



# The Presbytery of the North East and the Northern Isles

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

## Presbytery Mission Plan:

*Vision, Priorities & Progress*

*A network of vibrant, fruitful, sustainable churches,  
following Jesus, in recognisable communities.*



Worship and Proclamation



Nurturing New Believers



Loving Service



Justice, Peace, Reconciliation



Care for Creation

### — Four Strategic Priorities —

#### Growth and Renewal

Increase discipleship, worship, outreach, service

#### Children and Youth

Engage children, young people, and carers

#### Financial Sustainability

Plan for Giving to Grow

#### Local Context

Mission shaped locally

Estimated cost of a 1.0 FTE Minister: £53,120

### — How the Plan Works —

#### Resources Allocated

- ▣ Centrally funded Staffing
- ▣ Church Buildings managed by Kirk Sessions

#### What It Enables

- Recruitment into Vacancies
- Investment in Key Buildings
- Local Mission Planning

**87 FTE target across the Presbytery**

### Implementation Progress Since 2023

147 Congregations at start

83 Congregations by 2026

101+ Kirk Sessions Engaged

30 Unions

1 Linkage

2 Part-Time Ministries

2 Guardianships

23 Vacancies Created

10 Vacancies Filled

15.25 FTE MDS Posts

13 FTE Mins. Advertising

3.25 FTE MDS Advertising

57.75 FTE Ministers in Post



# The Presbytery of the North East and the Northern Isles

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

## Evaluation and Update 2026

### Vision, Aims, Principles

**Our vision** is to be a Presbytery which seeks, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to enable a network of vibrant, fruitful, sustainable churches, following Jesus, in recognisable communities

- where the Good News of the Kingdom of God is proclaimed in worship, outreach, and service
- where new believers are invited, taught, baptised, and nurtured in faith in appropriate gatherings and groups
- where believers respond together to human need by loving service in and with their communities
- where the local church prays for and engages with activities and organisations that work to transform unjust structures of society, challenge violence of every kind, and pursue peace and reconciliation
- where all generations strive together to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

To this end, **we aim** to deploy our human, financial, administrative, physical and spiritual resources in ways that encourage and support

- congregations to re-imagine and renew their life and work,
- congregations worshipping and witnessing in appropriate groupings,
- congregations using well-equipped, sustainable and strategically located buildings,
- congregations served and led by ministry teams, both lay and ordained, equipped with the faith, knowledge and skills needed to support mission and discipleship in their local communities and the wider world, including, where relevant, partnership with other denominations.

In pursuing this aim, **we recognize these principles**

- that mission is the work of the **whole people of God**—that it is always done alongside others, in receiving as well as offering hospitality, and varying in response to the specific context;
- that **mission is at home in the local church**—that it is the local congregation, following Jesus, led by its kirk session and working as part of an appropriate grouping, with the support of Presbytery, that is responsible for taking forward Jesus' mission, for loving and serving the people of their parish, and providing the ordinances of religion in that place

*(further principles underlying the Presbytery Mission Planning Act are outlined in Appendix 1.)*

## **A Combined Presbytery Mission Plan**

In December 2023, The Presbytery of the North East and the Northern Isles adopted as its Presbytery Mission Plan the aggregated plans of the former presbyteries of Aberdeen and Shetland, Buchan, Gordon, Kincardine and Deeside, Moray, and Orkney. These original plans vary in size, format, emphasis, and tone. But they are united in a recognition of the need to rationalise the church's resources for its mission; a resolve actively to participate in the work of missionally oriented change and a commitment to the planning principles set forth in the 2021 Presbytery Mission Plan Act (amended 2025), including the so-called 'Five Marks of Mission'.

In clarifying the status of church buildings and specifying the allocation of ministry posts across the presbytery, the Presbytery Mission Plan provides an agreed framework for future recruitment and investment. It also serves as an expression of the faith and hope of the churches in the Presbytery—a statement of what, by God's grace, we are and can be.

We aim to be a Presbytery which seeks, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to enable a network of vibrant, fruitful, sustainable churches, following Jesus, in recognisable communities.

We believe that as we prayerfully face the opportunities and challenges of our context, we must focus on these strategic priorities:

- 1. The need for Growth and Renewal:** Our aim must be an increase in discipleship, worship, outreach and service. This means an increase in new believers being nurtured in faith and engaged in loving service. This will include new forms of church life and new ways of working with people aged 40 and under. This means change is required.
- 2. Mission to Children and Youth is essential:** A focus for mission must be younger generations. Younger generations are seeking meaning more than ever. Our presbytery area has at least 35 secondary schools, each with hundreds of teenagers. Every local expression of church must be focused on engaging with and nurturing children, young people, and supporting their parents/carers in our communities. Experience suggests this will require investment in time, money and staffing.
- 3. Financial Sustainability:** Where possible, every congregation must be planning for financial stability; and aiming to cover the costs of ministry through their Giving to Grow contribution. (For a 1.0 FTE Minister of Word and Sacrament the current estimate is £53,120)
- 4. Local Context matters for Mission:** We recognize that wherever possible decisions are best shaped by those on the frontline of mission, within the limits of the principles, allocations and categorizations set out in our agreed Presbytery Mission Plan.

## **What is a Presbytery Mission plan?**

At its most basic a Presbytery Mission Plan is a document that sets out how our presbytery will allocate two of its available resources for mission. The first resource being centrally funded staffing (Ministers, and Mission Development Staff (MDS)). The second being the church buildings for which Kirk Sessions have responsibility.

## **What effect does a Presbytery Mission Plan have?**

The Presbytery Mission Plan enables recruitment in vacancies. Congregations can have permission granted to call a Minister or to recruit an MDS Staff Member where it fits within the plan allocations. The plan enables investment in those buildings that have been categorized as necessary and appropriate (Category A). Over time the plan can help us shape the mission of congregations within local communities to meet the needs of the local context.

## **What is the role of the Planning and Deployment Committee and Presbytery?**

The Planning and Deployment Committee offers support to Kirk Sessions and Congregations (typically in a vacancy) who may need to consider adjustment before being given Permission to Call, or to recruit centrally funded staff (MDS). We can offer options and explain the consequences of those options within the limits of allocations. We can support Kirk Session, Interim Moderators and office bearers to make decisions, and assist them through the process of adjustment.

## **How are the staffing allocations made?**

The overall allocation of centrally funded Ministry/Staffing for our Presbytery is based on a proportion of the total number of Ministers of Word and Sacrament that are available in Scotland (currently under 600), and on the financial ability of the central church to fund such staffing based on overall congregational giving. The total allocation of staffing given to our presbytery is 87 FTE (Full Time Equivalent). *Note: As a presbytery our total Giving to Grow contributions (the figure each congregation is asked to contribute toward the cost of a 1.0 FTE ministry, currently estimated at £53,120) would cover the cost of 90 staff.*

Within the plan smaller staffing allocations have been made to local groupings. Often, but not always, these groupings align with Secondary School catchment areas. In times of vacancy kirk sessions within local groupings are encouraged to form units that are appropriately sized to enable recruitment within those allocations. Our assumption is that these agreed grouping allocations were based on a combination of:

- Proportion of population in the parish (those we are reaching out to and serving)
- Financial sustainability of congregations (where possible covering the costs of ministry)
- Priority to the poorest (an extra weighting to those areas with levels of deprivation)
- Other Geographical factors such as islands, rural, urban, city

## **Summary of Implementation Progress since 2023**

The Presbytery formed January 2023 with 147 Congregations

In January 2023 the Congregational Statistics for the North East and Northern Isles reported:

Only 10 churches reported any professions of faith (7%)

Only 11 churches reported attendances of 100 or more (7.5%)

50 churches reported attendances of 25 or less (33%)

67 churches reported no children in worship (45%)

64 churches reported no youthwork (43%)

50 churches reported no involvement in school chaplaincy (33%)

As of May 2026, after implementation progress presbytery is now made up of 83 Congregations

Since January 2023, over 101 Kirk Sessions have engaged with the process of adjustment, leading to 30 Unions, 1 linkage, 2 part time ministries, 2 guardianships

This adjustment has allowed the creation of 23 Vacancies with Permission to Call a Minister of Word and Sacrament (MWS), 10 of which have been filled; and enabled the creation of 15.25 FTE Mission Development Staff (MDS) posts.

As of May 2026, we have 57.75 FTE Ministers MWS in post, and 12 FTE MDS in post

We have 13 FTE vacancies for MWS with Permission to Call advertising

We have 3.25 FTE MDS posts advertising

In terms of Ministers in post, and MDS in post, our Presbytery (like the majority across Scotland) are below our allocation of 87 FTE, and we would remain below our overall allocation should current vacancies be filled.

## **Unresolved matters during previous planning process**

As the former presbytery plans came together, there remained unresolved issues, sometimes known as conditions, or advisory notes from either Faith Action Team or the General Trustees, which accompanied the approval of the plans. All such requests for review across NENI have since been completed, and those decisions are reflected in the updated allocation tables and building categorisations.

Former Presbytery	Academy Catchment	Charge	Implementation Completed	Prior to Adjustment	Roll 2026	Parish Population	Staffing Allocated (as implementation completed)	MWS (where allocated)	Grouping Allocation Target	MDS (where created)	MWS in post	MDS in post	Church Buildings Category A	Church Buildings Category B (Disposal Target Year)	Current Status (UT/RC) Unrestricted /Reviewable	OLM	Notes
Aberdeen	Buckburn	Brimmond	Union	(was Newhills, Buckburn, Stoneywood)	430	8,005	1.0	1.00			1.0		Brimmond (Newhills)		UT		
Aberdeen	Dyce	Dyce lw Newmachar	Linkage	(Newmachar was Gordon presbytery)	454 and 335	10,123	1.0	1.00		0.5		0.5	Dyce Church, Newmachar Church, Pathways Centre		UT	OLM	0.5 MDS Youth
Aberdeen	Bridge of Don	Bridge of Don St Columbas	None Required		187	11,253	1.0	1.00					Bridge of Don St Columbas		UT		
Aberdeen	St Machar	Stockethill			70	4,062					1.0		Cairnry Community Centre (leased)		UT		To consider adjustment when vacant

3.5

Aberdeen	Northfield	Aberdeen North	Union	(was Northfield, Mastrick)	243	19,486	2.5	1.00		1.5	1.0	1.5	Aberdeen North (Mastrick)		UT		1 MDS Church and Community, 0.5 Cong. Support
Aberdeen	Northfield	Hillside	Union	(was High Hilton Middlefield Woodside)	380	19,495	2.5	1.00		1.5	1.0	1.0	Hillside (High Hilton)		UT		1 MDS Parish Assistant. 0.5 Children and Youth

5.0

Aberdeen	Hazlehead	Mannofield	Parish boundary extended	(now inc Garthdee)	660	12,569	1.0	1.00			1.0		Mannofield		UT		
Aberdeen	Hazlehead	Aberdeen Springfield	Union	(was Craigiebuckler, Ruthrieston West)	687	6,248	1.0	1.00			1.0		Craigiebuckler		UT		
Aberdeen	Cults	Cults	Parish boundary extended	(now inc Countesswells)	534	10,059	1.0	1.00			1.0		Cults		UT		
Aberdeen	Cults	Peterculter	Union	(was Peterculter, Drumoak Durris)	710	7,770	1.0	1.00			1.0		Peterculter, Drumoak Hall		UT		

4.0

Aberdeen	Lochside	Aberdeen South	Union	(was Torry St Fitticks, South St Nicholas Kincorth)	418	26,162	2.5	1.00		1.5	1.0	1.5	Torry St Fitticks		UT	OLM	1.0 MDS Parish Associate, 0.5 MDS Youth
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2.5

Aberdeen	St Machar	St Machar's Cathedral	Union	(now inc St George's Tillydrone, St Mary's)	451	16,011	2.0	1.00		1.0	1.0	1.0	St Machar Cathedral		UT		
Aberdeen	St Machar	St Stephen's			108	5,060					1.0		St Stephen's 2027		UT		To consider adjustment when vacant
Aberdeen	Oldmachar	Bridge of Don Oldmachar	None Required		121	11,263	1.0	1.00			1.0		Bridge of Don Oldmachar		UT		

3.5

Aberdeen	Grammar	Fountainhall	Union Team Ministry	(was Queen's Cross, Rubislaw, Midstocket, Holburn West)	1107	20,280	2.0	2.00			2.0		Queen's Cross, Mid Stocket, Rubislaw Centre		UT/RC		
Aberdeen	Harlaw	Devana	Union Team Ministry	(was St Marks, South Holburn, Ferryhill)	763	26,915	2.0	2.00			2.0		Ferryhill, South Holborn		UT/RC		St Johns For the Deaf Local Mission Church

4.0

Buchan	Mintlaw	Deer			420	3,274					1.0		Deer (Old) 2026		UT		To consider adjustment when vacant
Buchan	Mintlaw	Longside			302	3,342					1.0		Longside		UT		To consider adjustment when vacant
Buchan	Mintlaw	Maud and Savoeh lw New Deer			198 and 144	3,583					1.0		Maud, New Deer St Kane Kirk Centre		UT		To consider adjustment when vacant
Buchan	Peterhead	Cruden			247	3,502					1.0		Cruden		UT		To consider adjustment when vacant
Buchan	Peterhead	St Fergus			88	1,118					1.0		St Fergus 2026		UT		To consider adjustment when vacant

2.5

Buchan	Peterhead	Peterhead New			385	13,536	1.0	1.00			1.0		Peterhead New		UT		
Buchan	Peterhead	Peterhead St. Andrews		Guardianship	327	7,021							Peterhead St Andrews 2026				To consider adjustment when vacant

1.5

Buchan	Fraserburgh	Fraserburgh and District	Union Team Ministry	(was Fr. Old, Fr. West, Rathen West, Fr. South, Inverallochy, Rathen East, Pitsligo, Sandhaven)	377	18,010	2.0	2.00			1.0		Fraserburgh South, Inverallochy, Rosehearty		RC		
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2.0

Buchan	Fraserburgh	Crimond lw Lonmay			101 (C) and 71 (L)	2,550							Crimond	Lonmay 2026			To consider adjustment when vacant
Buchan	Fraserburgh	Mormond West	Union	(was Strichen and Tyrie lw New Pitsligo)	455	2,988					1.0		Strichen		UT	OLM	To consider adjustment when vacant
Buchan	Fraserburgh	Aberdour		(was lw Pitsligo)	89	763							Aberdour 2026				To consider adjustment when vacant

1.5

Buchan	Banff	Banff	link severed	(was link with King Ed)	280	4,984							Banff				To join Banffshire East Union
Buchan	Banff	Banffshire East	Union	(was Macduff, Whitehills)	577	7,042	1.5	1.00					Macduff	Whitehills 2026	RC		To develop 0.5 MDS post

1.5

Buchan	Banff	Seafield (Banffshire)	Union	(was Portsoy, Ordiquhill and Cornhill, Cullen and Deskford)	531	4,833	1.0	1.00			1.0		Portsoy, Cornhill, Cullen Hall Church	UT		
1.0																
Buchan	Turriff	Strathdeveron Community (Turriff)	Union Team Ministry	(was Turriff St Ninians, Turriff St Andrews, Monquitter, New Byth, Marnoch, King Edward)	594	11,025	2.5	2.00			1.0		St Ninians and Forglen, Marnoch	Turriff St Andrew's 2026, Monquitter 2026	UT/RC	To develop 0.5 MDS post
2.5																
Gordon	Alford	West Gordon (Alford)	Union	(was Howe Trinity (Alford), Upper Donside, Noth, CushnieTough)	946	8,102	2.0	1.00		1.0	1.0	1.0	Howe Trinity, Strathdon Hall and Church	UT	OLM	1.0 MDS Parish Assistant
2.0																
Gordon	Kemnay	Bennachie	Union Team Ministry	(was Kintore, Kemnay, Blairdaff, Chapel of Garioch, Echt, Midmar, Cluny, Monymusk)	1,496	15,382	2.5	2.00		0.5	1.0		Chapel of Garioch, Echt, Kemnay, Kintore, Monymusk	UT/RC		0.5 MDS Parish Outreach
2.5																
Gordon	Westhill	Kingshill	Union, parish boundary extended	(now inc Blackburn, Skene, Kingswells)	1,110	20,196	2.5	1.00		1.5	1.0	1.0	Skene Kirk, Trinity Church Westhill	UT		1.0 MDS Parish Assistant, 0.5 MDS Youth
2.5																
Gordon	Ellon	Ellon	None Required		1,194	12,140	2.0	1.00		1.0	1.0	1.0	Ellon	UT		0.5 MDS Community, 0.5 MDS Parish
Gordon	Ellon	Belhelvie	None Required		259	5,208	1.0	1.00					Belhelvie	RC		
Gordon	Ellon	Foveran			160	2,662							Holyrood 2027			To consider adjustment when vacant
3.0																
Gordon	Ellon	Formartine	Union	(was Udry Pitmedden, Tarves, Barthol Chap)	421	5,128	1.0	1.00			1.0		Pitmedden	UT		
Gordon	Ellon	Methlick	Part-time Ministry		284	1,125	0.5	0.50					Methlick	RC		
1.5																
Gordon	Huntly	Huntly Cairnie Glass	Deferred Union	In deferred Union with Strathbogie Drumblade	393	3,517					1.0		Huntly Cairnie Glass 2027	UT		in deferred Union with Strathbogie Drumblade
Gordon	Huntly	Strathbogie Drumblade	Deferred Union		335	2,536	1.0	1.00			1.0		Strathbogie Church	RC		
Gordon	Huntly	Insch Leslie Premnay Oyne	None Required		282	4,070	1.0	1.00			1.0		Insch	UT		
2.0																
Gordon	Inverurie	Inverurie St Andrew's			708	4,832					1.0		Inverurie St Andrews	UT		To consider adjustment when vacant
Gordon	Inverurie	Inverurie West			476	9,286					1.0		Inverurie West	UT		To consider adjustment when vacant
Gordon	Inverurie Westhill	Fintray Kinellar Keithhall			111	1,994							Fintray 2027			To consider adjustment when vacant
1.5																
Gordon Buchan	Meldrum	Meldrum and Bourtie			288	4,089					1.0		Meldrum Church	Bourtie 2026	UT	To consider adjustment when vacant
Gordon Buchan	Meldrum	Culsalmond and Rayne Iw Daviot			125 and 124	1,576					1.0		Daviot	UT		To consider adjustment when vacant
Gordon Buchan	Meldrum	Fyvie Iw Rothienorman			124 and 80	3,144							Fyvie, Rothienorman			To consider adjustment when vacant
Gordon Buchan	Meldrum	Auchterless and Auchaber	Union	(was Auchaber United Iw Auchterless)	141	2,065					1.0		Auchterless	UT		To consider adjustment when vacant
2.0																
KD	Aboyne	Braemar and Crathie			152	852					1.0		Crathie	UT		To consider adjustment when vacant
KD	Aboyne	Glenmuick			190	1,760					1.0		Glenmuick Ballater	UT		To consider adjustment when vacant
KD	Aboyne	Aboyne Dinnet Iw Cromar			192 and 121	4,959	1.0	1.00			1.0		Aboyne, Cromar	UT		
2.0																
KD	Banchory	Banchory Ternan West	None Required		533	4,577	1.0	1.00			1.0		Banchory West	UT		
KD	Aboyne/Banchory	Mid Deeside			390	3,559					1.0		Mid Deeside Torphins	UT		To consider adjustment when vacant
KD	Aboyne/Banchory	Birse & Feughside	Basis of Part-Time		180	1,476	0.5	0.50					Birse & Feughside	RC		
KD	Banchory	Banchory Ternan East	Basis of Part-Time		384	4,577	0.5	0.50					Banchory East	RC		
2.5																
KD	Portlethen	Maryculter Trinity (MCT)	Guardianship		109	3,184	0.25						Maryculter Trinity		OLM	
1.5																
KD	Portlethen	Kincardine Coastal	Union	(was Portlethen, Newtonhill)	390	13,048	1.5			0.5	1.0		Portlethen, Newtonhill	UT		0.5 MDS Children Families
1.5																
KD	Stonehaven Mackie	Stonehaven Fetteresso	None Required		467	6,072	1.0	1.00			1.0		Fetteresso	UT		
KD	Stonehaven Mackie	Stonehaven Carronside	None Required		627	6,072	1.0	1.00					Carronside Dunottar	RC		

2.0

KD	Laurencekirk Mearns	Arbuthnott, Bervie & Kineff (ABK)			151	4,438					1.0		Bervie	Arbuthnott 2026	UT		To consider adjustment when vacant
KD	Laurencekirk Mearns	St. Cyrus		Guardianship	191	2,843	0.25						St Cyrus				
KD	Laurencekirk Mearns	Howe of the Mearns	Union	(was West Mearns, Aberluthnott, Laurencekirk)	602	8,044	1.0	1.00			1.0		Fettercairn, Laurencekirk, Luthermuir	Auchenblae, Glenbervie 2026	UT		

2.0

Moray	Buckie	Buckie North & Rathven	Union	were linked	185	6,029					1.0		Buckie North		UT		To consider adjustment when vacant
Moray	Buckie	Buckie South West & Enzie	Union	were linked	176	4,708								Buckie South and West 2027			To consider adjustment when vacant
Moray	Buckie	Findochty Portknockie	Union, Guardianship	were linked	84	2,376	0.25						Findochty, Portknockie				To consider adjustment when vacant

1.5

Moray	Keith	Keith North, Newmill, Boharm and Rothiemay	Parish Grouping		338	3,567	1.0	1.00			1.0		Keith North	Rothiemay 2027	UT		
Moray	Keith	Keith St. Rufus, Botriphnie and Grange	Parish Grouping		678	4,085	1.0	1.00			1.0		Keith St Rufus	Grange 2027	UT		

2.0

Moray	Aberlour Speyside	Aberlour			162	2,075							Aberlour				To consider adjustment when vacant
Moray	Aberlour Speyside	Knockando, Elchies, Archiestown			115	2,219							Knockando				To consider adjustment when vacant
Moray	Aberlour Speyside	Mortlach and Rothes	Union	(was Mortlach and Cabrach, Rothes)	371	2,138	1.0	1.00					Mortlach, Rothes		RC		

2.0

Moray	Fochabers Milnes	St. Andrews Lhanbryd and Urquhart (SALU)	None Required		243	3,447	1.0	1.00			1.0			St Andrews Lhanbryd 2026	UT		
Moray	Fochabers Milnes	Bellie and Speymouth (Fochabers)	None Required		280	4,911	1.0	1.00			1.0		Bellie		UT		

2.0

Moray	Lossiemouth	Laich of Moray (Lossiemouth)	Union	(was St Geraldine's High lw Lossiemouth St. James, Duffus, Spynie, Hopeman)	398	11,796	1.5	1.00					Lossiemouth St James, Duffus	Lossiemouth St Gerardine, Hopeman, Spynie 2026	RC	OLM	To develop 0.5 MDS post
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1.5

Moray	Elgin	Elgin Parish	Union	(was Elgin St Giles, St Columbas South, Elgin High, Birnie and Pluscarden)	628	25,760	2.0	1.00		1.0	1.0	1.0	Elgin St Columbas	Elgin St Giles, Elgin High, Birnie, Pluscarden 2027	UT	OLM	1 MDS Parish Assistant
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2.0

Orkney	Kirkwall / Stromness	Orkney Parish	Union Team Ministry		1742 (United) and 47 (E&R)	22,270	7.0	6.75		0.25	4.75		Birsay Harray & Sandwick (Milestone Church, Dounby), East Mainland Church (East Mainland Church, Holm), Eday (Eday Church), Evie and Rendall (Hackland Church, Rendall), Firth (Firth Church, Finstown), Hoy & Walls ((Kirkside Worship Accommodation), Kirkwall East (Kirkwall: East Church, King St), Kirkwall St Magnus (Cathedral and St Magnus Centre), Orphir and Stenness (Orphir Church), Shapinsay (Shapinsay Church), South Ronaldsay & Burray (St Margaret's Church), Stronsay Moncur Memorial (Moncur Memorial Church), St Ann's Church Papa Westray, and Westray (Westray Church)	Stromness 2026	RC / UT	OLM x2	0.25 MDS Parish Assistant, Evie and Rendall to join Union
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7.0

Shetland	Lerwick / Brae	Shetland Parish	Union Team Ministry	647	23,167	6.0	3.00	3.0	1.0	2.0	Aith Church Baltasound St John's Church Brae Church Bridgend Church, Burra Isles Lerwick St Columba's Church Ollaberry Church Sandwick Church Scalloway Church Walls St Paul's Church Whalsay Church Hall Yell St Olaf's Church Methodist Church in Vidlin (use only)	RC/UT	1 MDS Parish Dev, 1 MDS Youth, 1 MDS Admin
								6.0					
		MDS allocated Presbytery Wide				0.5		0.5	0.5		0.5		0.5 MDS Mission Discipleship
		MDS allocated Presbytery Wide						0.5					allocation to be confirmed
					593,393	73.25	55.25	87.0	15.25	59.75	12.0		
					Total Population	Staffing allocated (as implementation completed)	MWS (Allocated)	Overall Allocation Target	MDS (where created)	MWS in post	MDS in post		

**Key:**

- MWS Minister Word And Sacrament
- MDS Mission Development Staff
- FTE Full Time Equivalent
- UT Unrestricted Tenure
- RC Reviewable Charge
- OLM Orained Local Minister
-  Vacancy with Permission

<b>Note: Church Buildings Category B Disposal Completed or in Progress as of 2026</b>	
Bucksburn-Stoneywood	Woodside
Kingswells	Ruthrieston West
South St Nicholas Kincorth	St George's Tillydrone
St Mary's	Holborn West
Rubislaw	St Mark's
St Fergus	Muckle Kirk
Fraserburgh Old	Fraserburgh West
Rathen West	Sandhaven
New Aberdour	New Pitsligo
Tyrie	Whitehills
Auchaber United	Turriff St Andrews
Monquitter and New Byth	King Edward
Lumsden	Towie
Cushnie	Tough
Cluny	Midmar
Blairdaff	Barthol Chapel
Udny	Evie
Braemar	Coull
Drumoak	Durris
Stonehaven South	Marykirk
Auchenblae	Glenbervie
Arbuthnott	Enzie
Rathven	Cullen Auld
Botriphnie	Craigellachie
Speymouth	Hopeman
Lossiemouth St Gerardine's High	Spynie

## **Supporting Local Mission – Presbytery Staff**

### **Stella McBurnie, Presbytery Clerk**

“In my role as Presbytery Clerk, I am in regular contact with Ministers, Interim Moderators and Kirk Sessions with regards to adjustments and vacancies, seeking to offer support and answer questions. Meeting with Kirk Sessions, particularly face-to-face, has enabled me to better understand what the challenges are for congregations faced with moving towards a union or linkage or disposing of a much loved building. Often the process begins with talking through the history of a parish and a congregation – getting to know the story of a place and a people. There is value in creating space for those in leadership, whether in ministry or through being elders, to vocalise the emotions stirred by the changes that are happening. People sometimes want or need an opportunity to share their sense of disappointment, frustration, grief and injustice at the planning process. But alongside that, there is often a sense of a burden being lifted, a sense of growing excitement at what is possible post-adjustment and a sense of change being necessary. I have found that Kirk Sessions are appreciative of time being invested in them and in receiving straightforward answers to their questions. I appreciate not having to do that all on my own, but through working closely with the Planning and Deployment Committee I have been able to give clarity where it is needed. I am also aware of the importance of sharing feedback on the process with the various departments within the Church of Scotland. Much time is spent working through the nitty-gritty of adjustments with congregations but there is also the joy of sharing in services that mark and celebrate adjustment and in services of induction. It is exciting to see united congregations begin to focus outwardly and to reap the benefits of being post-adjustment. There is work to be done in supporting congregations in the post-implementation stage but it is incredible to think of how much has already happened since January 2023 and how far we have progressed the implementation of the plan. Those congregations who have yet to go through adjustment will begin to receive more attention in the coming year and it part of my role will be to offer support to them as they wrestle with what the future looks like for them.”

### **Robert Smith, Mission Development Officer**

“As I have focused on meeting with congregations to learn more about their ‘shape’ and get a feel for what their mission efforts have been and could be in the future, my efforts really have been to come alongside, listen to them and let them know that I am a resource for them and that includes sharing with congregations about the Seeds for Growth programme and other forms of support. As congregations come to grips with the still ongoing adjustments in their parishes and settle into the many changes we face, which are significant, the focus on mission remains; and now more and more congregations are taking up the challenge to discover, imagine and work together to build mission together.”

### **Natasha Hepburn, Congregational Support Officer**

“Over the past year, congregations across our Presbytery have continued to show remarkable courage, care, and resilience as they navigate a time of significant change. Much of my work has centred on helping them regain confidence in the essentials — governance, safeguarding, leadership, and good communication — so that these structures serve mission, rather than become a distraction from it. Many Kirk Sessions are now finding a steadier rhythm after the intensity of adjustment and union. In some places, there’s visible energy and renewed focus; in others, a quieter faithfulness — a sense of keeping things steady while people rest and regroup. Both are signs of health and honesty in this season.

Much of this work isn't glamorous — it happens quietly, in conversations, small adjustments, and gentle encouragement. But together, these steps are helping congregations find their footing again, rebuilding confidence and rediscovering that the practical side of church life is at its best when it frees people to focus on what truly matters: worship, community, and mission."

### **Matt Sinar, Youth Development Officer**

"I have met with Youth Workers, Ministers, volunteers and congregations to find out where they're at in terms of ministry with young people, and to help them assess the opportunities before them and the resources available (people, buildings, finances, and more 'intangible' assets like community relationships). There are congregations across a full spectrum, from those with thriving long-standing youth ministries to those without any real regular contact with young people at all. No congregation is alone in their situation, wherever they find themselves on that spectrum, and there are always opportunities to build on existing platforms and develop new initiatives. The reality is that many congregations will be starting from scratch, but that can definitely be done. Youth Ministry doesn't need to be loud and showy; it needs to be relational and consistent over the long haul - so I believe it can always be successfully achieved on smaller or larger scales as appropriate to each congregation.

I have met with churches who are seeking to employ Youth Workers, and helped them through that process. I have run "Youthscape Essentials", a Youth Ministry training course for volunteers, and will run this again in 2026. I am developing a series of one-off workshops to help build skills in Youth & Children's Ministry. I am aware of training material being developed in England aimed at Ministers who are looking to start building and leading a Youth Ministry in their church from scratch, and am currently pursuing wider availability of this resource. But there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution and often the best approach is regular dialogue with congregations, helping them to figure out what their next steps look like whichever rung of the ladder they are on, and I am committed to being available to serve all congregations in this way."

### **Daria Oskolkova, Communications Officer**

"As part of my role to highlight and expand our outreach, I created YouTube and Instagram accounts where we share inspiring messages and stories from our congregations. Our Facebook following has doubled in the last year; YouTube views have reached 36K, and Facebook videos have received 330K views. Among the 110 videos currently on our channel is content highlighting CrossReach and the Legacies of Slavery project - the initiatives the General Assembly asked us to support. One video received 12,872 views and led to coverage in the Press & Journal. The plan is to continue growing our outreach so that we can share the gifts and beauty of the Christian life with more people. But most importantly, many of the videos showcase the great work our congregations are doing in their communities." Some highlights include:

*Brimmond Union* - <https://youtube.com/shorts/iUYwAyJkGGo?si=I2EZVGCoCqv6w3RI>

*Tuesday Tables in Keith* - <https://youtube.com/shorts/WYRlybsR4fU?si=uGLBZGJWchlMRVdB>

*The Haven in Stonehaven* - [https://youtube.com/shorts/WN5DxztCVIlg?si=MDhY\\_DvXzaGXGR-1](https://youtube.com/shorts/WN5DxztCVIlg?si=MDhY_DvXzaGXGR-1)

*Morning Toast in Orkney* - <https://youtube.com/shorts/-JLuUjKZUDU?si=wGzGo-F-prOMtNGk>

*The Caim in the Mearns Area* - <https://youtube.com/shorts/t77TtqJJ1Pc?si=xEaNR-UZ3CGibnGd>

*TLG Churches working together in Aberdeen North* -

<https://youtube.com/shorts/z35D6dSE8WI?si=xRMR3maS2NgavHVI>

(Links lead to short YouTube clips on each example of mission in action.)

**Appendix 1: PRESBYTERY MISSION PLAN ACT, (ACT VIII 2021) (AS AMENDED BY ACTS VII AND XII 2022, III AND IV 2024 AND IX AND XIV 2025) *Edinburgh, 26 May 2021,***

**SCHEDULE 2: THE CORE PRINCIPLES**

5.3.1 Presbytery, FAPLT and the General Trustees must prioritise Mission (as defined in section 1.1 (r) through the Mission Plan process. No area of church life is exempt (see section 1.1(y)). Everything in this Schedule should be read in the light of, and is subordinate to, section 2.1.1.

5.3.2 **Communities:** Every community of every size in every location within Scotland is part of a Church of Scotland Parish. While population should no longer be the only principle in shaping Mission Plans, it still remains the starting point. Our calling as a church is not primarily to resource congregations: it is mission to everyone in the land.

5.3.3 **Ecumenism:** “The Commission readily acknowledges that reaching the people of Scotland is an ecumenical task and one to which the Church of Scotland contributes along with other denominations as partners in the gospel.” If a particular community is well served by another denomination, there may be no need for the Presbytery to duplicate that. Where a community is equally well served by the Church of Scotland and another denomination the Presbytery should explore what local possibilities there might be for recognising each other’s ministry so that resources can be used elsewhere. The General Assembly of 2021 instructed the Faith Nurture Forum, now FAPLT, when developing principles for Presbytery Mission Planning, to include a principle of ecumenical working, bearing in mind the Lund Principle, affirming that churches should act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately. That same deliverance also encouraged the forming of local Mission Communities and regional Covenant Partnerships as outlined in the Report of the Ecumenical Relations Committee to the General Assembly of 2021.

5.3.4 **The poor:** The General Assembly has repeatedly affirmed that the gospel imperative is priority to the poor. At a time when resources are scarce, it is tempting to take away from the most marginal communities where churches are often very fragile and small. However pressing the reasons may be locally, this must be resisted because it makes a mockery of the gospel and the repeated commitments of the General Assembly. However, as in every part of the Church, this does not mean that existing patterns of ministry should not be evaluated and reviewed and different forms of church life introduced.

5.3.4 **Whole people of God:** One aim of the Act is to assist the church in making the most effective use of paid ministries. However, this takes place in the context of the ministry of the whole people of God. The Special Commission on the Third Article Declaratory, in 2010, noted that “the living out of the commitment of Article III may well involve an increasing number of communities where the ministry is exercised largely by the eldership and membership of the Church, albeit under the oversight of an ordained minister.” (8.5.6) Therefore a further principle to guide Presbyteries in their deployment of ministries is how they might be used to encourage and enhance the ministry of the whole people of God. This sharing of talents may be across a wider area than a parish – some Presbyteries are developing the idea of Mission Districts, on which more information will be available later.

5.3.5 **Congregations:** The Church has “a commitment to maintain worshipping, witnessing and serving Christian congregations throughout Scotland.” One of the ways in which the gospel finds

visible expression is in committed congregations under the power of the Holy Spirit. They both express the gospel and commend the gospel. In their Planning, Presbyteries will identify congregations that are outward looking, which engage with their communities and the wider church and consider how they might build on these strengths.

**5.3.6 Mixed economy:** Whilst affirming the importance of the Parish system and recognising the importance of a sense of 'place' the General Assembly stated that this needs to be expressed in a variety of ways. Martyn Percy, an Anglican scholar, says: "For the Church to find its place in the modern world, it will have to create new spaces for new communities and different opportunities for differentiated niche groups." While in many communities the sense of place is best expressed in something physical and tangible, that is not universally true. The Church will need, for example, to discover how to relate to those whose belonging is primarily through networks or the virtual world.

**5.3.7 Financial responsibility:** Presbytery Mission Planning does not mean ensuring that congregations which make a net contribution to central funds take priority. Nonetheless a degree of financial realism is required and it is appropriate that some consideration is given to congregational financial responsibility. Some congregations are more generous than comparable ones and all congregations are expected to make a financial contribution appropriate to their means. At present one third of congregations are net contributors and two thirds are net receivers. However, per capita giving can be much higher amongst some of the poorest congregations than it is in some of the wealthiest. It is essential for Presbyteries to consider the complex financial picture and allocate ministerial resources to congregations that take their financial stewardship seriously. The Presbytery, FAPLT and the General Trustees should also take account of the effect of a Mission Plan on the aggregate amount of Giving to Grow Contributions which the Presbytery's congregations remit to the national Church.

**5.3.8 Buildings:** There is a connection between ministry and church buildings, although that connection is neither uniform nor universal. At a national level there is a consensus that the Church of Scotland has too many buildings, numerous buildings that are underutilised, buildings that are too large for present-day needs and buildings that are in the wrong place. At a local level, however, almost every church building is deemed essential by those who worship there week by week. There is no simple solution to this problem. The starting point, however, should be mission. Presbyteries will want to consider which buildings are essential and useful for the mission they envisage, and offer to local parties means by which they might look more objectively at the bricks and mortar which they possess. The General Trustees will support Presbyteries in developing their Mission Plans. Presbyteries are encouraged to make use of the General Trustees' Land and Buildings Toolkit, and other assessment tools which will be available.



The Church of Scotland  
The Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland

Scottish Charity No. SC013064

**The Church of Scotland**

**The Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland**

**PRESBYTERY MISSION PLAN 2022**

## PRESBYTERY OF ABERDEEN AND SHETLAND

### PRESBYTERY MISSION PLAN 2022

#### 1. Introduction

*“For we are God’s workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good work which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:10)*

*“But the one who plants in response to God, letting God’s Spirit do the growth work in him, harvests a crop of real life, eternal life. So let’s not allow ourselves to get fatigued doing good... Right now, therefore, every time we get the chance, let us work for the benefit of all” (Galatians 6, The Message).*

As we emerge from the disruption and anxieties of the pandemic, we welcome a return of some normality – doing familiar things, seeing people and places we have missed. Not everything has returned to how it was before Covid however – some formerly in-person activities remain online, many still work from home and many are still dealing with loss, ill-health and poverty. Now we see other difficulties rushing in after Covid – it would be easy to be discouraged. Paul reminds us that we need to keep going even when things are difficult, to let the Holy Spirit “do the growth work” in us. Let us approach these post-Covid times with hope and energy, doing some things differently, adapting old ways to new ways, allowing God always “to make all things new” in all that we do.

Over a number of years, the former Aberdeen Presbytery held a dialogue entitled “Our Shared Future” with the Planning and Deployment Committee and the city congregations and Kirk Sessions. At the same time, Shetland was undergoing radical change from a Presbytery of 13 parishes to a single parish served by a ministry team: this included the closure of 20 out of a total of 31 buildings (c.60%). Those of us in Aberdeen were inspired by the boldness of Shetland’s decision to create a new model of an extended parish served by a ministry team with strategically located worship centres. The new Shetland parish then became part of the new Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland in the spring of 2020. In July 2020, we approved a new Presbytery Plan, based on the formation of Parish Groupings which were intended to lead to larger parishes served by ministry teams and often with more than one worship centre. This Plan also provided for the closure over a period of ten years of 13 sanctuaries and halls (c.40% of our buildings) which were found by our 2019 Necessary Buildings Audit not to be “well equipped spaces in the right places”.

Following the decision of the 2021 General Assembly, this Plan was suspended and we set about preparing a new Presbytery Mission Plan, which also had to take account of the reduction of our allocation of ministerial posts from 38 to 28.

As recommended by the Presbytery Mission Planning Implementation Group (PMPiG), a document setting out the process to be adopted in preparing our new Mission Plan was

approved by Presbytery at its meeting on 1 February 2022: see Presbytery Mission Plan Preparation Process (Appendix 2).

In preparing the new Presbytery Mission Plan for Aberdeen and Shetland, we have analysed Aberdeen's congregational statistics for church membership, baptisms, weddings and funerals in 2017 and 2021, made use of information about average congregational income net of Ministries & Mission contributions, and considered demographic data published by Statistics for Mission, including the 2020 Deprivation Map.

## **2. Context**

The 2020 Plan was our response to the 2019 General Assembly's instruction to Presbyteries to "challenge themselves in their Presbytery Plans to be robust, imaginative and courageous in reducing the number of charges, creating ministry hubs and enabling new pioneer and new church planting opportunities". The principles underpinning that Plan were identical to those set out in Section 5 of the Presbytery Mission Plan Act: Guidance and Code of Practice (September 2021). This we endeavoured to do.

Like other Presbyteries, we still face the challenges of a continuing decline in church membership (-16% since 2017) and attendance; a reducing and aging cohort of volunteers and office bearers, particularly people with expertise in finance and property matters; fewer Ministers of Word and Sacrament; the primary allegiance of many of us to our own congregational family and church buildings; and a secular society that regards the Christian Church as irrelevant or even harmful. The few months during which we started to implement our 2020 Plan showed that we could begin to address these challenges, so we have tried to apply the lessons learned then to the formulation of our new Presbytery Mission Plan.

The long-term effects of the recent pandemic are still to play out: lengthy closure periods have adversely affected in-person attendance at worship and the congregational fellowship valued by so many; it has also hit our congregational finances. We face a period in which family poverty and reliance on food banks are set to rise against a backdrop of unanticipated inflation and soaring energy prices, a mental health crisis among the young, and the daunting challenge of climate change; and now there are the global consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. While these challenges have opened up new opportunities for effective mission and service, as a Presbytery we have fewer resources with which to meet them, but we take heart from the plus side of the pandemic, which has prompted us to find new ways of being church: by the imaginative use of social and online media, for example, and the forging of local partnerships to meet local needs.

## **3. Vision**

Our vision is a Presbytery which seeks, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to enable our congregations and Parish Groupings to display and put into practice the Five Marks of Mission as set out in the 2021 Presbytery Mission Plan Act. To this end, we will deploy our human, financial, administrative, physical and spiritual resources in ways that encourage and support congregations to re-imagine and renew their life and work, worshipping and witnessing in

new sustainable parish groupings, using well-equipped and strategically located buildings, served and led by ministry teams, both lay and ordained, equipped with the faith, knowledge and skills needed to support mission in their local communities and the wider world, including, where relevant, in partnership with other denominations.

We recognise, however, that it is the local congregation led by its Kirk Session and working as part of a coherent and sustainable Parish Grouping, with the support of Presbytery, that is responsible for taking forward the Church's mission as agreed in the Presbytery Plan.

#### **4. Putting Mission at the Heart of Planning and Ministry**

##### **Principles**

The principles underpinning our 2020 Plan, which we set out in that document, were those outlined by the General Assembly, which set Mission as the primary principle for Presbytery planning along with eight secondary ones. These are the same as those set out in Section 5 of the Presbytery Mission Plan Act: Guidance and Code of Practice (September 2021) from which the following are taken.

**Communities:** *“Every community of every size in every location within Scotland is part of a Church of Scotland Parish.”*

We have taken account of the need to provide local opportunities for worship, witness and service across the Presbytery even if these do not take place in a permanent or traditional church building. Drawing on the experience of Stockethill Church, for example, which has for many years chosen to worship in their local community centre and local care homes, we believe that relocating missional activities can be an opportunity to work productively at the heart of the parish. We are also in the process of negotiating, with the support of the General Trustees, with Aberdeen City Council for one of our church buildings to be transferred to a local community council while retaining the right to use it for missional activities.

**Ecumenism:** *“Reaching the people of Scotland is an ecumenical task”*

While we recognise the importance of the Third Article Declaratory, we are realistic about the capacity of the Church of Scotland to resource this adequately. We believe that where Christians of different denominations can collaborate for the sake of the Gospel, God is glorified. We are encouraged in this by our experience of working together to provide practical support for Syrian refugees given sanctuary in Aberdeen and by the participation of some congregations in City-Wide Prayer Gatherings.

**The Poor:** *“The gospel imperative is priority to the poor.”*

Recognising that “priority for the poorest and the most marginalised is the gospel imperative facing the whole Church, not just the Church in the poorest places,” we have in our allocation of ministerial posts taken account of the 2020 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. We are already encouraged by the likely union of one Urban Priority Area congregation with its wealthier neighbour in a large Parish Grouping that includes another congregation with a high number of Deprivation Zones.

**Whole People of God:** *“One aim of the Act is to assist the church in making the most effective use of paid ministries. However, this takes place in the context of the ministry of the whole people of God.”*

At a time when the number of salaried ministries is heavily constrained, the task of identifying, encouraging and developing lay members to lead worship and engage in other missional activities is essential both for the flourishing of the Church and for their own discipleship and spiritual growth. Indeed, much of our capacity for outreach relies on a nucleus of volunteers who run our church cafés and contribute to local community projects – choosing the perhaps less glamorous role of Martha. We will continue to encourage and support our members to take advantage of the training courses for worship leaders offered by the Centre for Ministry Studies at the University of Aberdeen; there are 11 people in the first cohort. Some of our Elders have undergone training as Interim Moderators.

**Congregation:** *“The church has ‘a commitment to maintain worshipping, witnessing and serving Christian congregations throughout Scotland.’”*

One of our concerns about the new staffing allocation and its effect on congregational life in the aftermath of the pandemic is the risk that it may accelerate the continuing decline in church membership, leading to less income and another round of reductions in salaried ministry posts and so on in a downward spiral. Our hope is that the creation of larger, better endowed congregations working in Parish Groupings will enable them to flourish rather than simply survive. The challenge of re-establishing ourselves in those areas where we no longer have a presence is being addressed in the Plan.

**Mixed economy:** *“While in many communities the sense of place is best expressed in something physical and tangible that is not universally true.”*

Congregations and Parish Groupings will be encouraged and supported in developing their Local Mission Action Plans to explore new ways of being church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Where buildings have been closed, the new united congregation will be encouraged to explore new forms of worship and outreach in those communities where there is no longer a permanent bricks and mortar presence. Parish Groupings will be encouraged to consider the advantages of the Local Mission Church model, which may suit small worshipping groups who can self-organise. The experience of those congregations who offered online worship during the pandemic exemplifies another form of church life that was able to engage those for whom participation in in-person worship was neither possible nor appropriate.

**Financial responsibility:** *“Presbytery Mission Planning does not mean ensuring that congregations which make a net contribution to central funds take priority. Nonetheless a degree of financial realism is required.”*

We believe that Parish Groupings and congregations served by ministry teams is a good way of both ensuring financial stability and sharing wealth and other resources. Consideration of congregational income has been one factor informing our decisions about the composition of these Groupings. We also believe that having fewer unsuitable buildings to maintain will release resources that can be better used for missional purposes as well as reducing our

carbon footprint. With the escalating costs of heat and light, it is ever more important that buildings are fully utilised and operated as efficiently in energy terms as possible.

**Buildings:** *“There is a connection between ministry and church buildings, although that connection is neither uniform nor universal.”*

Presbytery has previously endorsed the General Trustees’ mantra of “well equipped spaces in the right places”. The aim of the Plan is that each Parish Grouping will be responsible for buildings that are assets for mission as opposed to obstacles. Since our 2020 Plan was approved, it has become clear that our ambitious rebuilding plans are no longer viable in view of the reduced valuations of buildings to be disposed of and the increased costs of new builds. We have taken account of this in preparing our new Plan. We have participated fully in the Asset Management Buildings Audit (AMBA) process prepared by the General Trustees and have considered the results of the Audit as well as holding a Review Meeting with the General Trustees. Following on from that, all our buildings have been classified as (a) to be retained or (b) to be disposed of, with a closure date stated.

## **5. Addressing the Five Marks of Mission**

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom;
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers;
3. To respond to human need by loving service;
4. To seek to transform the unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation;
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

### **Aims and Priorities**

Appendix 1 sets out how we propose to deploy the ministry posts allocated to us, reduce the number of our buildings, and create fewer and larger congregations working together in Parish Groupings, under the leadership of ministry teams. This restructuring is much more radical than our 2020 Plan. What is new, however, are the specific aims and priorities we have set ourselves in order that together we may address the Five Marks of Mission, thereby making mission the primary principle of our Plan. These are:

- Rebuilding congregational life and face-to-face fellowship disrupted by the restrictions imposed by COVID 19. This is likely to take time but is a necessary condition for everything else.
- Demonstrating priority for the poor by targeting support for congregations in parishes with areas of multiple deprivation: for example, Aberdeen North, High Hilton, St Mary’s, St George’s Tillydrone and Torry St Fittick’s. This must be a fundamental principle for all our work.
- Learning from the experience of using social and online media during lockdown to bring the message of God’s love to those outside the walls of the church buildings (Marks 1 and 2). This is already being supported through our Communications Officer.

- Resourcing our Parish Groupings to prioritise work with children, young people and their families (Marks 1 and 2). This has already happened or is happening in the West End, Aberdeen North and Shetland.
- Establishing fresh expressions of church in areas of new housing or where the local church building has closed or where there are particular opportunities for mission (Marks 1 and 2). Appendix 1 includes examples of these opportunities.
- Continuing to find practical ways of showing God’s love for those disadvantaged by poverty, ill-health and old age (Mark 3). Existing examples include support for local charities, such as Instant Neighbour, the Living Well Project and other groups for those suffering from dementia and those who care for them, and the Guild Projects.
- Continuing as a Presbytery, working in partnership with others, to oppose violence and injustice and to pursue peace and reconciliation (Mark 4). Aberdeen Rape Crisis Centre operates from city centre premises provided by the Presbytery.
- Taking practical steps to help our congregations reduce their carbon footprint (Mark 5).

Not all our congregations or Parish Groupings will be able or expected to address the totality of these aims and priorities at once, particularly during the next few years. Appendix 1 suggests how the Five Marks of Mission could be implemented in each Parish Grouping and each one will be tasked with preparing a Local Mission Action Plan, showing how they propose to contribute to the Presbytery's missional aims and priorities in their area during the period of the Plan.

One important feature of the deferred union between Mastrick and Summerhill that (with the addition of Northfield) became Aberdeen North in 2020 were the deliberate steps the two congregations took to prepare for this by planning and implementing a programme designed to bring them closer together, break down any barriers and foster mutual trust and appreciation. These included joint services, events and social activities, including two shared church holidays in 2018 and 2019. We are aware that a similar process of “getting to know you” has already begun between congregations in our proposed Parish Groupings and would expect this to feature in their Local Mission Action Plans.

The Presbytery Mission Plan is a work in progress that will be reviewed annually. Once the Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland is incorporated in the new Presbytery of the North East and Northern Isles, this will become the latter’s responsibility as it seeks to formulate a joint plan for the whole region.

## **6. Support for Congregations and Groupings in Implementing the Plan**

Once approved, implementation will be supported initially by the Standing Committees of the Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland, and thereafter, it is hoped, by the Standing Committees of the new Presbytery of the North East and Northern Isles, namely:

- **Planning and Deployment:** will provide initial guidance to congregations and Parish Groupings on the development of and feedback on their Local Mission Action Plans, and thereafter support for their annual review of these.

- **Congregational Support:** will establish a new scheme for Local Church Review, including guidance, training and follow up, and will support congregations in implementing their subsequent Action Plans.
- **Training and Development for Ministry and Mission:** working in partnership with others, will promote training activities and development opportunities for congregations, including a Local Worship Leaders programme.
- **Church, Society and International:** will facilitate local engagement with political and social issues, encouraging congregations to work for peace, justice and reconciliation.
- **Property and Finance:** will respond to the challenge of climate change, and will also support the work of ecumenical bodies by promoting local inter-church activities.

## 7. New Presbytery

From 1 January 2023 The Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland is uniting with others into The Presbytery of The North East and The Northern Isles. It has been agreed by the six constituent presbyteries that the approved Presbytery Mission Plans of the six existing presbyteries will be amalgamated unchanged to form the first Mission Plan for the united presbytery. It is understood that the new Presbytery will ensure that the commitments of each plan are retained through the first years of the new Presbytery. It is also understood that as each Presbytery Mission Plan is carried on into the Presbytery of The North East and The Northern Isles that, at least in the short term, the decisions as to staffing allocations and the staffing weighting for rural and island areas should be respected as would have been the case in all of the current Presbyteries.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout this process, we have sought the guidance of the Spirit as difficult decisions had to be made and we acknowledge the prayers and support of the many people who have helped us in this task.

We believe that the aims and priorities listed in section 5 and in Appendix 1 provide a set of challenging goals for our congregations to address in their Local Mission Action Plans, and that the arrangements proposed in Appendix 1 make best use of the resources available to us as a Presbytery. We accept, however, that these are likely to be revisited once we become part of a much larger, more diverse Presbytery covering the city of Aberdeen, the towns and villages of Buchan, Gordon, Kincardine & Deeside and Moray, as well as the islands of Orkney and Shetland. We are confident that, guided and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, we can work together to bear witness to the Good News of God's saving love through our words and actions.

We commend the Plan to you.

Eunice McConnach  
Mission Planning Team Convener

## **Appendix 1: Table of Groupings**

### **Key for abbreviations and definitions:**

**“AMBA”** means the Asset Management and Buildings Audit devised by the General Trustees

**“Building Classification”** means the categories specified in the Act, section 2.1.2, namely: (a) to be retained beyond 5 years from the date at which the Mission Plan is approved or annually reviewed; or (b) to be sold, let or otherwise disposed of by a specified date which is within 5 years from the date at which the building is first categorised as (b).

**“congregation”** means an association of persons in a parish whose names are on the Communion Roll and Adherents’ Roll and who are under the pastoral oversight of a minister or ministers (or an Interim Moderator) and a Kirk Session, for Christian worship, fellowship, instruction, Mission and service, as defined in the Act, section 1.1 f).

**“FTE”** mean Full Time Equivalent

**“local congregation”** shall mean part of a congregation as defined above which worships in a particular locality

**“MDS”** means Ministry Development Staff

**“MWS”** means Minister of Word and Sacrament

**“new Presbytery”** means The Presbytery of The North East and The Northern Isles

**“Parish Grouping”** has the meaning assigned to it by the Act section 7.0(8).

**“RT”** means Reviewable tenure

**“the Act”** means the Presbytery Mission Plan Act 2021

**“the Plan”** – the Presbytery Mission Plan 2022 for the Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland and any subsequent Mission Plan for The Presbytery of The North East and The Northern Isles into which it may be incorporated.

**“UT”** means Unrestricted Tenure

**“V”** means Vacant

**“Worship Centre”** means a building where the primary function is worship

## Parish Grouping 1: Brimmond/Bridge of Don Area

Name of Congregation	Congregational Membership 2021	2011 Gross Pop'n	2011 Net Pop'n	Current Status	Plan for congregations by end of Plan	Interim steps required	Total staffing in Plan	Building Classification	Notes		
<b>Bucksburn-Stoneywood</b>	355	4,321		V	2 Parishes, 2 Kirk Sessions, 3 Worship Centres + 2 additional Buildings (The Stables and Dyce Church Hall) for mission and outreach	Union	3 FTE	(b)	Closure date: By 01.10.22		
<b>Dyce</b>	781	5,908	5,262	UT				(a)			
<b>Newhills</b>	305	3,684	3,312	UT				(a)	Subject to review in 3 years-note below		
<b>Bridge of Don, St Columba's</b>	211	11,253	9,835	UT				(a)			
<b>Stockethill</b>	83	4,062	3,360	UT				N/A			
<b>Newhills- The Stables</b>										(a)	
<b>Dyce - Church Hall</b>										(a)	

25,623

### Implementing the Five Marks:

1. Proclaiming the Good News: All congregations in the Grouping will provide opportunities for regular worship in their respective buildings or in the case of Stockethill, its usual places of worship (Community Centre and care homes) and in such other places in their communities as may be agreed with Presbytery.
2. New Believers: The congregations in the Grouping will work together in (i) mission to children, young people and families through schools and other avenues, and (ii) establishing fresh expressions of church in areas of new housing within Grouping area. The experiences of Stockethill should be a valuable resource in this connection.
3. Loving Service: The congregations in the Grouping will work together to help support those in need both within the Grouping Area, and in city wide initiatives such as Instant Neighbour and Living Well Cafe.
4. Transforming Unjust Structures: The congregations in the Grouping are encouraged to engage with the work of the Faith Impact Forum in respect of national and international ventures, and with the Presbytery in respect of local initiatives, to raise awareness of the need to challenge injustice and violence.
5. Creation and Sustainability: The congregations in the Grouping will seek to make the most efficient use of their buildings with a view to reducing their carbon footprints as much as possible. The use of the eco-congregation model is encouraged.

### Aims and Notes:

1. The aim of the Plan by 31.12.25 is to have within the Grouping a maximum of 2 congregations with a total of 3 FTE posts. It is strongly recommended that at least 0.5 FTE will be an MDS post. A post may be shared across the Grouping. The current MDS post at Dyce (0.5) may be changed to a post in the Plan or will be terminated by 31.12.25.

2. It is expected that by 31.12.25 there will be 3 Worship Centres at Bridge of Don St Columba's, Dyce/Newmachar and Newhills, while Stockethill will continue its current worship pattern in Community Centre and care homes. The additional buildings at Dyce Church Hall and The Stables(Newhills) will be used for mission and outreach. The Grouping may organise such satellite worship and fresh expressions activities elsewhere as may be agreed by Presbytery.
3. The categorisation of Newhills Church building will be reviewed 3 years after the Plan comes into effect, taking into account expected residential development in the vicinity and progress with necessary repairs and upgrading of the building.
4. A union has been agreed between Newhills and Bucksburn-Stoneywood to take effect on 01.10.22 under the name of Brimmond Church. As a transitional arrangement, the new charge may appoint a 0.5 FTE MDS post holder, subject to approval of a MDS Recruitment Panel and PMPIG (to ensure it meets the required mission and resource brief), and that for an initial period of 18 months. Thereafter, the staffing within the Grouping may be reviewed to facilitate any necessary re-allocation of resources.
5. It is likely that following the creation of the new larger Presbytery on 01.01 23, a union or linkage between Dyce and Newmachar will take place. A 0.5 FTE post may come from the current Gordon Presbytery allocation if this occurs. The future of the 2 Newmachar buildings is a matter for Gordon Presbytery and ultimately the new Presbytery.
6. With the assistance of the Presbytery Buildings Officer, plans will be prepared for the modernisation and refurbishment of the Dyce church buildings.
7. A Basis of Grouping will be in place by the end of 2023.
8. Bridge of Don St Columba's Church is to continue discussions with Foveran Church (Gordon Presbytery), with a view to exploring the possibility of Foveran becoming a Local Mission Church in union with Bridge of Don St Columba's.
9. The number of congregations and Worship Centres may be reconsidered at the annual review of the Plan.

## Parish Grouping 2: Aberdeen North/High Hilton Area

Name of Congregation	Congregational Membership 2021	2011 Gross Pop'n	2011 Net Pop'n	Current Status	Plan for congregations by end of Plan	Interim steps required	Total staffing in Plan	Building Classification	Notes
<b>Aberdeen North</b>	337		19,486	V-Apr 22	2 Parishes, 2 Kirk Sessions, 2 Worship Centres		5 FTE	(a)	Refurb and extension planned
<b>High Hilton</b>	340	12,027	9,628	UT		(a)			
<b>Woodside</b>	118	7,468	5,731	V		(b)	Closure Date: by 31.12.22		

34,845

### Implementing the Five Marks of Mission:

1. Proclaiming the Good News: Both congregations in the Grouping will provide opportunities for worship in their respective buildings and in such other places in their communities as may be agreed with Presbytery, but particularly in those areas where church buildings have been closed in the recent past.

2. New Believers: Both congregations within their parishes will seek to bring non-church members to Christ, reaching out to families, schools and other groups within their parishes, with the help of Presbytery resources to explore fresh expressions of being church in the community.
3. Loving Service: Both congregations will play their part in supporting those in need within their parishes, where there are areas of deprivation, and in supporting community initiatives, such as the Living Well Café.
4. Transforming Unjust Structures: The congregations in the Grouping are encouraged to engage with the work of the Faith Impact Forum in respect of national and international ventures, and with the Presbytery in respect of local initiatives, to raise awareness of the need to challenge injustice and violence.
5. Creation and Sustainability: Following the closure (or anticipated closure) of a number of buildings in both Parishes, both congregations will seek to make the most efficient use of the buildings to be retained, including the refurbishment of the existing sanctuary and the building of a new hall at Aberdeen North, with the support of a Presbytery Steering Committee, with a view to reducing their carbon footprints as much as possible.

#### Aims and Notes:

1. The aim of the Plan by 31.12.25 is to have in place a Grouping comprising the two congregations of Aberdeen North and High Hilton with a total of 5 FTE posts. It is strongly recommended that at least 2 FTE will be MDS posts, and at least 2 FTE will be MWS posts. The current FT MDS post in each congregation could be changed to a post in the Plan or will be terminated by 31.12.25.
2. It is accepted that both High Hilton and Aberdeen North have gone through significant change in the last 3 years and need a period for consolidation. Accordingly, no action towards a Parish Grouping is envisaged in the first two years of the Plan and the situation will be re-considered whenever the Plan is reviewed annually.
3. Both existing Worship Centres at Aberdeen North and High Hilton will be retained. It had been hoped to build a new church at Aberdeen North but that has proved financially unviable and plans are under way for a refurbishment of the existing sanctuary and construction of a new smaller hall alongside at the current Aberdeen North church site. Use of other premises under room hire or other agreements for fresh expressions of church may be approved by Presbytery.
4. It is hoped that a union between Woodside and High Hilton will be agreed.
5. It is noted that this Grouping contains 11 or more Deprivation Zones and this has been taken into account in the staffing allocations. During the period of the Plan, Presbytery will (i) support High Hilton in establishing a fresh expression of church in the area formerly served by Middlefield Parish Church (now part of High Hilton Parish); (ii) support Aberdeen North by strengthening the range of skills available to the Kirk Session through the appointment of Assessor Elders.
6. Once the future of Woodside is confirmed, it is hoped that the new Presbytery will encourage and support proposals for establishing a fresh expression of church in the Woodside area.

### Parish Grouping 3: Aberdeen West Area

Name of Congregation	Congregational Membership 2021	2011 Gross Pop'n	2011 Net Pop'n	Current Status	Plan for congregations by end of Plan	Interim steps required	Total staffing in Plan	Building Classification	Notes
<b>Craigiebuckler</b>	668	6,248	5,162	UT	2 Parishes each with a ministry team, 2 Kirk Sessions, 4 Worship Centres and 1 additional building at The Hub for mission and outreach	Union	4 FTE	(a)	
<b>Cults</b>	597	9,059	6,948	UT				(a)	
<b>Cults- The Hub</b>								(a)	
<b>Kingswells</b>	265	4,915	3,877	V				(b)	Closure Date: By 30.06.23
<b>Mannofield</b>	744	4,951	4,163	UT				(a)	
<b>Peterculter</b>	463	5,639	4,731	UT				(a)	
<b>Ruthrieston West</b>	187	4,578	3,858	UT				(b)	Closure Date: By 31.12.23

32,586

#### Implementing the Five Marks:

1. Proclaiming the Good News: All congregations in the Grouping will provide opportunities for regular worship in their respective buildings and elsewhere as may be agreed with Presbytery.
2. New Believers: The congregations in the Grouping will work together in (i) mission to children, young people and families through schools and other avenues in the Grouping Area, and (ii) establishing fresh expressions of church in those places within the Grouping area (whether new housing or existing communities) where there is no physical church presence, such as Garthdee including the Robert Gordon University, Countesswells and Kingswells.
3. Loving Service: The congregations in the Grouping will work together to help support those in need both within the Grouping Area, and in city wide initiatives such as Instant Neighbour, Somebody Cares, and the Guild Annual Projects.
4. Transforming Unjust Structures: The congregations in the Grouping are encouraged to engage with the work of the Faith Impact Forum in respect of national and international ventures, and with the Presbytery in respect of local initiatives, to raise awareness of the need to challenge injustice and violence.
5. Creation and Sustainability: The congregations in the Grouping will seek to make the most efficient use of their buildings with a view to reducing their carbon footprints as much as possible. The use of the eco-congregation model is encouraged.

#### Aims and Notes:

1. The aim of the Plan by 31.12.25 is for the Grouping to have a maximum of 2 congregations with a total of 4 FTE posts. It is strongly recommended that at least 0.5 FTE will be an MDS post unless such MDS post is locally funded. Since this Grouping contains a number of large well-endowed congregations, they will be encouraged to reinforce their ministry teams by locally funding MDS post(s). A post or posts may be shared across the Grouping.
2. There will be 4 Worship Centres at Craigiebuckler, Cults, Mannofield and Peterculter as well as the outreach and community facilities at the Hub, Cults. Other locations for fresh expressions of church may be hired or used as may be agreed by Presbytery.
3. A new Basis of Parish Grouping is being formed to include Ruthrieston West.

4. Changes to parish boundaries may take place following approval of the Plan (see General Notes at end).
5. It is possible that as a result of discussions currently in progress, Kingswells may choose to unite with Skene Church (currently in Gordon Presbytery) after the creation of the new Presbytery on 01.01.23. It is hoped that a decision will be made on this possibility by 31.12.22. If Kingswells unite with Skene Church, then a 0.5 FTE post may be allocated from this Grouping to the united charge.
6. It is possible that as a result of discussions currently in progress, Peterculter may choose to unite with Drumoak/Durriss Church (currently in Kincardine and Deeside Presbytery) after the creation of the new Presbytery on 01.01.23. It is hoped that a decision will be made on this possibility by 31.12.22. If Peterculter unite with Drumoak Church, then a 0.5 FTE post may be allocated from this Grouping to the united charge.
7. Following clarification of the above possibilities, the Grouping and Presbytery will review the plans for the number of congregations outlined in section 1 above, and any necessary changes to the Plan will be effected at the annual review.

#### Parish Grouping 4: South Aberdeen Area

Name of Congregation	Congregational Membership 2021	2011 Gross Pop'n	2011 Net Pop'n	Current Status	Plan for congregations by end of Plan	Interim steps required	Total staffing in Plan	Building Classification	Notes	
South St Nicholas Kincorth	274	14,359	11,747	UT	1 Parish, 1 Kirk Session, 1 Worship Centre		2.5 FTE	(b)	Closure Date: By 31.12.23- See note	
Torry St Fittick's	249	11,803	8,596	UT				(a)		
			20,343							

#### Implementing the Five Marks:

1. Proclaiming the Good News: The congregation(s) in the Grouping will provide opportunities for regular worship in their buildings and elsewhere as may be agreed with Presbytery.
2. New Believers: The Grouping will seek to maintain a presence in Kincorth where the church building is to close and to establish fresh expressions of church in the new housing areas of Charleston and Cove.
3. Loving Service: The Grouping will seek to support those in need within the Grouping Area where there are areas of deprivation, and to support community initiatives where possible.
4. Transforming Unjust Structures: The congregations(s) in the Grouping are encouraged to engage with the work of the Faith Impact Forum in respect of national and international ventures, and with the Presbytery in respect of local initiatives, to raise awareness of the need to challenge injustice and violence.
5. Creation and Sustainability: The Grouping will seek to make the most efficient use of their buildings with a view to reducing their carbon footprints as much as possible. The use of the eco-congregation model is encouraged.

#### Aims and Notes:

1. The aim of the Plan by 31.12.25 is to have within the Grouping one congregation with a total of 2.5 FTE posts. It is strongly recommended that at least a 0.5 FTE will be an MDS post. There are currently two 0.5 MDS posts (one a Parish Worker attached to Torry St Fittick's and one a Hub Administrator for both congregations) which are held by the same person. There is a further 1.0FTE MDS post which is vacant, but which it may be possible to fill (subject to the necessary approvals) on a short term basis as a transitional measure. All these MDS posts will be terminated by 31.12.25 unless converted into a post or posts under the Plan.
2. A union of the 2 congregations is anticipated by 31.12.23 with the Worship Centre for the new united charge to be at Torry St Fittick's Church, with additional worship elsewhere as may be agreed with Presbytery. The South St Nicholas Building is due to close by 31.12.23 but since the South St Nicholas manse which is on the same site will be occupied until autumn 2024, the closure date may be reconsidered at the time of the union for security reasons relative to the manse.
3. Following the creation of the new larger Presbytery on 01.01.23, links may be explored with a church or churches in the adjoining Presbytery of Kincardine and Deeside.

#### Parish Grouping 5: Old Aberdeen Area

Name of Congregation	Congregational Membership 2021	2011 Gross Pop'n	2011 Net Pop'n	Current Status	Plan for congregations by end of Plan	Interim steps required	Total staffing in Plan	Building Classification	Notes
<b>Bridge of Don: Oldmachar</b>	153	11,263	9,845	V -RT being sought	2 Parishes, 2 Kirk Sessions, 3 Worship Centres and 1 additional building (Dunbar Halls) for mission and outreach	RT	3.5 FTE	(a)	
<b>St Machar's Cathedral</b>	361	5,134	3,557	UT				(a)	Historic Building
<b>St Machar's - Dunbar Halls</b>								(a)	
<b>St Mary's</b>	248	6,794	4,995	UT				(a)	
<b>St Stephen's</b>	130	7,369	5,060	UT				(b)	Closure Date: by 31.12.25
<b>St George's Tillydrone</b>	71	5,026	4,083	V		Union		(a)	Possible Lease-see below
			26,210						

#### Implementing the Five Marks:

1. Proclaiming the Good News: All congregations in the Grouping will provide opportunities for regular worship in their respective buildings and elsewhere as may be agreed with Presbytery.
2. New Believers: The congregations in the Grouping will work together in (i) mission to the student population in the Grouping Area, and (ii) establishing a fresh expression of church in the Tillydrone area
3. Loving Service: The congregations in the Grouping will work together to help support those in need both within the Grouping Area, where there are areas of deprivation, and to support community initiatives and wider Presbytery initiatives where possible, such as Living Well Café.

4. Transforming Unjust Structures: The congregations in the Grouping are encouraged to engage with the work of the Faith Impact Forum in respect of national and international ventures, and with the Presbytery in respect of local initiatives, to raise awareness of the need to challenge injustice and violence.
5. Creation and Sustainability: The congregations in the Grouping will seek to make the most efficient use of their buildings with a view to reducing their carbon footprints as much as possible. The use of the eco-congregation model is encouraged.

Aims and Notes:

1. The aim of the Plan by 31.12.25 is to have within the Grouping a maximum of two congregations with a total of 3.5 FTE posts. It is strongly recommended that at least 0.5 FTE will be an MDS post. A post may be shared across the Grouping.
2. By 31.12.25, three Worship Centres are envisaged – St Machar’s, St Mary’s and Oldmachar. In addition, the Dunbar Halls will be used for mission and outreach.
3. A union between St George’s Tillydrone and St Machar’s Cathedral has been agreed and will take place in mid-October 2022 under the name of St Machar’s Cathedral, with the Kirk Session of the new charge to decide on a pattern of worship at the St George’s Tillydrone building, subject to the matter in the following note.
4. Negotiations have begun with Tillydrone Community Council with a view to leasing the St George’s building on a Full Repairing and Insuring Lease at a peppercorn rent. This is being followed up locally and by the General Trustees and in due course, by the Law Department. The terms of the Lease will be subject to the approval of the General Trustees, the Law Department, the Presbytery and the relevant Kirk Session. If the Lease goes ahead, it is likely that works will be required to bring the building up to the standard required for such a Lease and funds are available for this work from the previous sale of the St George’s manse. In the event that the Lease does not go ahead, the building will be disposed of.
5. A union is anticipated in due course between St Mary’s and St Stephen’s at which point the building at St Stephen’s will be closed and disposed of. It is hoped that with the support of the Grouping it will be possible to maintain a church presence in the locality of the St Stephen’s building once the building has closed. It is noted that both the Parish of St Stephen’s and the Parish of St Mary’s contain a large amount of student accommodation.
6. The number of congregations and worship centres may be reconsidered at the annual review of the Plan.

## Parish Grouping 6: West End/City Centre/Riverside Area

Name of Congregation	Congregational Membership 2021	2011 Gross Pop'n	2011 Net Pop'n	Current Status	Plan for congregations by end of Plan	Interim steps required	Total staffing in Plan	Building Classification	Notes
Ferryhill	272	6,915	5,271	UT	2 Parishes, 2 Kirk Sessions, with 4 Worship Centres and 1 additional building (Rubislaw Church Centre) for mission and outreach		4 FTE	(a)	
Holburn West	271	4,022	3,130	UT					(b)
Midstocket	381	7,473	5,828	UT				(a)	
Queen's Cross	360	6,815	5,112	V		Union		(a)	
Rubislaw	359	1,970	1,529	UT				(b)	Closure Date: By 31.12.23
Rubislaw - Church Centre								(a)	
St Mark's	338	17,599	12,726	V		Union		(b)	Closure Date: By 31.12.23 Historic Bldg
South Holburn	359	10,019	8,052	UT				(a)	
			41,648						

### Implementing the Five Marks:

1. Proclaiming the Good News: All congregations in the Grouping will provide opportunities for regular worship in their respective buildings and elsewhere as may be agreed with Presbytery.
2. New Believers: The congregations in the Grouping will work together in (i) mission to children, young people and families through schools and other avenues in the Grouping Area, and (ii) establishing a fresh expression of church in the city centre area
3. Loving Service: The congregations in the Grouping will work together to help support those in need both within the Grouping Area, and in city wide initiatives such as Instant Neighbour, Living Well Café, Street Pastors, the Big Issue and the Guild Annual Projects.
4. Transforming Unjust Structures: The congregations in the Grouping are encouraged to engage with the work of the Faith Impact Forum in respect of national and international ventures, and with the Presbytery in respect of local initiatives, to raise awareness of the need to challenge injustice and violence.
5. Creation and Sustainability: The congregations in the Grouping will seek to make the most efficient use of their buildings with a view to reducing their carbon footprints as much as possible. The use of the eco-congregation model is encouraged.

### Aims and Notes:

1. The aim of the Plan by 31.12.25 is for the Grouping to have a maximum of 2 congregations with a total of 4 FTE posts. It is strongly recommended that at least 0.5 FTE will be an MDS post unless such MDS post is locally funded. Since this Grouping contains a number of large well-endowed congregations, they will be encouraged to reinforce their ministry teams by locally funding MDS post(s). A post or posts may be shared across the Grouping. Unions are anticipated between (a) Ferryhill, South Holburn and St Mark's; and (b) Holburn West, Midstocket, Queen's Cross and Rubislaw.
2. There will be 4 Worship Centres at Ferryhill, Midstocket, Queen's Cross and South Holburn as well as the mission and outreach facilities at the Rubislaw Church Centre. Other locations for fresh expressions of church may be hired or used as may be agreed with Presbytery.

3. The current 0.5 MDS post attached to South Holburn will be terminated by 31.12.25 unless converted into a post under the Plan.
4. The fresh expression of church in the city centre may take place in partnership with other denominations and/or action groups such as the Street Pastors.
5. St John's Church for Deaf People whose Minister is directly employed by the Church of Scotland to cover the North Region will be associated with and accommodated by the Grouping.
6. A new Basis of Parish Grouping will be formed once the expected unions have taken place.
7. Changes to parish boundaries may take place following approval of the Plan (see General Notes at end).

### Parish Grouping 7: Shetland

Name of Congregation	Congregational Membership 2021	2011 Gross Pop'n	2011 Net Pop'n	Current Status	Plan for congregations by end of Plan	Interim steps required	Total staffing in Plan	Building Classification	Notes
Parish of Shetland: 1 congregation comprising 12 local congregations: Burra Isle Scalloway Brae Ollaberry Sandwick Lerwick:St Columba's Whalsay Aith Walls Unst St John's Yell Cullivoe St Margaret's, Lunna (congregation without a building)	770 total	23,167	21,661	Team Ministry	1 Parish with a Team Ministry of 3 Charges, 1 Kirk Session		6 FTE - at present 3 MWS, 3 MDS	(a)	The closure and disposal of buildings agreed when Shetland became one Parish is well under way. 11 buildings are being retained as previously agreed.

### Implementing the Five Marks:

1. Proclaiming the Good News: Through the Shetland-wide Ministry Team, the aim is to ensure that all worshipping communities have access to weekly services, whether in person or through live-streaming. In addition, Local Congregations work ecumenically to provide worship to Care Homes. Where village churches have been closed, the Ministry Team is consulting with local communities to see how the Good News can be proclaimed through summertime open air services, and winter time use of public halls.
2. New Believers: Local congregations are key to nurturing disciples throughout Shetland in ways that can be accessed regardless of geographical distance, for example, through Zoom Bible studies and Facebook reflections. Links are being strengthened with schools and youth centres, and Faith at Home materials used by the Children and Families worker. Fresh expressions of church are being explored, for example Forest Church and Messy Church.

3. Loving Service: The Ministry Team and congregations are striving to rebuild social capital damaged by closure of many buildings through service to the community, for example, use of buildings for civic and community purposes. There are strong connections with a Food Bank, Crossreach Care Home , Youth Centres and other community ventures.
4. Transforming Unjust Structures: The Kirk Session has a Church and Society Team which engages with issues of justice and inclusion through presentations from relevant organisations, and engagement with Shetland Inter Faith, as well as encouraging donations to Christian Aid and similar charities. Local congregations are encouraged to engage with the work of the Faith Impact Forum in respect of national and international ventures, and with the Presbytery in respect of local initiatives, to raise awareness of the need to challenge injustice and violence.
5. Creation and Sustainability: There is a keen interest in a transition to green energy given Shetland's involvement in the oil and gas industries. There is also a deep love of the islands and their wildlife and awareness of the need to protect it. The Local congregations that are planning or implementing major refurbishments of their buildings are doing so with a view to reducing their energy use and their carbon footprints as much as possible. The use of the eco-congregation model is encouraged.

**Aims and Notes:**

1. The staffing complement reflects Shetland's weighting as a rural and island parish, and currently includes 3 FTE MDS posts. It is strongly recommended that in the course of the Plan, at least 2 FTE will be MDS posts.
2. It is understood that no change in categorisation of the Shetland buildings is necessary at present, given the very substantial changes previously adopted and largely implemented.

**Total Number of Posts in Plan: 28 including MDS posts**

**General Notes:**

1. The net population figures represent the total population less the number who identify with another faith or denomination. These are from the 2011 Census and now out of date. It is hoped these may be updated at the first Review of the Plan in 2023 with data from the Census carried out in 2022.
2. We understand that existing MDS posts may continue after the approval of the Plan, and provided they are terminated by 31.12.25, these would not count towards the total posts in the Plan. However, it will be possible for some of these posts to "become" posts under the Plan, subject to discussions and negotiation with the Church of Scotland HR department. This allows us to factor in some flexibility during the transition stage towards the reduction in posts required by 31.12.25. The current 0.5 FTE post of Communications Officer will terminate at 31.12.22 as the new Presbytery comes into existence on 01.01.23.
3. These tables focus on what we hope to achieve in terms of staffing by 31.12.25.
4. Many aspects of the Plan may be reconsidered at the statutory annual review of the Plan so that the Plan can be adapted to new circumstances and situations as they arise.

5. Following approval of the Plan, some parish boundary adjustment is likely to take place. For example, these might include (i) the boundary between Aberdeen West Grouping and the West End/City Centre/Ferryhill/Holburn Grouping being redrawn as the line of South Anderson Drive/Anderson Drive from the Bridge of Dee to Westburn Road; (ii) the boundary between West End/City Centre/Ferryhill/Holburn Grouping and Stockethill Parish/Aberdeen North and High Hilton Grouping being redrawn as the line of Westburn Road.

## **Appendix 2:**

### **PRESBYTERY OF ABERDEEN AND SHETLAND PRESBYTERY MISSION PLAN PREPARATION PROCESS**

#### **The Preparation of the Plan**

The Preparation of the Plan will be undertaken by the members of the Planning and Deployment Committee (PDC) of the Presbytery (details of members shown in Appendix A), who for the purpose of this document will be referred to as the Mission Planning Team (MPT).

The Remit of the Mission Planning Team will be as follows:

1. In liaison with the Congregational Stewardship Committee, establish a Task Group (the AMBA Task Group) to carry out the Asset Management and Buildings Audit (AMBA) provided by the General Trustees.
2. Review the work already carried out to establish Parish Groupings under the Presbytery's 2020 Plan (the 2020 Plan) and the results of that work to date.
3. Review the extensive consultations carried out prior to the approval of the 2020 Plan and other subsequent consultations.
4. Prepare a draft Presbytery Mission Plan to be brought to Presbytery for discussion in accordance with the Timetable shown below. The general principle underpinning the Presbytery Mission Plan will be the creation of Parish Groupings and Team Ministries with variations where appropriate.
5. Review feedback to the draft Mission Plan and submit a final Plan for approval by Presbytery in accordance with the Timetable shown below.

The Powers of the Mission Planning Team shall include: requesting statistical data for congregations from the Presbytery records.

#### **Conflicts of interest**

To prevent conflicts of interest, no member of the MPT shall participate or vote on any issue relating to their own congregation or another congregation in the same Grouping. Within the AMBA Task Group, no member of the Group may carry out the Audit in relation to a church of which they are a member or a church in the same active or proposed (under the 2020 Plan) Parish Grouping.

#### **Good Practice**

Good practice will include keeping accurate notes of meetings of the MPT, and of meetings between MPT members and representatives of Kirk Sessions/Congregations/Parish Groupings. Such notes will be shared only with the parties attending the meetings and in strict confidentiality with members of the MPT. The Presbytery Clerk will attend such meetings at his discretion and may carry out checks to ensure good practice is being observed. The MPT will be able to request administrative support from the Presbytery Office.

#### **Consultation Process**

It is noted that substantial consultation was carried out by the Presbytery of Aberdeen from 2018-2020 in connection with the preparation of the 2020 Plan. In addition, prior to the coming into being of the Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland, it is noted that a very radical re-organisation of the

parishes of the then Presbytery of Shetland took place resulting in the creation of a single Parish of Shetland with a team ministry which then became part of the 2020 Plan. Given these circumstances, consultation with the Parish of Shetland has already begun around staffing numbers but no structural or organisational changes are envisaged for the Parish of Shetland.

In July 2021, all Kirk Sessions were sent a summary of the Mission Plan Act and relative Guidance and asked to provide comments and suggestions to the Planning and Deployment Committee by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021. A considerable volume of feedback was received from that exercise. The MPT has reviewed the results of all consultations to date and may consult with individual Ministers, Kirk Sessions and Parish Groupings (active or anticipated) as required and appropriate throughout the preparation of the draft Mission Plan. It is accepted that there will be different degrees of change in different Parishes and Groupings requiring different levels of discussion and consultation – it is not a “one size fits all” approach. The MPT may also consult with the Facilitators appointed by the Planning and Deployment Committee to the proposed or active Parish Groupings under the 2020 Plan.

### **Working with neighbouring Presbyteries**

In light of the planned Presbytery of the North East and Northern Isles, the MPT will continue to consult with the Planning Convenors of neighbouring Presbyteries as to the possibility of cross border linkages/unions/groupings and generally as to the compatibility of the Mission Plans of the individual Presbyteries. Contact will also be maintained with the Joint Steering Committee for the Presbytery of the North East and Northern Isles.

### **Criteria to be used by Presbytery in making judgement calls on Mission Plan issues**

Where judgement calls require to be made in relation to Mission Plan issues, for example: building categorisation, allocation of ministry posts to Parishes, Groupings and Presbytery-wide appointments, etc, Presbytery will have regard to the following considerations:

- The Five Marks of Mission as set out in the Presbytery Mission Plan Act.
- The results of the AMBA process.
- The general principle of creating Parish Groupings and Team Ministries which will underpin the Mission Plan.
- The needs of specific parishes or communities which emerge in course of consultation.
- Any other information relevant to the particular issue.

Where such decisions are made, Presbytery and the MPT will make clear so far as possible the grounds on which the decisions have been made. It is accepted, however, that Presbytery and the MPT may hold sensitive or confidential information which it is not appropriate to put in the public domain.

### **Timetable**

The anticipated timetable will be as follows:

May 2022:

Presentation of the draft Presbytery Mission Plan at a Special Meeting of Presbytery with all congregations invited to send two representatives. Discussion and feedback will take place at this meeting.

September 2022:

Presentation of the Presbytery Mission Plan for approval by Presbytery at a Special Meeting for the purpose.

Updates on progress will be given to the Presbytery Business and Finance Committee at their regular meetings.

Appendix A

Mrs Eunice McConnach

Mrs Hazel Hewitt

Rev Kenneth Petrie

Mr Richard Little

Miss Pauline Alexander

Mr George McLeod

Rev Jonny Clipston

Mr Alex Nicholson

Mrs Mary Crawford

Dr Graeme Roberts

Mr Bill Falconer

Mr Alan Smith

Mrs Lorna Glen

Rev Dr Joseph Somevi

Rev Dr Fran Henderson

Mr John Telfer



## The Presbytery of Buchan – Mission Plan 2022 Committee

### Presbytery Plan

#### Vision Statement

Our vision is for a network of faithful, sustainable churches in recognizable communities: where the Good News of the Kingdom of God is proclaimed in worship, outreach and service with all generations in ways that are relevant in today's culture, helping people outside the church family take steps closer to Jesus - where new believers are invited, taught, baptized and nurtured in faith in appropriate gatherings and groups - where believers respond together to human need by loving service in and with their communities - where the local church prays for and engages with activities and organisations that work to transform unjust structures of society, challenges violence of every kind and pursues peace and reconciliation - where all generations strive together to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

#### Our History as the people of God in Buchan

When we are facing up to great changes and are unsure of our way forward we often turn to the past to where we have been in order to trace how we got to where we are. Partly this is to make sure we carry our origin stories on with us but it is also a search for clues from the past which may help us address the future. This is natural to Christians because we have as our source of wisdom and knowledge the books of the Bible cherished and studied over many generations. We instinctively look for occasions in the experience of the past generations of the faithful which might help us interpret our experiences now. The past will not show us what we should do in the future. The past is not somewhere we can live or even return to. For humanity time moves only forward in a linear manner. However, despite the great emphasis in the textbooks of transition and change in finding new solutions, there is also value in looking back to see how our ancestors in the faith coped with the changing times they lived through.

In a post-Christian society we find ourselves facing the kind of hostile environment that the first Christians found when they came to the North-East of Scotland some time in the sixth century AD. They encountered a mixed Pictish-Gaelic society with its own traditions of organisation and belief. The Pictish kingdoms of Fortriu and Ce are enjoying a period of intense study by archaeologists and historians in our time. This year the Book of Deer has returned to the North-East for an all too brief visit. Study of this earliest book known to have been made in Scotland have revealed a time of transition from Pictish kingdoms to the early Scottish kingdom that came about during the reign of Kenneth MacAlpin. Recent excavations at Portmahomack have revealed the only evidence for the making of vellum for books ever found in Scotland and they have led to a significant reinterpretation of the importance of Christianity in the Fortriu and Ce. Ce, the land in which we now live was once the possession of a Pictish Clann Ci, the Clann of the Dog which Mary Melville in her recent book about the Book of Deer connects to the many doodles and drawings of dogs which appear in the manuscript. These were not any old mongrels however, these Ci were the Pictish war hounds. The most spectacular physical evidence for the Pictish church lies further West of us in Moray around Kinedder, in Portmahomack and Rosemarkie where there are many carved stones and excavation has revealed rich artefactual and structural

evidence. In our area even the location of the original abbey of Deer is unknown and other sites are complicated by later Christian structures building on the past important places. The names of Saints Drostan, Colm, Fergus and Modan along with Nechtan and Uinniu (or Finnan), the legends and hagiography held in the Aberdeen Breviary and the evidence of the Book of Deer with its wonderful illustrations of monks and priests give us a partial picture of how things might have been. Many of the figures in the book are holding little box shrines which look like the Monymusk Reliquary and may have held tiny books such as the Book of Deer along with bottles of anointing oil or reserved sacrament and the vessels for Eucharist. Many of our later church buildings bear the names of these very local saints though not all can be trusted as attributions with true history as we would know it behind them. Claiming the founder to be an important saint is a practice well known from early mediaeval times on.

The origin story of Christianity in North-East Scotland begins with the landing at Aberdour of St Drostan. The founding of a monastery at New Aberdour was followed by an inland monastery at Deer. The ruins of the 13th century abbey at Deer still mark where a later expression of monasticism was run under the Benedictine Rule. Now the ruins are preserved by Historic Environment Scotland and open to all who visit. There is a whole society dedicated to the Book of Deer Project and they have been deeply involved with the new excavations at Deer and the promotion of the visit of the Book to its homeland from the confines of the library of Cambridge University. This is all evidence of the continued interest of modern people in the history of life here in the North-East. An interest which sadly has not led to more members for the latest expression of Church here but is an important string in our ongoing mission as a church community. This is our history before it is anyone else's. Without the monks of Aberdour and Deer there would have been no church growing in the early mediaeval period of the North-East.

The very fact that we cannot identify the first abbey at Deer and are only turning up scanty evidence from the small trenches opened in the last few years is not surprising. The excavations at Portmahomack run by Martin Carver and the University of York revealed unexpected archaeological riches in a place that is no longer central to modern society. The church of the past moved with its people. From an entirely rural economy to the fishing towns and the urban centres of our time. From the old church of Marnoch to the post disruption Free Church in Aberchirder. Time and time again the church has moved to be where people are. Christianity is not dependent on its buildings, it is an entirely portable faith. All that we need is contained in our scriptures and in the history of which we, as the church in Buchan are the latest expression.

The shape and the location of the church in our time has moved through times of change from conversion to reformation, to disruption to transformation from Christendom based thinking to the new missional landscape which we are just beginning to explore. If we can use this plan for FTEs, sustainable communities of faith and buildings to move us out further into the new landscape of faith that we inherit in our time we will be following in the footsteps of our forbears in the faith. No matter the cost, they packed their books and vessels and carried them to the next location of mission to the people of the North -East all through our history.

Our ancestors have proven to us already the validity of our quest to let form follow function in the church of our time. The structure should form to serve the mission. Our mission is to spread the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ not to maintain the shape of the church, preserved as if it was an exhibit of the National Trust for Scotland and not a living home for people of faith.

## Introduction to the planning Process

The Mission Plan you are reading now began with the work of Buchan Presbytery's strategy Group. Members of the Strategy Group, in teams of two, visited every congregation in the Presbytery via Zoom during the lockdown of 2020-2021. We asked each congregation the same questions (see Appendix A).

At the end of the Strategy Group's Consultations the Business Committee of Presbytery appointed the Mission Plan 2022 Committee to produce this Mission Plan. Our appointment was endorsed at the June 2021 meeting of Presbytery and we began work immediately.

The Mission Plan Act of 2021 states that :

*2.1.1 A Mission Plan shall describe how the Church of Scotland's engagement with Christ's Mission is to be shaped and resourced in the following five years and to that end shall*  
*iv)*

*i. ensure that the life of the Church of Scotland is shaped around Mission and adequately reflects the outcomes of Local Church Review and ideas for local mission;*

*ii. sustain the commitment to a territorial ministry as described in the Third of the Articles Declaratory appended to the Church of Scotland Act 1921 and affirmed in Declaratory Act V 2010 including its commitment to ecumenical working;*

*iii. make appropriate use of such ministry posts as may be permitted by the General Assembly so that the number of post holders in each Presbytery conforms to the numbers and time- scales set by the General Assembly;*

*iv. ensure that new ways of being Church, other than stipendiary Ministers of Word and Sacrament or traditional MDS appointments, are reflected in the Mission Plan;*

*2.1.2 In doing so the Presbytery will categorise each ecclesiastical building as either:-*

*(a) to be retained beyond the five years from the date at which the Mission Plan is approved or annually reviewed, or*

*(b) to be sold, let or otherwise disposed of by a specified date which is within five years from the date at which the ecclesiastical building is first categorised as (b).*

From the answers given to the Strategy Group, the Mission Plan Committee sought patterns of friendship and working together already existing between our congregations that could be the basis of groupings for our Presbytery Plan. We heard that there were significant cultural and theological differences between town and country areas and between fishing and farming areas. There were also differences between active fishing communities and heritage fishing communities that were now more geared towards tourism and other industries.

We sent out a workload Proforma to all ministers and Interim Moderators respecting the confidentiality of those who filled it in and this helped us to see the scale of the work undertaken by our present ministers, interim moderators and locums.

We followed up the Strategy Group's questionnaire with one of our own (See Appendix) which sought to understand how our congregations were already showing the five marks of mission and where these marks needed more focussed effort in the future in order to fulfil the requirements of the Radical Action Plan.

We also held a zoom consultation with our Presbytery's team of readers asking them their views on how they would fit into new groupings and new ways of working across the Presbytery.

All of these consultations have led to more work for the constituent committees of our existing Presbytery, work which we hope will continue into the new Presbytery of the North-East and Northern Isles.

Using this information we called meetings of eight suggested Groupings across the Presbytery area and prepared a response form (see Appendix) to be used after the grouping meetings. We also made a suggested allocation of FTE posts for each grouping and set off to hold the first eight meetings in real life at the end of the second lock down between the 24<sup>th</sup> February and the 24<sup>th</sup> March. We did not feel that these meetings should be online for the sake of open discussion.

## **Core values for the planning process**

Our aim for these meetings was to work from the grassroots up to form our plan. We set core values for the resulting planning process. The Plan itself must be :

### **Honest**

There must be Integrity and openness in discussion and the decision-making process e.g. no member of the committee would make a decision on their own charge and its buildings

### **Sustainable**

The Mission Plan must propose sustainable groupings and congregations in buildings that are affordable and fit for purpose.

### **Workable**

The proposals in the new plan must be feasible, effectual and achievable.

### **Flexible**

We have to leave room for the Holy Spirit to work in ways we cannot plan for and for the groupings to find ways of working together that are unique to their situation. In the midst of a massive paradigm shift in Western society, we cannot be sure where new things are emerging. Whilst planning is essential for making the best use of limited resources, we must remain flexible and recognise the sovereignty of God. It is not 'our' church. It is the church of Jesus Christ. God will build His church and we are to be partners.

### **Grass Roots**

The local grassroots congregation is still relevant and central to God's purposes in our Presbytery, loving and serving the people of their parish and providing the ordinances of religion in that place for the whole population. This makes the Church of Scotland expression of church distinctive in our country.

William Temple once said that the Church is the only institution that exists primarily for the benefit of those who are not its members. This means that all strategic decisions have to be made on the basis of missional, and not merely congregational, considerations. Jesus Christ came not to be served but to serve and the Church is not above its Head.

### **Missional**

Originally developed within the Church of England in 1984, the five marks of mission have become widely accepted by many Christian Denominations. In October 2020, the General Assembly agrees that for the Church of Scotland to be fit for purpose in the 21st Century the 5 marks of mission must be in evidence a local, regional and national levels. The 2021 GA agreed that these 5 marks of mission must be central to Presbytery Planning.

The five marks of mission are:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth



## Our Five Marks of Mission

Another way of understanding the five marks of mission is

- Witness to Christ's saving, forgiving, reconciling love for all people
  - Build welcoming, transforming communities of faith
  - Stand in solidarity with the poor and needy
  - Challenge violence, injustice and oppression, and work for peace and reconciliation
  - Protect, care for, and renew life on our planet
- (Used by the Anglican Board of Mission in Australia)

Due to the breath of the church and the diversity of the local context, there will be many ways the marks of mission are understood and implemented.

### Allocation of FTEs

The number of full time equivalent posts (FTE) allocated by the Faith Nurture Forum for the Presbytery of Buchan is 14.

At the beginning of the process we hoped to have the equivalent of 2 FTE used for MDS roles in mission development, envisaging a team that could work across the whole Presbytery, however as the process continued we have found this impossible to sustain.

We used the workload pro forma, population statistics and the committee's knowledge of the geography of our Presbytery along with an assessment of how many other denominations of mainline churches are working in the different grouping areas to allocate the FTEs across our Presbytery. This was done before the grouping meetings took place. In the course of discussion with the groupings and at Presbytery we modified the allocation and reformed the plan to include two 0.5 FTE posts to develop a new form of church in Mintlaw, identified by Grouping 1 as an area of growth and missional opportunity, and in Turriff, a centre for the whole of the Western half of Presbytery which is a hub for youth organisations and the gathering of young people in the evenings. We have tried to balance the need for new development with the needs of our established worshipping communities. We have one FTE retained for 2, 0.5 FTE, Presbytery wide posts in mission development. One of these is presently filled by our MDS worker, Janet Dick who is working on the development of new missional opportunities with adults. The other post will be focussed on enabling children's and youth work across Presbytery. In a rapidly changing environment the Church of Scotland needs

flexibility and responsiveness in its structures with the ability to recognise new opportunities as well as sustaining mission bearing fruit which is already present. We have also allocated some 0.5 FTE posts to other groupings with the expectations that they will be used creatively to develop new mission work.

### **Grouping Meetings**

We used the same Presentation with individual grouping statistics slide for each meeting.

At least three members of the MP2022 Committee went to each meeting, one chairing, one leading worship, one taking a minute and often one providing refreshments in the neutral meeting places hired for the occasion. We asked each congregation to send three representatives plus their minister or Interim Moderator to the meeting and hired halls big enough for covid safe meetings.

We listened to the views expressed at these meetings, heard where we had been mistaken in our assumptions made from the Strategy Group discussion and also encountered the first major point of criticism of the process we were using. Most people felt that they needed to see the whole allocation of FTEs across the Presbytery and the shape of the other groupings before they decided whether the suggested grouping was the best one for their congregations. This information was made available after the Grouping meeting held on the 24<sup>th</sup> March.

Two of our congregations moved grouping after their first meeting. We had to go back to three of our groupings for further discussion after their response forms fed back unhappiness with their situation. Meetings to discuss a Mission Narrative for each grouping followed where groupings of congregations were happy to work together, some facilitated by the MP 2022 committee and some by the groupings themselves.

Throughout this series of meetings our congregations' representatives have travelled a great distance from their comfort zones. They have engaged with 'thinking outside the box' and have travelled paths which were previously seen as closed to them or too radical to be contemplated. They have taken this thinking back to their congregations for discussion and sent back responses. The MP2022 committee has been humbled by the willingness of the folk of our Presbytery to do what has to be done in order to prioritize missional practice and to reorganize around our FTE allocation. We are phenomenally proud of what they have done, have offered to do and are doing to serve our Lord Jesus Christ in Buchan. They have done this despite the lack of an explanation for the size and speed of the changes required.

As a result of this process we have eight Groupings in this Draft Plan.

**Each of the groupings has contributed a mission narrative or vision statement as part of this process and which we have included to ensure the voices of a whole Presbytery are heard. This plan is our Presbytery Plan formed by the representatives of all the congregations of Buchan Presbytery who have worked with the Mission Plan 2022 Committee to facilitate change within the restrictions which our FTE allocation puts on us.**

During our discussion and the formation of the groupings we have advocated the redrawing of boundaries to form groupings and the dissolution of some linkages to allow change to happen. This will have to be addressed by our new Presbytery in the implementation phase of this planning cycle.

The terms and abbreviations listed below are used in the following tables.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
FTE	Number of full time equivalent posts allocated to this grouping
Population	The population of the parish as found in the Statistics for Mission produced by the Church of Scotland
Nett population	The population of the parish who do not identify as another religion or denomination of Christianity and therefore may look to their parish church for the ordinances of religion
Church	The designation of this building by the Mission Plan as either A to be retained beyond the five years from the date at which the Mission Plan is approved or annually reviewed, or B to be sold, let or otherwise disposed of by a specified date which is within five years from the date at which the ecclesiastical building is first categorised as B
Hall	See definition for Church, above
Members	The number of members on the roll of the congregation from the last available statistical return

## The Groupings and their Mission Narrative

Grouping 1						
Congregation	Membership	Parish Population	Nett Population	FTE	Church*	Hall*
Cruden	310	3,502	3,047		A	A
St. Fergus	150	1,118	1,008		B 2023	B 2023
Deer	528	3,274	2,947	2.5	B 2024	A
Longside	365	3,342	3,075		A	A
New Deer	238	1,703	1,515		B 2023	A
Maud and Savocho	168	1,880	1,654		A	A
<b>Total</b>	<b>988</b>	<b>14,819</b>	<b>13,246</b>	<b>2.5</b>		

\* If B, disposal by end of stated year

### Mission Narrative : Grouping One

The grouping stretches from the parish of New Deer in the west, to the parish of Cruden in the east with the parish of St Fergus on the northern edge, and includes the parishes of Maud and Savocho, Deer and Longside. Much of the area is dependent on agriculture, with Peterhead, the biggest whitefish port in Europe close by. The St Fergus Gas Terminal, which receives around 25% of the UK's natural gas lies within the grouping. Due to the scattered rural nature of the grouping transport links and the road infrastructure are sometimes not ideal. Public transport is limited - especially at weekends.

The grouping is made up of largely rural communities. The biggest and fastest growing community is Mintlaw (pop. 2,800 est.) situated at the centre of the grouping and served by the parishes of Deer & Longside. Also located at Mintlaw is the Academy, with a current role of c. 850 pupils. This is expected to increase in the coming years. Most of the grouping fits within the Mintlaw Academy catchment zone, with the exception of the Parishes of Cruden and St Fergus.

Historically, the spiritual centre of the grouping is Deer. According to tradition a Cistercian Abbey was founded in 1219 under the patronage of William Comyn, Lord of Badenoch and Earl of Buchan. There was also an earlier monastic community, which according to tradition was founded by Saint Columba and Saint Drostan. Deer is perhaps best known for the Book of Deer, a tenth century illuminated 'Gospel Book' which includes 12<sup>th</sup> century additions in Old Irish and Scottish Gaelic. The book contains the earliest surviving Gaelic writing from Scotland.

The congregations within the grouping have all been active in mission and reaching out to their local communities. Along with offering a pastoral ministry and the ordinances of religion, there are a broad range of activities aimed at children and young families including Messy Church, Godly Play, Sunday School, youth work and uniformed organisations. Outreach to adult and older people includes hospitality through cafes, lunch clubs, craft, and friendship and walking groups, plus a men's fitness group. There is wide use of social and printed media. Opportunities for spiritual and faith nurture are met through weekly worship. several study

and prayer groups, and special services and activities which reflect the major festivals such as Harvest, Easter, and Christmas.

There is no doubt that the Covid pandemic has severely damaged missional practice. What has gone before may no longer work or be sustainable in the present and a new focus is required for the future. Central to this is developing and nurturing the faith and gifts of the people of God. Growing members as disciples is viewed as essential for the future mission of the grouping. The scattered nature of the grouping also presents challenges in maintaining a physical presence in each community. Buildings that are retained should be open during the week and become a natural part of the day-to-day activities of the community. Church groups such as the Guild could come together and form networks of fellowship.

The development of teams of suitably gifted people could lead worship and offer pastoral care and support to nursing homes. In a similar way, the experience of children's ministry could lead to the further development of Messy Church (for example) working across the grouping. Creating partnerships with caring agencies and support groups could enable the church to contribute to the increasing problem of social isolation and loneliness. Promoting Christian heritage also offers significant opportunities for mission with the high level of interest in Deer Abbey and the Book of Deer. The worship and activities of the grouping broadly reflect many of the 5 marks of mission. Given the nature of the wide and scattered grouping, accompanied with the reduction of staffing, care and attention will be required to ensure that future mission is focused and sustainable to avoid overstretch and burnout. Developing the use of online groups, the streaming of worship and use of social media will also be necessary. Also, what opportunities are available for building relationships with people who would not usually attend church or connect with current activities?

Presbytery invites the grouping to think out of the box and experiment with an alternative model of church or missional activity. Regarding Mintlaw, the Committee see this as an area of missional priority and recommend that the 0.5 FTE is used to develop a physical, mainstream Christian presence within this community. This will require a degree of experimentation and reflective practice. There are numerous possibilities of additional funding.

### **FTE allocation**

This grouping is a large geographical area made up of a network of scattered inland and coastal communities without good transport links. In order to support and enable grassroots worshipping communities in their mission we have allocated 2 FTE ministers of words and sacrament.

Mintlaw is the fastest growing neighbourhood without a mainstream church presence in this grouping. It has the obvious potential for the formation of a new worshipping community. A 0.5 FTE post is allocated to develop this new area of work.

### **The Way Forward**

1. Reduce FTE allocation to 2.5 for the grouping
2. Form a Steering Group with representatives from all the congregations in the grouping to :
  - a) Develop a more detailed mission plan by the end of 2023, outlining achievable missional goals for this planning cycle.
  - b) Bring together a United Kirk Session for the grouping by the end of 2025.
  - c) Develop teams of suitable people to lead worship and offer pastoral care alongside the FTEs.

- d) Enable the formation of an emerging worshipping community in Mintlaw.

### **Buildings**

New Deer Church centre is a multi-functional well-equipped space and already in use for worship as well as missional activity and a well appreciated community cafe. Maud and Savoich is a church in good repair with a hall that is well used.

Deer Church has the potential for development as (a) a centre for the celebration and promotion of the Christian heritage of Buchan, including, but not limited to, the Book of Deer and Deer Abbey, (b) a component part, together with Aberdour Church, of the proposed Pilgrimage Path from New Aberdour to Deer, (c) a resource facility for the Presbytery as a place of spiritual retreat and (d) an exhibition space for other local heritage bodies.

Partnership with other organisations and funding bodies, together with ecumenical work with St Drostan's, the Scottish Episcopal Church in Old Deer, would be envisaged. The building is placed in category B, with a date of release of 2024, to allow time for exploring the viability of the whole project outlined in the foregoing paragraph, to include identifying partners in the project and investigation of funding possibilities.

St Fergus' buildings are in poor repair but there is a good community centre suitable for regular community worship and mission and Longside and Cruden are both serving a number of widespread communities at the eastern edge of the grouping.

Longside and Cruden Churches are both in good condition and there are no suitable alternative premises for Christian worship in the vicinity.

<b>Grouping 2 - Peterhead</b>						
<b>Congregation</b>	<b>Membership</b>	<b>Parish Population</b>	<b>Nett Population</b>	<b>FTE</b>	<b>Church*</b>	<b>Hall*</b>
<b>Peterhead St. Andrews</b>	346	7,021	5,460	1.5	B†	B†
<b>Peterhead New</b>	461	13,536	10,935		B†	B†
<b>Muckle Kirk</b>					B*	
<b>Total</b>	<b>807</b>	<b>20,557</b>	<b>16,395</b>	<b>1.5</b>		

† B, pending review not later than June 2024.

\* Peterhead New have been working towards the transfer of The Muckle Kirk to a community partnership and this process is ongoing but should be over soon so there is no point in adding a date to it.

### **Mission Narrative : Peterhead Grouping**

The proposed group consists of the 2 parishes in Peterhead (Peterhead New Parish Church and St. Andrews Parish Church) and through a union with Peterhead West Associate church in the 1990s, the fishing community of Boddam to the south.

Peterhead is the largest white fish port in Europe and the largest town in Aberdeenshire with a population of 20,557. Main employers are fishing and associated industries along with North Sea oil and gas industries. There are 7 Primary schools, including Boddam, 1 Special Needs School and a secondary school. Part of the parish is identified as an area of deprivation, according to the 2020 SIMD Figures (Scottish Indices of Multiple Deprivation) with 9 of the data zones placing us at the bottom of Aberdeenshire. There are identified strategic needs in health, employment and support for young people.

The majority of the population profess to be White Scottish with a significant minority speaking a language other than English. 20% of the population are skilled traders. Just over a quarter of the population profess affiliation to the Church of Scotland.

We aim to encourage existing members to attend Sunday worship whilst welcoming and encouraging engagement of all visitors and groups. We have had a number of non-English speakers who have come recently and we have been able to facilitate access to English Language classes both formally and informally.

Each congregation has demonstrated a significant level of commitment in lengthy periods of vacancy leading to a Union six years ago for Peterhead Old and Peterhead Trinity, with acknowledgement given to interim moderators, readers, officebearers, members and volunteers who have kept their churches as a witness, firmly at the heart of their communities.

The present picture includes many areas of practical Christian service - Coffee Mornings, Groups for ladies and men, Conversation Cafe for non-English speakers, Guild, informal visits to care homes and families in the community, Scottish Week Involvement through hosting events, prayer and bible study, much appreciated visits to schools and care homes, partnership events including Holiday Club, supporting the Ekwendeni Community in Malawi, Christian Aid, Blythswood, emergency appeals.

Looking ahead, we wish to embrace the 5 Marks of Mission, pooling our resources, to be the best we can be while constantly looking outwards to engage with other faith groups in our community and more than half the population who do not profess any faith.

It should be noted that planned projects can fit into more than one of the Marks for Mission.

**Tell (Proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom)**

Through different worship styles using modern technology, including the facility to livestream, social media and web sites, considering also, worship outside the confines of a building, schools links, care home links, inter-generational worship.

**Teach (teach, baptise and nurture new believers)**

Faith – sharing course, Girls Brigade, Guild, Children’s Church, family worship, adult Bible Study, Prayer, continuing relationships with families after baptism, church magazine, School Chaplaincy, inter-generational events e.g. Easter Egg Hunt.

**Tend (respond to human need by loving service)**

Sharing Larder, coffee mornings, after church flower delivery, warm hub, parent and tots group, holiday club, after church teas and coffees, informal visits to members and adherents, lifts to church.

**Transform (transform unjust structures of society, challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation)**

Build on links with Christian Aid, Blythswood, Ekwendeni (Malawi) and related humanitarian projects, including the 3-yearly cycle of Guild projects, Inter-generational events.

**Treasure (strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth)**

Identify and develop being eco-friendly as we look to make our church environments more suited to the demands of ‘doing church in a different way’, focus on recycling, beach clean.

The 2 congregations face significant challenge in moving forward towards a union, as realisation dawns that everyone has to make sacrifices, letting go of what's familiar and held dear while grasping a different way of thinking and working.

Looking ahead, we can build on the success of the Holiday Club, where the team comprised members from both congregations and from the local Congregational Church. The Guilds offer an opportunity for closer working together and already, invitations to Bible Study and prayer have been exchanged.

The Peterhead Grouping has significant missional challenges and opportunities. Looking to the future The 2022 Mission Plan Committee suggests that Presbytery instructs the Kirk Session to develop a mission strategy. This should include identifying current provision of help and support within the town and developing working close relationships with appropriate partner groups. The grouping may further benefit from the support of the Mission Committee of the new Presbytery to facilitate this process.

There has been a long journey taken in this grouping which has meant confronting past disagreements and forging new relationships. Moving forward together, this grouping needs to be given time to decide what buildings they need for the mission they will develop together. There is not enough hall space at Peterhead New and the 2 congregations have already used the hall at St Andrew's to host their joint Summer Mission. The loss of the Muckle Kirk in the last years has already reduced the number of buildings in the largest and busiest town in the Presbytery. Money is not as readily available as it used to be for them to buy or rent space in the already busy halls in the town and work with the poor and disadvantaged will require hospitality and storage space.

## **Allocation of FTE**

Peterhead is a concentrated urban area with many denominations and Christian fellowships. It is also a town with significant social needs which have been identified by the congregations. These challenges should be addressed by ecumenical partnership.

The uniting congregation in Peterhead has been allocated 1.5 FTE envisaged as 1 FTMWS and 0.5 MDS post to develop work with children and families.

## **The Way Forward**

Steering Group - A Steering group with representatives of both congregations should be formed as soon as possible to:

- a) Develop an achievable mission plan within 18 months. This should include a survey of work already being done in the town by other groups.
- b) Work together towards a union of Peterhead New and Peterhead St Andrew's within 12 months.
- c) To use the developed mission plan to decide which buildings they need. Any buildings kept must be justified by missional need and financial sustainability. Until these decisions are made both buildings should be categorised as B pending review no later than June 2024.

<b>Grouping 3 - Fraserburgh</b>						
<b>Congregation</b>	<b>Membership</b>	<b>Parish Population</b>	<b>Nett Population</b>	<b>FTE</b>	<b>Church*</b>	<b>Hall*</b>
<b>Fraserburgh Old</b>	410	13,323	10,906	2	B 2023	A
<b>Fraserburgh West</b>	390				B 2023	A
<b>Fraserburgh South</b>	233				A	A
<b>Inverallochy and Rathen East</b>	65	1,747	1,394		A	
<b>Pitsligo</b>	75	1,427	1,148		A	A
<b>Rathen West</b>	69	689	602		B 2023	
<b>Sandhaven</b>	64	824	704		B 2023	
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,306</b>	<b>18,010</b>	<b>14,754</b>	<b>2</b>		

\* If B, disposal by end of stated year

### **Mission Narrative : Fraserburgh Grouping**

Fraserburgh is the largest shellfish port in Scotland and a major port for whitefish. Fishing and the associated support industries have a major impact on the history, economy and social context of town and surrounding area. The congregations represented in the grouping have each in their own unique way demonstrated a significant level of commitment. Despite the lack of full-time leadership, and the challenges posed by Covid 19, they have continued to maintain worship and serve the local communities. Credit is due to the interim moderators, locums, office bearers, members and volunteers who have kept alive the light of faith within the tradition of the Church of Scotland.

The present picture includes many areas of practical Christian service. Support for foodbanks, needy families & local charities, Christian Aid, visiting the elderly and housebound, thrift shop, cafe etc. There are a wide range of organisations offering friendship and fellowship. Study groups, sermons and fellowship evenings offer opportunities for faith nurture. Efforts have been made to make buildings more accessible and are regularly used by a variety of community groups. There is clear evidence of outreach to families, children and young people with a church led nursery, family services, Sunday School, a wide range of well supported uniformed organisations, Junior Badminton and contact with local schools. Seasonal events include Remembrance Sunday, Summer Fete, a Christmas Bazaar and festive services.

Looking to the future, there is a clear desire to see the new grouping prosper with closer working relationships. Aspirations include encouraging the return of regular worshippers who stopped attending due to Covid. The emphasis on practical Christian service is also part of the future vision. This includes continuing to support foodbanks and help to address the high levels of poverty within the local communities. Children's and families' work could be further bolstered by restarting Messy Church and a Summer Holiday Club. Outreach to the elderly is also a priority, with an emphasis on more social gathering and support for dementia sufferers and their families. The renewal of worship also featured. There is a desire to end the current ambiguity and have the continuity of a minister to lead and guide.

The Fraserburgh Grouping face significant challenges in moving forward, especially in the formation of a single town congregation and developing sustainable working relationships with the surrounding rural communities. This will require the willingness to accept and adapt to the new reality. Regarding mission, the grouping already has significant strengths and reflects many of the marks of mission.

Looking to the future the 2022 Mission Plan Committee believes that to fully express the 5 marks of mission the grouping should:

- Explore new ways of communicating and proclaiming the Gospel. Examples include enhancing the use of the internet and social media.
- Explore new ways of faith nurture. Examples could include Emmaus, Alpha, online Bible Study, Reading Groups.
- Explore the formation of alternative worshipping communities.

In striving to safeguard the integrity of creation, the grouping should explore ways of further promoting the work of organisations like Christian Aid and Tear Fund. This should also have a very practical outcome. The grouping should consider what they can do as individuals and working together across the communities to promote sustainability. In what way can the grouping contribute to improving the local environment and encouraging a fairer sharing of resources and opportunities? Any planned changes or redevelopment of church premises should include reducing their carbon footprint.

### **Allocation of FTE**

Fraserburgh is a town served by several other denominations but there is still a significant workload for the Church of Scotland. The traditional nature of the community means that the church is still the centre for celebrating life events, especially funerals. There are also the scattered communities within the grouping, each with their own worshipping and missional communities which will require the FTEs to support them. This is reflected in the allocation of 2 FTE posts.

### **The Way Forward**

The creation of a Steering Group as soon as possible with representatives of all the congregations in the grouping. This Steering Group should :

- a) Develop an achievable Mission Plan for the whole grouping which should include the development of a team ministry using their FTE allocation.
- b) Move forward to the union of all the Kirk Sessions in the grouping by the first annual review.
- c) Produce a business plan for the management of the three church halls with emphasis on missional goals and financial sustainability.

### **Buildings**

The current Fraserburgh South Church Building has been chosen on the advice of the General Trustees as the centre for worship in the town. Fraserburgh Old and Fraserburgh West church buildings are now category B.

All three church halls are being retained. A business plan will be required for the use, management and financial sustainability of the Fraserburgh halls by the end of 2023.

The sad decline in membership in Sandhaven and Rathen West and their proximity to Fraserburgh, would suggest that both buildings are unsustainable in the future and they have been placed in Category B.

Grouping 4 - Mormond Hill						
Congregation	Membership	Parish Population	Nett Population	FTE	Church*	Hall*
New Aberdour	100	763	664	1.5	B†	
New Pitsligo	237	1,103	998		B 2023	
Strichen and Tyrie	330	1,885	1,753		A	A
Crimond	130	851	757		A	A
Lonmay	85	1,699	1,479		B 2024	A
Tyrie Church					B 2023	
<b>Total</b>	<b>882</b>	<b>6,301</b>	<b>5,651</b>	<b>1.5</b>		

† B, pending first annual review.

\* If B, disposal by end of stated year

### Mission Narrative : Mormond

The group consists of 6 rural communities, all within sight of Mormond Hill, hence the name.

These communities all have their own unique identities, all valuing their own heritage. Less than half the populations profess affiliation to the Church of Scotland, employment is mainly in construction, wholesale and retail, agriculture, forestry and fishing along with health and social care.

Each congregation has demonstrated a significant level of commitment, in some cases in an extended period of vacancy, with acknowledgement given to interim moderators, locums, readers, officebearers, members and volunteers who have kept the light shining in their communities.

The present picture includes many areas of practical Christian service - Sharing Larder, Community Cafe, Lunch Club aimed at older folks living alone, partnership events with e.g. Christian Aid, Tear Fund, Mission Aviation Fellowship, Blythswood. There is also much appreciated work with local schools, care homes and uniformed organisations.

Looking ahead, we want to embrace the 5 Marks of Mission, pooling our resources to be the best we can be while constantly looking outwards to engage with other faith groups within our communities.

It should be noted that planned projects can fit under more than one of the Marks for Mission.

- Tell (Proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom)  
Through different worship styles using modern technology, social media and web sites, considering also, worship outside the confines of a building, men's breakfasts, ladies retreats, schools links, care home links.
- Teach (teach, baptise and nurture new believers)  
Alpha courses, House Groups, Brigades, Children's Work, Guild development across the grouping

- Tend (respond to human need by loving service)  
Sharing Larder, community cafe (evening and daytime) developing into caring for carers, Lunch Club, Holiday Club, afternoon teas
- Transform (transform unjust structures of society, challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation)  
Build on links with Christian Aid, Blythswood and related humanitarian projects, including the 3-yearly cycle of Guild projects
- Treasure (strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth)  
Identify and develop being eco-friendly as we look to make our church environments more suited to the demands of 'doing church in a different way'.

The group faces significant challenge in moving forward towards a union, as realisation dawns that everyone has to make sacrifices, letting go of what's familiar and held dear while grasping a different way of thinking and working.

### **The Way Forward**

The direction of travel in this grouping is towards a single Kirk Session with 1.5 FTE posts for the whole area. The grouping themselves have identified a way forward through this planning cycle which will involve two unions linked in the first instance, working towards their goal of one united Kirk Session with 2 places of worship.

1. East Mormond - A union of Crimond and Lonmay, which are currently linked, shall be formed as soon as possible.
2. West Mormond - A union of Strichen with New Pitsligo and New Aberdour shall come together by the end of 2023.
3. Union of whole grouping maintaining a place of worship in the East and in the West and a missional presence in each of the other communities by the end of 2025.

A Steering Group with representatives from all the congregations in the grouping shall be created in the first quarter of 2023. This Steering Group will:

- a) Form a Mission Plan for the whole grouping to include how to use their FTE allocation across the grouping.
- b) Move towards a union of all the Kirk Sessions as soon as it becomes possible.

### **Buildings**

The Steering Group will develop a plan to demonstrate the missional and financial viability of Aberdour Church and its possible reuse as part of the Pilgrim route by the first annual review.

The Steering Group will develop a plan for the removal and future use in the grouping of the mobile hall from Lonmay.

Strichen Church and Crimond Church are to be retained as worship centres in the East and West of the Grouping.

Grouping 5						
Congregation	Membership	Parish Population	Nett Population	FTE	Church*	Hall*
Banff	336	4,984	4,286	1.5	A	A
Macduff	619	5,438	4,731		A	A
Whitehills	254	1,604	1,411		B 2023	A
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,209</b>	<b>12,026</b>	<b>10,428</b>	<b>1.5</b>		

\* If B, disposal by end of stated year

### Draft Mission Narrative : Grouping 5, Whitehills, Banff and Macduff, Gardenstown and Crovie

The grouping stretches for 12.7 miles along the north Banffshire coast and comprises the communities of Whitehills, Banff and Macduff, Gardenstown and Crovie. The key industries are fishing, ship building, farming, and tourism. Whitehills (pop 990) is located two miles west of Banff. A former fishing community, the village is a growing tourist destination, with the harbour developed into a busy marina for leisure craft. Banff (pop 4,000) is a former royal burgh, and the historic county town of Banffshire. The town boasts many fine examples of Georgian architecture, plus nearby Duff House. One mile to the east and separated by the River Deveron, Macduff (pop 3,830) continues to be dominated by the fishing industry. It retains a busy working harbour with a shipyard capable of constructing vessels up to 30 m long.

Although recognising many positives in the economy, each community includes areas of severe deprivation. The impact of rural deprivation is also very real in the surrounding areas. Whilst noting the geographical proximity of the communities, each has its own distinct character, heritage, and outlook. Failure to recognise the distinct context of each community will be detrimental to the life and mission of the church, plus have the potential to alienate significant sections of the population. There are also substantial concerns about the negative impact closure of a church building will have on the local community. Again, this would have a detrimental impact on the mission of the church, especially in an area where so many profess an allegiance to the Church of Scotland.

There is clear evidence that each of the congregations are fulfilling their calling with an active missional presence within their communities. Each of the five marks of mission are reflected. These include midweek clubs for young people in Macduff, drop-in coffee and chat in all three communities, chaplaincy to schools and care homes and thrift shops. The buildings are regularly used by community groups. Some activities have been paused due to the Covid pandemic, with the Grouping keen to restart Messy Church and other activities including offering 'warm spaces'. There is evidence of ecumenical partnerships, plus a good working relationship with a local independent church.

Looking to the future, the grouping faces several challenges. Maintaining a physical presence is required in each community, plus the expectation placed on the ministry team will also require careful management. Responding to the distinct character of each community the united Kirk Session will also have a key role to play, enabling each of the congregations to adapt to a new way of working, with a joined-up approach to mission whilst maintaining worship in each of the communities.

The group also has significant opportunities. Chaplaincy to local schools and outreach to young people should be further developed. The growing numbers of tourists visiting the local area and a growing awareness of local

issues relating to deprivation and mental health offer openings for authentic Christian service and witness. The Mission Plan 2022 Committee recommends that consideration be given to the creation of a new expression of church in the area.

In conclusion, one member of the grouping offered the following reflection: On the cliffs outside Macduff Parish Church an 18th century anchor and the town cross, provide an iconic view of the town. The fishing community knew that when returning from trips, keeping their boats in line with Macduff church would mean safety from the rocks that surround the harbour entrance. This powerful image also reflects the role of the church within the communities of the grouping. Building on the strong Christian heritage, with the high level of Christian commitment, the grouping is well placed to face the future.

### **Allocation of FTE**

Banff is the county town and centre for the area. Separated by the River Deveron and the Narrow bridge from the neighbouring town of Macduff, it is a vibrant hub of commercial activity. Macduff is a distinct town with a thriving and growing shipbuilding industry. It is different in its culture and mission opportunities from Banff. Both of these towns have vibrant and self-sustaining congregations and the potential to develop new forms of church and ways of worship across their coastal grouping in partnership with Whitehills. Whitehills is close to Banff but is also a distinct community. Further along the coast the villages of Gardenstown and Crovie are also distinct communities. The allocation for the grouping is 1.5 FTE to enable the support and development of the three distinct worshipping communities who share the grouping.

### **The Way Forward**

The grouping shall move towards a Union of all the Kirk Sessions into one charge.

A steering group will be created with representatives of all the congregations in the grouping in the first quarter of 2023. This Steering Group is to:

- a) Form a Mission Plan for the whole grouping to include how to use their FTE allocation across the grouping and do this by the end of 2023.
- b) Work towards a union of all the Kirk Sessions by the end of 2023.

### **Buildings**

All of the category A buildings in this grouping are necessary within this planning cycle. The Mission Plan will identify a missionally and financially viable plan for the use of these buildings and plan to use technology to connect the places of worship.

Grouping 6						
Congregation	Membership	Parish Population	Nett Population	FTE	Church	Hall
Ordiquill and Cornhill	128	485	426	0.5	A	
Portsoy	204	2,531	2,227		A	
Cullen and Deskford	245	1,817	1,490			
<b>Total</b>	<b>577</b>	<b>4,833</b>	<b>4,143</b>	<b>1</b>		

This grouping will be staffed by 1 FTE post consisting of 0.5 from Buchan's allocation and 0.5 from Moray's allocation.

### Mission Narrative : Grouping 6

The group is coastal and country in nature, with Cullen/Deskford (pop. 1,800) and Portsoy (pop. 2,500) occupying largely coastal locations (albeit that both parishes extend inland too) and Ordiquhill/Cornhill (pop. 500) enjoying a rural location. Centres of worship at Cullen and Portsoy lie 6 miles from one another, east to west, with Cornhill 6 miles to the south of Portsoy and 9 miles south-east of Cullen. In between lie a number of villages and communities such as Ordiquhill, Deskford, Fordyce and Sandend. While considerable industry or large-sized places of employment don't feature in any of the communities, both Cullen and Portsoy benefit from substantial tourism during the summer months - Cullen has a hugely popular beach and a growing reputation as a centre for antiques, while Portsoy's profile is greatly enhanced by the hugely successful Scottish Traditional Boat Festival and as a film location for productions such as Peaky Blinders and Whisky Galore. Cornhill, with its location amidst farmland, is an attractive village with a true sense of community.

Each of the existing parishes, in fact, have community very much at their heart. Activities at Cornhill include the Guild, a youth praise band, Sunday Club, Songs of Praise, monthly coffee morning, Strawberry Fayre, a flower festival, whist drives and ceilidhs. The Hall Church at Cullen plays host to concerts, amateur dramatics, an annual thrift shop, coffee mornings, dance classes and art groups, while Portsoy has a weekly Coffee 'n Company which regularly attracts an attendance of 100+, the Well Cafe for pre-school children, its own annual thrift shop, regular Fair-Trade stalls and a cafe during the Boat Festival, as well providing a venue for events such as concerts, charity coffee mornings and conferences. Each of the centres of worship play host to regular and ad hoc meetings, such as Ranger Guides, SWI and floral art and sewing courses at Cornhill and prayer gatherings, Bible studies and yoga classes at Portsoy.

In terms of worship, both Portsoy and Cullen enhance their weekly diet with an online livestream and this is something that is being actively pursued by Cornhill too - this will become essential in time. The group sees that continuing refinement and advancement of livestream technology will form a key part of its mission going forward. Monthly worship services have been held (and will shortly re-commence) at Wakefield Nursing Home in Cullen and at Durnhythe Nursing Home in Portsoy.

Cornhill retains an excellent, ongoing relationship with the local Ordiquhill Primary School, with a Christmas carol concert in the church, with minister and elder visits and classes visiting for local history projects, while Cullen engages in a chaplaincy arrangement at Cullen Primary School along with other clerics and pastors in the area. Opportunities for further development exist here too, in re-building prior relationships within the Portsoy and Fordyce primary schools.

When considering the Marks of Mission which form the building blocks for the Presbytery Plan the group feels that, in equal partnership between each of the centres of worship, the group is well placed to fulfil the

missional obligations placed upon it. Proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom (while we understand that this is not the only criteria) can only be possible if present worship spaces are protected and enhanced, giving us the right places in which to teach, baptise and nurture new believers. We believe, wholeheartedly, that each of our church communities already respond to their wider community in responding to human need by loving service, although we know that there's always more that can be done and on a united front we believe we can do even more, by utilising talents and combining resources. Allied to this, we remain determined to continue to fulfil marks 4 and 5 too, challenging injustice and safeguarding the integrity of creation.

### **Allocation of FTE**

Due to the scattered nature of the grouping which includes two small coastal towns with smaller villages in a large rural hinterland, the worshipping, missional communities, in order to reach their potential, will require the support of 1 FTMWS. (0.5 FTE from Buchan's allocation and 0.5 FTE from Moray's allocation)

### **The Way Forward**

A Steering Group shall be established with representatives from every congregation in the grouping with immediate effect.

The Steering group will:

1. Develop a mission plan to enable collaborative working across the grouping and move towards the union of all the Kirk Sessions as this becomes possible.
2. Work towards a union between Ordiquill and Cornhill and Portsoy by the first annual review.
3. Assess the buildings in the grouping in the light of the developing mission plan for the grouping and report to the first annual review.

<b>Grouping 7 - Corehill Collective</b>						
<b>Congregation</b>	<b>Membership</b>	<b>Parish Population</b>	<b>Nett Population</b>	<b>FTE</b>	<b>Church*</b>	<b>Hall*</b>
<b>Auchaber United</b>	99	1,246	1,084	1	B 2023	B 2023
<b>Auchterless</b>	162	819	737		A	
<b>Fyvie</b>	160	1,502	1,322		A	A
<b>Rothienorman</b>	95	1,642	1,494		A	
<b>Meldrum and Bourtie</b>	359	3,938	3,465			
<b>Culsalmond and Rayne</b>	153	1,432	1,245			
<b>Daviot</b>	135	855	761			
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,163</b>	<b>11,434</b>	<b>10,108</b>	<b>2</b>		

\* If B, disposal by end of stated year

This grouping will be staffed by 2 FTE posts consisting of 1 FTE from Buchan's allocation and 1 FTE from Gordon's allocation.

#### **Mission Narrative : Core Hill Collective**

The grouping consists of the parishes of Auchaber United with Auchterless, Fyvie with Rothienorman (and Culsalmond & Rayne, linked with Daviot, and Meldrum & Bourtie, currently lying within Gordon Presbytery) With the exception of Old Meldrum, the parishes serve largely scattered rural communities. There is evidence of a growing population, new housebuilding, and a significant number of families with young children.

All the congregations are active within their local communities. Current missional activities include using church premises to host a variety of community events such as concerts, poetry readings and a book launch. All these groups and events are run by church members. The Rothie Church Music group provides children the opportunity to learn to play and perform musical instruments. They participate in special worship services which bring the community together at Christmas, Easter and Harvest as well as at the end of the summer school term. There is also a community choir associated with Fyvie Church, which attracts both church members and folk from the local communities. Practical social support and hospitality are also a feature of the grouping, with community cafes, coffee morning, garage sales, and events to mark the seasons of the year.

The grouping is very involved in supporting a wide range of charitable and social concerns, including Food Banks, Christian Aid and Traidcraft. During Storm Arwen, the Glebe Centre at Fyvie was used to provide hot soup and allow people to get warm. Mention was made of how during the 1950's poorer members of the community were allowed to glean the fields - helping themselves to food after the harvest. At Rothienorman, care is taken to ensure that local people are employed to cut the grass. In so doing money is put into the pockets of the poorest increasing their dignity. When contractors are appointed to do necessary work, one of the criteria is ensuring that staff are paid a living wage.

There are several challenges and opportunities facing the grouping. To fully reflect the five marks of mission,

The 2022 Mission Planning Committee believes that the innovative work surrounding young people and music in Rothienorman plus the community choir in Fyvie are ideas which could be expanded across the grouping. The rich history and heritage surrounding Fyvie Church, which is closely associated with the National Trust property of Fyvie Castle should be developed to provide a significant missional opportunity. Along with the regular Sunday Worship and Ordinances of religion, proclamation and faith nurture could be aided using courses such as Alpha, Emmaus, Christianity explored or other study/discussion groups.

Due to the scattered nature of the grouping, there is clearly an opportunity to further develop the use of social media and the live streaming of worship. In the use and development of buildings, attention should be given to reducing the carbon footprint through energy efficiency and insulation. The memory of gleaning is an interesting one. In a time of rising costs and lower incomes what would a 21<sup>st</sup> century version of gleaning look like? Is there anything the grouping can do to encourage the sharing of surplus produce?

This grouping is shared across the border with Gordon Presbytery and the two Presbyteries have categorized the building on their side of the borders. Once we are united in the new Presbytery the annual review of the plan will require a confirmation that these are the buildings that the grouping needs.

### **FTE Allocation**

This grouping is a very large area of scattered rural identifiable communities with the larger village of Oldmeldrum in the south. An allocation of 1 FTE each from Gordon Presbytery and Buchan Presbytery has been made. Given the young, growing population, the traditional outlook of the communities which still look to the local church for the ordinances of religion an allocation of 2 FTMWS is required to support the life and mission of the worshipping communities.

### **The Way Forward**

Form a Steering Group with representatives of each congregation in the grouping to work together on

- a) Pooling resources for mission and developing mission activities appropriate to the local context across the grouping.
- b) Moving towards a union of Kirk Sessions into two charges of Auchterless with Auchaber and Fyvie and Rothienorman: Meldrum and Bourtie with Culsalmond and Rayne with Daviot within this planning cycle.

### **Buildings**

Auchaber Church has now closed and is to be sold.

Auchterless is now the focus of the large rural area running from the boundary with Huntly to the boundary with Fyvie serving scattered rural communities.

Fyvie Church is the largest church building in the grouping operating as a community resource hosting a community choir and various concerts and cultural activities in the space as well as worship on Sundays. It is a focus for funerals and weddings. There is no other facility suitable for worship locally.

Glebe House hosts a community cafe and warm space, community council, various meetings of groups and organisations and the congregation's outreach into the community. There are no other local facilities that would enable these activities to take place. Nor could either of the buildings be adapted to host all the current activities.

Rothienorman Church is at the centre of a growing community and provides a children's music ministry, ordinances of religion and Sunday services. This is a small, well-used building in good condition and benefits from low running costs.

<b>Grouping 8 - Turriff</b>						
<b>Congregation</b>	<b>Membership</b>	<b>Parish Population</b>	<b>Nett Population</b>	<b>FTE</b>	<b>Church*</b>	<b>Hall*</b>
<b>Turriff St. Ninian's</b>	526	4,127	3,673	2.5	B†	
<b>Turriff St. Andrew's</b>	421	2,500	2,250		B†	
<b>Marnoch</b>	324	1,769	1,556		A	
<b>Monquitter and New Byth</b>		2,302	2,025		B 2025	A
<b>King Edward</b>	129	327	294		B 2023	
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,400</b>	<b>11,025</b>	<b>9,798</b>	<b>2.5</b>		

† B, pending first annual review.

\* If B, disposal by end of stated year

### **Turriff Area Grouping - Draft Vision Statement**

Our vision is to have a visible and thriving fellowship at the centre of all four of our communities. We aim to work together as a team, pooling our skills and resources and, led by the Holy Spirit, to share the Good News in a way that connects with all generations. We will reach inwards, building each other up through worship, prayer, discipleship and fellowship. We will reach outwards, responding to the needs of our communities by sharing God's love in Word and action

### **FTE Allocation**

The Turriff Grouping is geographically large and diverse covering several distinct communities. In Turriff there is only one other mainstream denomination represented and the whole grouping is short of other ecumenical partners. There is a heavy workload of funerals most of which still come to the Churches. Turriff itself is a growing community and offers significant potential for mission. It is an ideal place to develop a new expression of church to reach those who do not connect with traditional worship. 2.5 FTE has been allocated with the expectation that the 0.5 FTE post will be used to develop a new expression of church, while the other 2 FTE will be full time ministers of Word and Sacrament.

### **The Way Forward**

A Steering Group with representatives from all the congregations will be formed in the first quarter of 2023 to:

- a) Develop a Mission Plan which sets out how the grouping aims to achieve its stated vision.
- b) Identify how the FTE's responsibilities will be shared across the grouping.
- c) With help from the General Trustees assess the Turriff buildings for their suitability and sustainability with the aim of reducing to one worship centre. This study to be completed by the first annual review.

- d) Identify, and work towards implementing by the end of 2024, the most effective form of adjustment (from those listed in the Presbytery Mission Plan Act) to integrate the five churches in the grouping to achieve their Mission Plan.
- e) plan to develop a new expression of church in the Turriff area using their 0.5 FTE post.

### **Buildings**

Marnoch Church serves a large rural area as well as Aberchirder itself, it has already divested itself of its hall to the community. It is in good condition and is required for regular worship and celebration of life events. The attached Session House is well used.

King Edward and Monquitter Churches are no longer sustainable and there are halls in both communities which are remaining open and can be adapted for worship along with the other activities already happening there. There is uncertainty regarding the ownership of King Edward hall which will need to be resolved.

In common with every town in Buchan Presbytery, Turriff is required to reduced its buildings to one worship centre. Both properties have their particular merits and shortcomings but a decision will have to be made to ensure the future sustainability of a united congregation in Turriff.

## **Suggestions for transition period**

During the transition period after the plan has been adopted by Presbytery there will still be work to be done. Each of the Presbyteries entering the new Presbytery of the North-East and Northern Isles brings their own Presbytery plan. These plans will form the accepted first Presbytery Plan of the new Presbytery so it is essential that the decisions made by individual Presbyteries are respected for the first years of the new Presbytery. However our plans are quite different reflecting our differing geography, faith history and cultural history. The geographical spread of our new Presbytery requires us to trust that the people on the ground have made the best plans they could from our different perspectives.

We will be entering our new Presbytery with plans that have to be implemented over the period to 2025. How this is to be achieved will be the business of the new Presbytery. We hope that our work will be a good foundation for church communities with wider horizons than before, yet still rooted in the soil of Buchan.

The guidance given for the Planning act is that we should aim for union rather than linkages and allow for new forms of emerging church and creative ways of using MDS posts within our FTE allocation. This will mean the establishment of teams of FTE and non-stipendiary ministers along with attached (or peripatetic) readers. While this committee have to plan for this it is not our place to dictate how groupings should work but leave it up to the experience of those who are working in those groupings to organise themselves into structures that work for the individual circumstances and geography of their grouping. Creative use of Local Mission Church to sustain an open and inclusive worshipping community within each of our small rural communities and the pooling of resources in our urban communities to produce vibrant and missional expressions of church, each focussed on the 5 marks of mission, is the intention and prayer of this plan.

In our plan we have several 0.5 FTE posts which we hope will be used creatively by congregations to develop new forms of worship and new forms of service in their community. These posts could be filled by someone who wishes to work part-time, or part-time in parish ministry and part-time in developing new forms of church and could be either MDS or ministry posts. In our changing times we trust that God will send the right people to enable this to happen.

We have seen the value of our 0.5 FTE MDS Mission Development worker and hope that we can attract a further person willing to work in our Presbytery as an 0.5 FTE to enable the development of new youth work to complement work already being done.

## Reflection

The Timescale of the changes we are being asked to make has not lent itself to a consultative process. It takes longer than a year for people to reset their thinking about church formation and mission. There should have been preparation involving workshops in new missional thinking, pioneer ministry, emerging church communities and thinking out of our Presbyterian Box. Rather than deciding that there should be a 'Radical Action Plan' there should have been a shaping of what that plan would look like and a staged delivery at a pace congregations could understand and support. As it is we have been asked to plan in a situation where the goalposts have shifted during the planning and we have had little guidance as to how much change and of what kind we were being asked to propose. The panicked flailing about that has resulted across the national church has not been good for the church in terms of morale or in terms of making actual radical rethinking possible. Indeed there is a grave danger that the plan itself will smother the mission which congregations are already doing and will, with some of our buildings, throw the baby out with the bathwater. Not all our buildings are 'well equipped' or 'in the right place', yet all of them are repositories of faith and vessels of prayer over many generations. Past efforts at Unions and Readjustments have led to a drastic loss of members from the parishes where buildings were closed before they were ready to die. The resulting loss of members led to a loss of income to maintain the life and work of the church in those parishes and, inevitably, to further closures. The AMBA which we have been instructed to use for our work as a Mission planning Committee is biased towards the survival of urban and well resourced congregations at the expense of the small and rural congregations who are often very successful on the scale of their communities. If we close buildings based only on numbers of members and attenders we will be in danger of losing some priceless treasures. Yet there is no AMBA category for historically significant buildings or for mission possibilities based around them that may attract the pilgrimage and spirituality of generations who do not come to church on Sunday but who are seeking for a modern outworking of an ancient faith and spiritual practice. Our congregations will need support and accompaniment through the planning cycle as they move forward into new patterns of church life.

In a piece of writing completed last year the convener of this committee proposed another AMBA category to be applied to our buildings that speak beyond their present usage to those who come in seeking the numinous presence of God.

Is this building palpably full of the presence of peace and mystery leading people to think about God?

Is it a place of transcendent beauty which speaks to people who do not have the wherewithal to sit through a Sunday service but will find God here?

Do people leave it feeling calm and at peace ?

If so is there a missional justification for keeping this place even if it is not used for worship every Sunday?

The writing of such a missional justification may exercise some of us in the coming months.

## **The Reaction of Congregations and Groupings to the Planning Process.**

Asked to make a mission plan for a much larger grouping area, our congregations have engaged to the best of their ability and with a remarkable amount of acceptance and commitment. Charges that have been vacant for a long time have taken that time to think about their future. Some have carried on the way they are with the help of a willing locum e.g. Crimond and Lonmay, others have been exploring working together with their neighbouring congregations who were also in vacancy e.g. Fraserburgh and its outlying linked congregations. These congregations deserve our admiration for the work they have done and for their capacity to survive a vacancy of over 20 years in the case of Crimond and Lonmay. These are the people for whom the planning process is an opportunity to move forward. Everyone knows that change is necessary but there is a grave danger that we will cause so much damage to our congregations that we will lose a large number of our members and cause the swifter demise of our denomination than otherwise.

There has been a grave toll of damage done by the uncertainty which the speed and scope of change presented to us by Faith Nurture on the instructions of the General Assembly and at the behest of the Assembly Trustees. This has led to meetings at which representatives of congregations have had to contemplate the end of use of a beloved building and new ways of working together with other congregations with little guidance on how these changes should take place. Changing everything at once and attempting to make enough change to make it unnecessary to do this again in the near future is a worthy ambition but is it worth this pain. There are many ministers who now feel detached from the central church and even from Presbytery, people who feel that they will have to move in order to facilitate change at a time they were not ready to move. People who are considering how they can retire and not face any of this and untold numbers of exhausted and damaged planning teams who have found themselves dealing with anger, resentment, fear and misplaced blame. The attitude of the ministry of the Church of Scotland has been irrevocably changed towards the central church administration and when we try to contact those who have been helpful to us in the past at the administration centre of 121 George St we find that they are working part time from home, not available to us when we need them. Some staff have left or been made redundant without any notification to the rest of the staff of the church who only find out when they phone for help. None of this can be right and it does not lead to any confidence that the central administration is in any way in control of the process of change. Most ministers are now waiting for the almost inevitable changes to the terms and conditions of our positions which will turn this plan into some kind of reality.

In "Canoeing the Mountains" Tod Bolsinger warns that

*"a reframe itself is only a new way of seeing and describing the problem. This is as far as many missional congregations get. They change the labels on the old file folders and announce that they are now a mission and not a church. What were once called committees are now called teams, what was once a presbytery is now a mission agency, and the senior pastor is now the lead mission catalyst. A reframe, while vital, isn't enough to bring the deep, systemic changes necessary..... At the heart of adaptive leadership is learning. To put it bluntly, if you are not learning anything new, it is not adaptive work. It might be a good, necessary, wise, even vital strategy. But if your group is addressing a new challenge with an old solution, relying on a best practice or implementing the plan of a resident expert, then the solution is a technical one, not adaptive."*

This plan is a technical solution to the reduction in FTE posts allocated to our Presbytery, to the reduced numbers at worship since the Covid Pandemic and to the problem of too many buildings for the people we have to look after them. It is not yet a Mission Plan in anything other than the terms of the Mission Plan Act.

A true Mission Plan for our Presbytery should begin with prayer and inspiration, with discussion and consultation, with discernment of God's calling and with the building of the kind of corps of discovery necessary to venture out into the changed new world of our post Christian society. Without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit this paper will remain just that, a paper solution to a balance sheet problem. It will lead to a corpse not a corps of discovery.

With the inspiration of the Spirit God can breath new life into the old bones so that they live anew in the world of our time, younger and fitter than the old Church of Scotland but first there has to be a death. Without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit this is a plan for the death of the church as we know it. God grant that there will be a resurrection in the name of Christ our Lord.

### **Finding hope for the future**

Psalm 100: 5 offers these words of encouragement

For the LORD is good and his love endures forever;  
his faithfulness continues through all generations.

### **Vision Statement for Planning**

In the presentation the MP2022 Committee gave to each of our groupings we emphasized our concern that the whole process should be collaborative, open and honest and that we were planning for sustainable worshipping communities in each of our groupings. What would that look like? Perhaps a little like this.

*“For a church this means that when the members, the relationships and the mission of the church are aligned and working symbiotically toward a shared purpose, the church functions well. People are both loved (relationship) and challenged (purpose). There is both a commitment to depth and authenticity (relationship) and space to welcome new people (purpose). There is an ability to accept people as they are (relationship) and to be continually transformed into the likeness of Christ (purpose). There is a deep desire to enjoy life together (relationships) and use our resources and energy to serve others (purpose).”* Tod Bolsingr ‘Canoeing the Mountains’

This is our hope and prayer for our Presbytery.

## **Appendix**

1. Strategy Group Questionnaire
2. Workload Proforma
3. Mission Plan Questionnaire
4. Grouping response form

## Presbytery of Buchan – Strategy Group: Consultation with Congregations

Earlier in 2020, the Presbytery Strategy Group embarked on a consultation with congregations aimed at identifying possible options for the structures and use of resources across Buchan Presbytery. Questionnaires had been issued and a series of meetings had been planned. Covid-19 and lockdown caused a pause in the process. The group has met and proposes the following revised timetable for consultation:

Early November	revised questionnaire issued to all congregations for discussion and completion by Monday 30 <sup>th</sup> November
December	Strategy Group review returns from congregations and set up a series of meetings with individual congregations to discuss their return
January	Strategy Group meet with every congregation
February	Based on responses from congregations, members of the Strategy Group meet with groups of congregations and to produce proposals for a revised Presbytery Plan
Spring	Strategy Group proposals presented to special meeting of Presbytery

The Strategy Group have also taken note of the deliverance at the 2020 General Assembly:

*Instruct Presbyteries, in this year's annual review of Presbytery Plans, to exercise robust oversight which will prepare the Church for revising down the number of charges, buildings and ministries required across Scotland and note the intention to produce realistic predictions on the number of ministries that are needed and can be afforded in order to structure the local Church for mission and growth .*

(General Assembly 2020)

During the lockdown, the Strategy Group met with 20+ people from across Presbytery and asked them to identify the values that should underpin various aspects of church life as we engage with this process. The following were the conclusions:

Faith	showed fellowship and creativity as the front runners with worship and diversity coming next. Love, hope, truth, openness, commitment and teamwork were common throughout the responses with belief, respect, leadership and engagement less so.
People	resulted in an overall strength for fellowship, immediately followed by respect, then engagement closely chased by openness with worship, teamwork, belief, truth, and commitment preceding love and diversity.
Challenge	provided more even responses with hope, openness, commitment, creativity, and engagement high on each group's result, closely followed by fellowship and teamwork with belief, respect, leadership and diversity less important.
Buildings	all six groups agreed on openness, creativity and engagement, and a majority of responses called for inclusive diversity through commitment, then teamwork and respect with leadership bringing up the rear

Both this focus group and a similar discussion group amongst ministers recognised that the last six months of lockdown have reinforced the need for congregations to be willing to be open to a different approach to church life.

## **Buchan Presbytery - Future Strategy**

Congregations are asked to complete the questionnaire from the Presbytery Strategy Group and return it by **Monday 30<sup>th</sup> November** to: [buchanstrategygroup@gmail.com](mailto:buchanstrategygroup@gmail.com)

### **Background:**

The role of the church includes:

- Worship
- Discipleship
- Mission
- Serving the community

The aim of this questionnaire is to engage congregations in identifying how, in the future, the resources of the Church of Scotland can best be used, and structured, to achieve this role.

Congregations are asked to identify possible options for the church in their parish and in their area. Creativity is encouraged as this is the opportunity to influence future discussions.

### **Points to be considered:**

- Low numbers of ministers of word and sacrament in training
- Age of congregations
- Drop in congregational income
- Encouragement to work together
- The challenges of filling vacancies and attracting ministers to Buchan
- Travel distances for Interim Moderators and Readers
- Changes in centres of population
- Cost of upkeep of buildings
- Challenges to appoint office bearers
- National plans to merge existing Presbyteries into 12
- The number of long term vacancies
- Low number of Readers in training
- Challenges of organising pulpit supply

**Emerging models of congregations across Scotland** – this list is not exclusive, and a wide variety of options, and names, are being considered (and combinations of these):

- Union of churches – 1 building, 1 congregation, 1 minister, 1 session, etc.
- Union of churches – several buildings, multiple congregations, 1 minister, 1 session
- Linking charges – multiple buildings, multiple congregations, one minister, multiple sessions
- “Team/Hub Ministry” – one, or more, minister(s) of word and sacrament, attached readers or other workers (paid or voluntary), multiple places of worship, one session
- Dissolving congregations and allowing members to move as they wish
- Use of community buildings instead of, or, as well as traditional church buildings

The future of the Church of Scotland will be different in each locality. Therefore, the Strategy Group is keen to engage all congregations in realistic but creative thinking about their own parish and locality in order that the church can continue in our, and neighbouring, areas. They also note that the General Assembly encouraged progress on the reduction of the number of Presbyteries. Congregations discussions should not be limited by current Presbytery boundaries.

**Name of Congregation:**

**Which other congregations do you work with now – and in what ways?**

**Looking ahead to the next 5/10 years which other congregations would you see yourselves working with and what might this look like in terms of ministry, organisational structures, buildings, etc.?**

*Please give a number of options to the current status quo – do not be limited by the number of boxes and the space in each box can expand, as necessary. The options should not be ordered in terms of preference. There is space for comments after each option, but at this stage a general outline of the possibilities is all that is required. Any ideas are not commitments. The purpose is to feed into the discussion process ideas gathered from a local perspective.*

Option:

Comment:

Option:

Comment:

Option:

Comment:

PRESBYTERY OF BUCHAN – PRESBYTERY PLANNING PROCESS

**WORKLOAD INFORMATION**

*For completion by Parish Ministers and Interim Moderators*

Date Completed: / / 2021      By whom:

**CONGREGATION:**

*\*Please complete a form for EACH individual congregation in the charge.*

Constitution:  Model  Unitary  Quoad Omnia

No. of active Elders       No. of Members/Adherents (Total)

Attached OLM / Reader / Other (please detail, Including weekly hours)

Do you have a pastoral visiting team?  Yes  No

How Many Nursing/Care Homes are in the parish?  None

**Normal Pattern of Worship (outwith the Pandemic)**

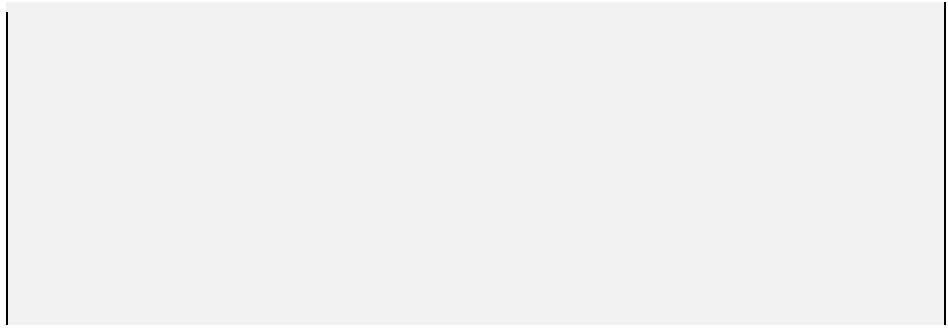
Sundays

Other days (weekly)

Other monthly or occasional Services of Worship (including Care Homes)

Bible Study or regular prayer meeting?  Weekly  Monthly  Quarterly

Other (Details)



**In the past 12 months:** No. of funerals [ ]

<b>In the 12 month period before Covid lockdown:</b>		
No. of Weddings [ ]	No. of Baptisms [ ]	No. of New Members [ ]
<u>Number of meetings</u>		
Kirk Session [ ]	Congregational Board [ ]	Sub Committees [ ]
No. of courses (New Members/Alpha etc.) [ ]	No. of school assemblies [ ]	
No. of other speaking engagements (Guilds etc) [ ]		

### **Pastoral Visiting**

We are aware that this, while an extensive part of the role of parish ministry, is a difficult thing to quantify, and much of it confidential, however, please use this optional space to give as much information as you feel able in your particular parish and circumstances, in terms of workload.

### **Children’s Ministries / Youth Work**

How many groups does the church have? [ ]

How are you involved? (Leading/hands-on regular helping/planning/chairing meetings)

**Adult Ministries / Groups**

How many groups (Guild/Reading Group/Choir etc) does the church have? [  ]

How are you involved? (Leading/hands-on regular helping/planning/chairing meetings)

**Related Ministries**

No. of Schools for which you are Chaplain [  ]

Other Chaplaincies (please detail)

Other ministries related to your role as Parish Minister (please detail)

Other services, meetings, responsibilities for which you must prepare and/or lead (please give details, including frequency)

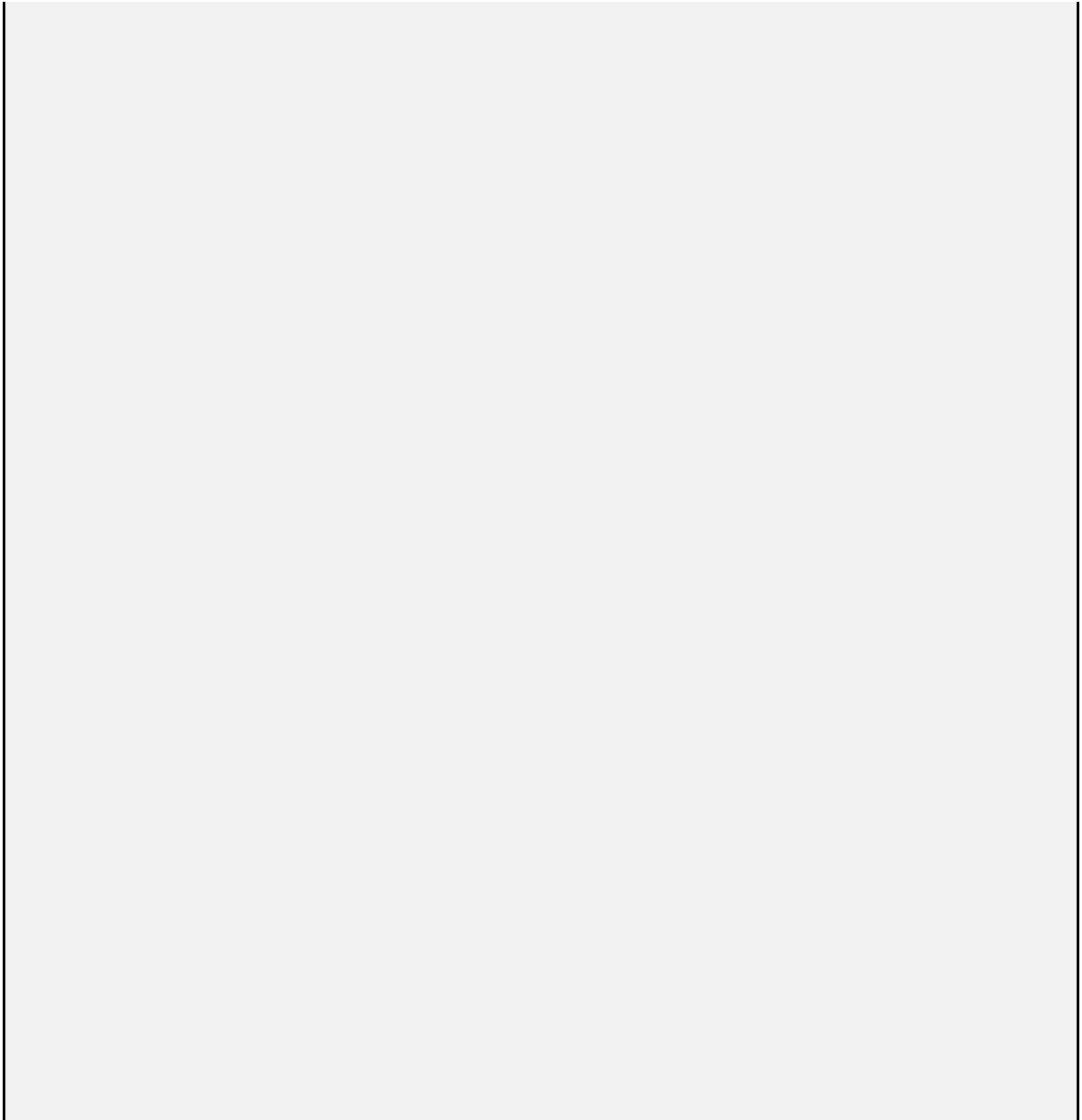
**National Church Roles**

Are you on a Church Forum or Task Group?  
If yes, please give details and time requirements

*Please note: Presbytery roles will also be taken into account but do not require to be detailed here.*

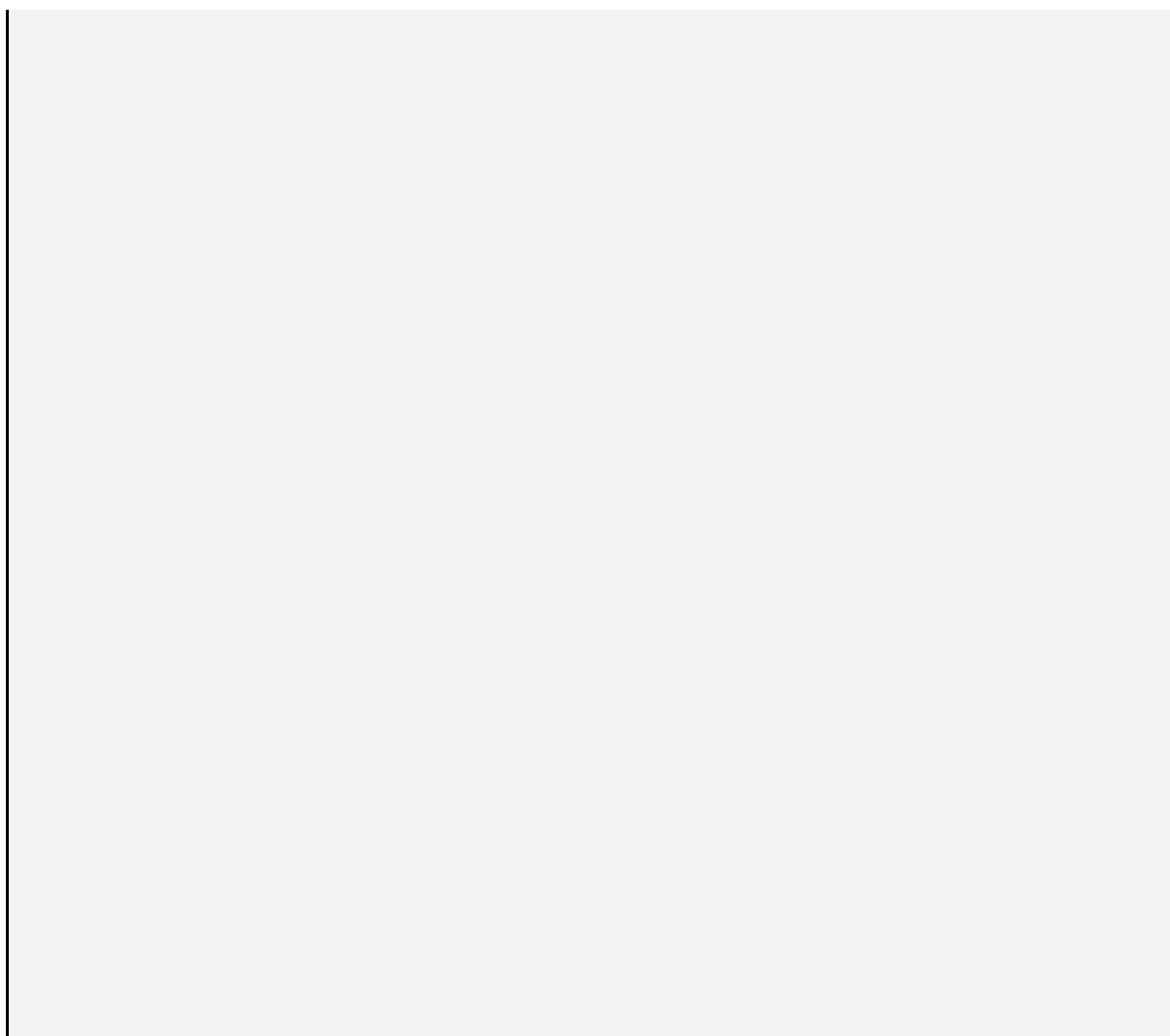
**No full-time Minister?**

It may be that, should you be an Interim Moderator, or there is a locum or other non-FTE appointment you may feel the answers above do not reflect what may have been/may be possible with a full time ministry allocation in post. Please use this space to comment.



Is there anything else, specifically in terms of workload issues, you wish to add?

Please use this space:



Notes:

1. Population statistics of the parish will be taken from the Church of Scotland *Statistics for Mission* – if the parish has increased significantly in the past 10 years (with new-builds for example) please give what additional details you can, particularly average increase in population.
2. A separate, shorter, form for Locums, Readers and Retired Ministers is attached below. Please forward this to any within your congregation.

**Thank you for your assistance, we hope we have not added to your already busy workload too much.**

Please return this form, **BY FRIDAY 1<sup>st</sup> OCTOBER** - preferably by email - to Hugh O'Brien:

[hobrien@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:hobrien@churchofscotland.org.uk)

or The Manse, 10 Ross Street, Macduff AB44 1NS

## LOCUMS, READERS & RETIRED MINISTERS

To assist with future Mission Planning The Ministries Committee of Presbytery are carrying out a short Workload survey and we would be delighted if you would complete the following for any congregation you are involved with on a regular basis (infrequent preaching engagements are not included). Thank you for your assistance.

### CONGREGATION:

*\*Please complete a form for EACH individual congregation you are involved with (not the charge).*

Your involvement:

average hrs per week

- |  |                          |                                     |                      |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| • Attached, with a full time minister in post        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| • Serving as Locum with an Interim Moderator in post | <input type="checkbox"/> |                                     | <input type="text"/> |
| • Serving as Locum <u>and</u> Interim Moderator      | <input type="checkbox"/> |                                     | <input type="text"/> |
| • Regular pulpit supply (monthly or more frequent)   | <input type="checkbox"/> |                                     |                      |
| • Other (please detail)                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |                                     | <input type="text"/> |

•

How often do you preach per annum?  times.

What other worship services, Bible studies, home groups, or other activities do you lead?  
(please detail, with frequency)

Do you assist with pastoral or hospital visiting?  Yes  No

If yes, as you are able, please give details of frequency, number of hospitals etc:

Please use the rear of this sheet to provide any additional information, specifically in respect of workload and your involvement in this parish.

Please return this form, **BY FRIDAY 1st OCTOBER** - preferably by email - to Hugh O'Brien:  
[hobrien@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:hobrien@churchofscotland.org.uk)

or The Manse, 10 Ross Street, Macduff AB44 1NS

Thank you.

The Mission Plan 2022 Committee has begun its work and we invite you to join in by filling in and returning this questionnaire. It is designed to be a discussion starter and we hope it will be completed by groups, individuals and Kirk Sessions. We are in the information gathering stage of our work and your answers will add to our understanding of the views of the church goers and church members in our Presbytery. This is an important part of our consultation which will feed into the making of the Presbytery Mission Plan. Answers from this questionnaire may spark more questions and fuel discussion as we seek a new vision of Church in our Presbytery area. Thank you for engaging in this task with us,. The Questionnaire comes out as a plain document which you can answer electronically or print out and write you answers on a separate piece of paper and either scan and email or post to [ajaffrey@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:ajaffrey@churchofscotland.org.uk) or Alison Jaffrey, The Manse, Fyvie, Turriff, Aberdeenshire, AB53 8RD. We would appreciate it if you could return your filled in questionnaires by the 31st October 2021.

The 5 marks of mission.

The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To seek to transform unjust structure of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

Questions

1.What do you most fear about the future of the Church of Scotland in Buchan?

2.What do you most look forward to in the future of the Church of Scotland in Buchan?

3.Which of the 5 marks of mission do you see evidence of in your life and in the life of your congregations?

4.Which of the 5 marks of mission are you and your congregation planning to develop?

5.What 2 new endeavours would make a difference to your congregational and community life?

6.In John 12:24 Jesus said, "I am telling you the truth: a grain of wheat remains no more than a single grain unless it is dropped into the ground and dies. If it does die, then it produces many grains."

What are you willing to give up now to allow a future to grow ?





# **PRESBYTERY MISSION PLAN**

**GORDON PRESBYTERY  
OCTOBER 2022**

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Presbytery Planning Review Group

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## Glossary of Terms/Acronyms

MP – Mission Plan

PMP Act – Presbytery Mission Plan Act 2021

PPRG – Presbytery Planning Review Group

FTE – Full time equivalent

MWS – Minister of Word and Sacrament

MDS – Ministries Development Staff

OLM – Ordained Local Minister (non-stipendiary post)

## I.0 Introduction

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)*

In Gordon Presbytery, our challenge is to live into Jesus’ radical call to discipleship in every aspect of our individual and collective life. The future of our mission and ministry depends first on God’s faithfulness to us. It also depends on our willingness to repent from sin and live into the new life given by the Holy Spirit, so that we may follow and obey Jesus as his disciples.

Gordon Presbytery is a dynamic mix of rural and semi-urban communities. Our communities are diverse and feature significant socio-economic disparities between the richest and poorest members. The Presbytery Mission Plan (MP) must present a future for mission defined first by faithfulness to Jesus Christ, and also by planning for sustainable and realistic ministry in the context of our ever-changing communities.

As a presbytery, our MP must be marked by continual submission to God’s will. At all times, we must follow the example of Jesus and pray, “not my will, but yours be done” (Matthew 26:39). Following wherever the Lord leads us to go requires open hearts and a willingness to change, even when doing so feels burdensome and uncertain. As Christians, we must never shy away from bearing our crosses and following our Lord and master (Matthew 16:24).

There is no doubt that the changes proposed in this plan will be difficult to bear, and we are deeply aware of the genuine heartache and disorientation that will be experienced by many of our Christian sisters and brothers across Gordon Presbytery. We acknowledge that change is necessary but never straightforward. As a presbytery, we will bear these changes together, and with God’s help we will do everything in our power to encourage and support each other as we all follow Jesus by leaning into new expressions of ministry. It is our hope that this plan enables and encourages collaboration and team working across our presbytery in such a way that sustainable forms of ministry are developed. We hope that as congregations work together, they will find the shared opportunities and resources needed for mission. To be clear, this MP is a starting point for working differently within our presbytery and it will require holistic effort from members of presbytery, Kirk Sessions, congregations, and those in ministry posts for it to be successful.

As we go forward with planning the future mission of Gordon Presbytery, our discernment will be guided by prayerful attention to God’s Word, and by earnest and sustained consideration of the **Five Marks of Mission**:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise, and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth

May the God use this plan to deepen and grow the mission of the church here in Gordon Presbytery.  
*SOLI DEO GLORIA!*

*Gordon Presbytery Planning Review Group (PPRG)*

## 2.0 MISSION NARRATIVE

At the heart of developing our MP is our call to relationships - to Christ and to each other. The PPRG has spent time listening to each other and to God.

Jesus' own ministry as expressed in scripture is the basis for our call to mission. Jesus modelled how to reach out to others and grow in our faith and called us to join with him to build the Kingdom of God. As a presbytery and as sisters and brothers in Christ, we desire to join with our Lord in his mission. Our effort to do so will be grounded by the primary missional lens of the Five Marks of Mission, and also by two secondary lenses: 1) The Mission Cycle; and 2) Key Areas of Growth for Gordon Presbytery.

We have also gained valuable information through surveys; formal/informal conversations with congregations, including a series of listening surgeries; Asset Management Buildings Audits (AMBAs) conducted as a pilot with the General Trustees; church and community statistics; and guidance and legislation provided by the Faith Nurture Forum and the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

### Primary Missional Lens:

#### (1) Five Marks of Mission:

The Presbytery Mission Plan Act 2021 (PMP Act) and subsequent guidance prioritises mission. Mission in the local church is the beating heart of the PMP Act, and mission is defined in reference to the following Five Marks which bear repeating:

The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth

In our development of this MP, we have purposefully used the language of the Five Marks of Mission. We strongly encourage congregations to see mission with reference to these marks.

### Secondary Missional Lenses:

#### (1) The Mission Cycle

This resource was introduced to Gordon Presbytery in 2019 by Rev Dr Paul McKeown, who learned of it from a church in Glasgow. Given we often get consumed by the ongoing tasks of running the kirk, the Mission and Discipleship Committee brought it to the forefront of our minds to help congregations, kirk sessions, and presbytery remember our central calling to "go and make disciples." Our adapted 'Mission Cycle' comprises five strands:

- Goodwill
- Engagement
- Exploration
- Owned faith
- Care for creation

Four of these strands envision moving a person from basic contact with the church (goodwill) to becoming a maturing disciple (owned faith). However, we recognise care for creation is also part of the five marks of mission (Mark 5). Therefore, we added a circle that highlights creation care, which can begin as an ethical response and grow to a deep responsive call of our faith.

The graphic on page 7 has been compiled from survey responses from Kirk Sessions given in December 2021. These responses reveal strength in particular areas of mission – particularly the 3<sup>rd</sup> Mark of Mission. However, they also reveal challenges around engaging with younger people and encouraging people towards a place of owned faith (Mark 2), in addition to living out our faith in such a way as to transform society. This compilation helps us understand some of the gaps which need to be addressed within our Mission Plan.

A full summary is provided in Appendix C for more information.

## (2) Key areas of growth for Gordon Presbytery

A **Presbytery Review Group** was formed in 2017 to help Gordon Presbytery discern if there was a more effective approach to being presbytery and surveyed each church (either minister, kirk session, or a group of leaders). They asked how Gordon Presbytery could better support them. At the conclusion of these surveys, the key areas of growth that arose were as follows:

- Prioritise Relationships
- Create space for the sharing of stories/best practices
- Help build connections/networking
- Help support local churches
- Provide resources
- Provide trainings
- Provide clear communication in various forms
- Clarify the Role of Presbytery
- Provide spiritual support

To live into this calling, the key areas of growth were used to change the way we carry out the life and work of Gordon Presbytery, and that has shaped the development of our MP.

The missional lenses led us to develop our MP around the following areas of emphasis:

### Areas of Emphasis within the Mission Plan:

**Mission and Ministry Groups living out the Five Marks of Mission:** Just as Jesus sent out the disciples two-by-two, we believe in the importance of shared mission and ministry within our communities. In keeping with the call to build God’s Kingdom through relationships and teamwork, each church was consulted and placed in a group with other churches. These groups were then asked to discern how they could come together as a team, identify missional opportunities, offer each other support, and continue the work of God’s Kingdom in each local area. Each congregation was also surveyed regarding their buildings and the life of their congregation in relation to the Five Marks of Mission.

Within these teams there will be a combination of Minister of Word and Sacrament posts (MWS), Ministries Development Staff posts (MDS) and Ordained Local Minister deployments (OLM). In addition, teams will include Readers, Auxiliary Ministers and those trained to lead worship by the Mission and Discipleship Committee of presbytery.

We have provided an explanation of some of these roles using material from the Church of Scotland.

*“Full-time ordained ministers have a particular role and function in offering leadership and vision to the Church in a changing missional context. Significant to this role is the enabling and discipleship of others to exercise their own ministry as part of the people of God. Conduct of worship, the celebration of the sacraments and preaching are integral, as is the ability to work collaboratively in a wider framework - locally, within Presbytery and as part of the National Church.”* Church of Scotland website

Across the Church of Scotland, MDS posts can range from family/youth/outreach workers to more traditional roles such as Parish Assistants and Associate Ministers. They offer a great deal of flexibility and job descriptions can be developed to match the needs of a local context. It is the firm view of the PPRG that these posts are vital for mission.

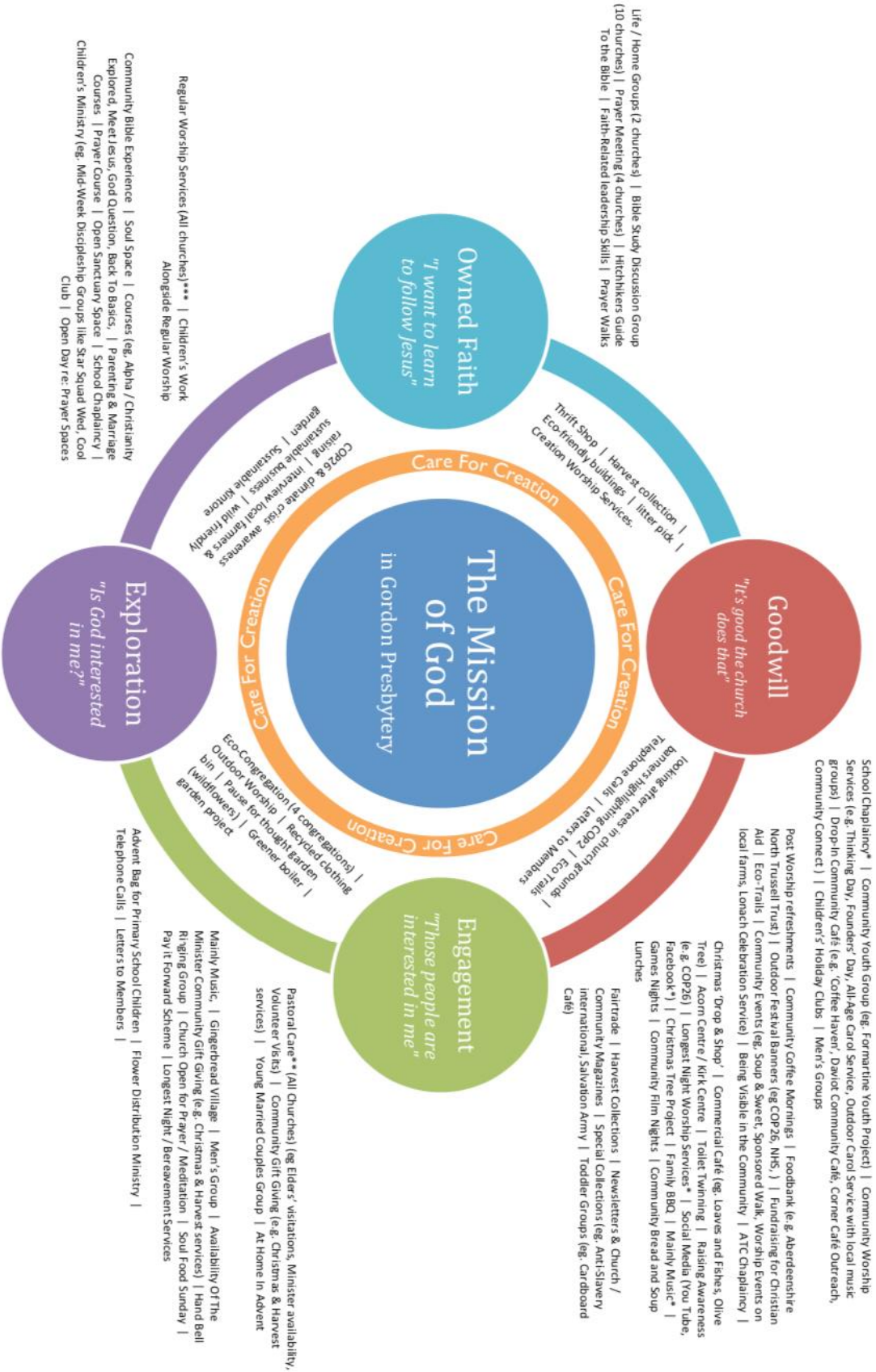
*“Ordained Local Ministry is a non-stipendiary (unpaid) part-time ministry of Word and Sacrament. OLMs serve in local contexts as identified by Presbytery according to their missional needs and often (though not exclusively) work in a team setting with Parish Ministers. OLMs can serve in vacant parishes and fulfil locum roles, exercising a preaching, pastoral and sacramental ministry. The function of the OLM would be a localised one, with appointments to posts the prerogative of Presbytery, in a manner similar to that of the Auxiliary Ministry, to a particular locality or a specific role.”* Church of Scotland website.

The PPRG recognise the considerable concern raised when adjustments regarding ministry posts are planned. During the listening surgery process, views were expressed that any such adjustment signifies the devaluing of an existing ministry. Adjustments are a consequence of the tight constraints the presbytery is required to plan within, and those constraints are not simply imposed because of financial woes. The number of ordained ministers available to serve is rapidly falling, with more retirements occurring in recent months than previously predicted.

It is impossible for us to reduce the number of ministry posts in the presbytery without making adjustments. However, the PPRG wish to reassure all those impacted by adjustments that their work has been and will continue to be valued, not only in their local context, but by the presbytery. We wish to support all those who are deeply unsettled by the changes outlined in the plan, and note in particular, our sadness at the loss of our presbytery wide MDS posts.

**The reality of our local congregations:** Each local congregation brings strengths and weaknesses to their respective groups. Many congregations struggle to maintain buildings, office bearers, run youth gatherings, or offer online worship on their own. One of the purposes of each group is to ensure that each congregation, minister, or lay team is not doing everything in isolation. In conjunction with this, it is the call of our Presbytery Teams, Committees, and MDS workers to come alongside to encourage and equip the local groups for mission and ministry.

# DIAGRAM 1. THE MISSION CYCLE



\* Most churches mentioned a level of School Chaplaincy. This type of work can be at a 'goodwill' level if the only engagement is through assemblies. However, if there can be opportunities for 'exploration' (if schools are open to this) or 'engagement' (if schools are open to this) and wider community that the church is interested in them. This becomes more exploratory depending on the individual conversations.

\*\* All churches do some level of Pastoral Care which is missional insofar as it shows the church's interest in them. This becomes more exploratory depending on the individual conversations.

\*\*\* The most fundamental reason for the existence of the church is to worship God. Although worship could be argued to be in all categories (I've placed it in 'exploration' as we would hope worship should enable and encourage faith exploration at some level in all who attend, I haven't included it in 'owned faith' as we know that part of worship is to assume that people without an 'owned faith' would be attending.

### 3.0 OBJECTIVES AND PRESBYTERY PLANNING PRINCIPLES

The purpose of this MP is to meet the requirement of the PMP Act for each presbytery to have an approved MP in place by 31 December 2022. According to Act:

*A Mission Plan shall describe how the Church of Scotland's engagement with Christ's Mission is to be shaped and resourced in the following five years and to that end shall demonstrate how the Presbytery will:*

- i) ensure that the life of the Church of Scotland is shaped around Mission and adequately reflects the outcomes of Local Church Review and ideas for local mission;*
- ii) sustain the commitment to a territorial ministry as described in the Third of the Articles Declaratory appended to the Church of Scotland Act 1921 and affirmed in Declaratory Act V 2010 including its commitment to ecumenical working;*
- iii) make appropriate use of such ministry posts as may be permitted by the General Assembly so that the number of post holders in each Presbytery conforms to the numbers and timescales set by the General Assembly;*
- iv) ensure that new ways of being Church, other than stipendiary Ministers of Word and Sacrament or traditional MDS appointments, are reflected in the Mission Plan.*

The supplementary report of the Faith Nurture Forum, as presented to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 2021 confirmed that the Presbytery of Gordon is allocated **16** FTE ministry posts. This is a reduction from **31.4** in 2011 (49%). With regards to planning, we considered all of the presbytery planning principles.<sup>1</sup> The PPRG has robustly challenged the figure of **16 FTE** ministry posts, following the discovery that the weighting for Gordon Presbytery had been changed, from 2 to 1.5 in 2017, but not communicated to the presbytery or to the General Assembly. This included bringing the matter to the General Assembly of 2022 and engaging with the independent panel established by that GA. It has been confirmed to us that the independent panel do not support a return to a weighting of 2 for Gordon presbytery and as such our total number of FTE posts remains at **16**.

**With regards to buildings**, Gordon Presbytery chose to become one of the pilot presbyteries for the roll out of AMBAs. The General Trustees trained a group of volunteers to conduct them in the autumn of 2021. Summary reports for each parish grouping were provided and reviewed by the PPRG in conjunction with information given in the congregational surveys regarding the opportunities for mission relating to their buildings. Where appropriate, additional information has been sought from the Northeast Buildings Officer.

According to the PMP Act:

*Going forward, the Presbytery must categorise each ecclesiastical building as either:*

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<sup>1</sup> The Presbytery Planning Principles originate in the Presbytery Mission Planning Act: Guidance and Code of Practice V1.4 and includes the following: 1. **Communities** – including population sizes, areas of regeneration/growth, potential mission opportunities and geography. 2. **Ecumenism** 3. **Poverty** – Our priority towards the poor (considering SIMD statistics). 4. **The ministry of the whole people of God** – using technology and training to empower and equip others. 5. **Worship** – maintain worshiping communities throughout Scotland. 6. **Diversity of worship** – Maintaining different kinds of ministry in a mixed economy. 7. **Finances**. 8. **Buildings**.

*(A) to be retained beyond the five years from the date at which the Mission Plan is approved or annually reviewed, or*

*(B) to be sold, let or otherwise disposed of by a specified date which is within five years from the date at which the ecclesiastical building is first categorised as (B).*

Further information on our methodology can be found in Appendix A.

### **Future steps**

From 1 January 2023 Gordon Presbytery is uniting with others into The Presbytery of the North East and the Northern Isles. It has been agreed by the constituent presbyteries that the approved Mission Plans of the six existing presbyteries will be amalgamated unchanged to form the first Mission Plan for the united presbytery. It is our understanding that the new Presbytery of the NE&NI will ensure that the commitments of each plan are retained through the first years of the new Presbytery. It is our understanding that as the Gordon Presbytery Mission Plan is carried on into the Presbytery of the North East & Northern Isles – that, at least in the short term, the decisions, and proportional allocations of staffing and so on, should be respected as would be the case for all of the preceding Presbyteries.

## **4.0 ENDINGS, BEGINNINGS AND THE SPACE IN BETWEEN**

At almost every stage of our lives we are experiencing a beginning, an ending, or we are living in the space in-between. Time and time again, we find that new opportunities and relationships emerge as other seasons and experiences come to an end. Very often we find ourselves caught in the middle of this dynamic. We are responding to the loss of something ending while also waiting for the new thing to emerge. It's a place of uncertainty and transition.

The MP is a prime example of this dynamic. This plan confronts us with unavoidable changes regarding ministry posts and the retention of buildings. For most of our presbytery, there will be some sense of loss and some measure of “ending”. At the same time, we are also prayerfully envisaging the development of new relationships and new structures, the details of which are not yet fully formed. Amid our uncertainties, there are also possibilities and the signs of innovation. There is also the space between, and it will take time for what is agreed in the plan to come to fruition. We don't have all the answers yet as to how everything will unfold.

As a planning group, we want to acknowledge the transitions we are experiencing, find ways of celebrating the depth of history in our presbytery, and enable representatives of each congregation to have an opportunity to respond to what is proposed.

### **Celebration of our history**

We were struck by the wealth of information shared by congregations in relation to the buildings within their parishes. We recognise how difficult it will be for many congregations to accept the categorisation of buildings which have meant so much to so many people down through the centuries. In this, Scotland's Year of Stories, we want to encourage each congregation to find creative ways of documenting and celebrating the history of their parish and particularly their buildings. We believe this is especially important where a building is no longer to be retained by the congregation, and we believe that we should seek to support one another as a presbytery in doing this.

## **Your responses**

Throughout our planning process we have endeavoured to listen to the congregations in our presbytery. To this end, we established Listening Surgeries to which every congregation was invited to attend. We were delighted at the uptake and met with representatives from a number of congregations over a 6-week period. Robust conversations happened and we appreciated the honesty of all those who attended. During the consultation period, we received a tremendous amount of correspondence and whilst we may not have been able to respond to every email or letter, it was all taken into consideration in developing the final plan.

Where there were question marks over particular aspects of the parish groupings, we sought your help in resolving those issues and as far as is possible these changes are reflected in the final plan.

## **Conclusion**

The PPRG is excited about the creation of the nine Mission and Ministry Groups within Gordon Presbytery to help resource congregations for mission. We are hopeful about the new teams being built and visions being cast, but we also recognize bringing these new ideas means that other things will be laid aside. We know this will not be easy, but we will be in it together. We are thankful that God is at work in our midst, and we trust that the Lord will lead us in the time to come.

## 5.0 MISSION AND MINISTRY GROUPS IN GORDON PRESBYTERY:

From the perspective of the whole of Gordon presbytery, the mission audit conducted by the Mission and Discipleship Committee of presbytery, in conjunction with the PPRG, identified strengths within the presbytery around the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Marks of Mission. There is ample evidence of the generation of goodwill and engagement with community, together with care for creation.

It is evident that there is less strength regarding Marks 1, 2 and 4. We struggle to live out our faith in ways that would transform society, to proclaim the good news of Jesus or to nurture the faith of new believers

In addition, the mission audit identified the following missional opportunity within our presbytery:

- Reaching out to younger people (defined as those under 40), including mission towards families and those who are single.

The PPRG identified further missional opportunities which exist because of the specific geography of the presbytery and housing developments happening within certain communities. For example, within the plan there are missional aims in relation to the rural/isolated communities and in communities where there is a secondary school hub.

In this section you will find a mission narrative for each of the Mission and Ministry Group. This explains the mission priorities of the presbytery for the grouping and explains the deployment of resources in that grouping.

## MISSION AND MINISTRY GROUPS IN GORDON PRESBYTERY:

### Mission and Ministry Groups 1 and 2:

CUSHNIE & TOUGH, HOWE TRINITY, NOTH, AND UPPER DONSIDE

### Mission and Ministry Group 3:

BLAIRDAFF & CHAPEL OF GARIOCH, CLUNY, ECHT & MIDMAR, KEMNAY, KINTORE, AND MONYMUSK

### Mission and Ministry Group 4\*:

SKENE AND KINGSWELLS

### Mission and Ministry Group 5a:

BELHELVIE AND ELLON

### Mission and Ministry Group 5b\*:

NEWMACHAR AND DYCE

### Mission and Ministry Group 5c\*:

FOVERAN AND ABERDEEN ST. COLUMBA'S BRIDGE OF DON

### Mission and Ministry Group 6:

BARTHOL CHAPEL, METHLICK, UDNY & PITMEDDEN, AND TARVES

### Mission and Ministry Group 7:

HUNTLY CAIRNIE GLASS, STRATHBOGIE DRUMBLADE, AND INSCH LESLIE PREMAY OYNE

### Mission and Ministry Group 8:

FINTRAY KINELLAR KEITHHALL, INVERURIE ST. ANDREW'S, AND INVERURIE WEST

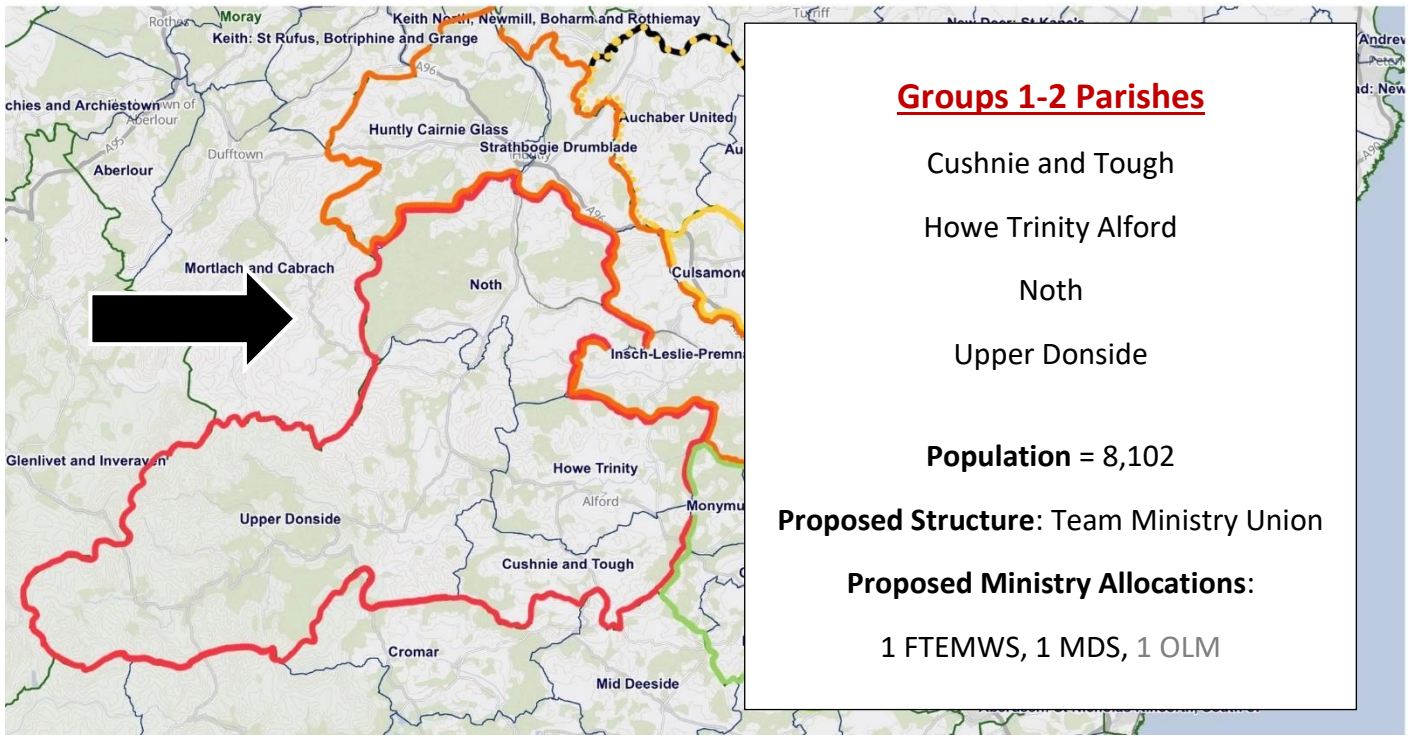
### Mission and Ministry Group 9\*:

CULSALMOND & RAYNE, DAVIOT, MELDRUM & BOURTIE, AUCHABER, AUCHTERLESS, AND FYVIE WITH ROTHENORMAN

\*THESE GROUPS ARE WORKING WITH PARISHES WITHIN OTHER PRESBYTERIES AND THE PLANS ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY OUR NEIGHBOURING PRESBYTERIES IN ADDITION TO OUR OWN VOTE.

## MISSION AND MINISTRY GROUPS 1 AND 2

### IN GORDON PRESBYTERY



### Mission and Ministry Groups 1 and 2:

CUSHNIE & TOUGH, HOWE TRINITY, NOTH, AND UPPER DONSIDE

**Proposed Structure:** As we seek to prioritise mission, ministry, and a local worshipping presence in Groups 1 and 2 we envision a Team Ministry through Union.

**Mission Narrative:** The geographical area of the combined groupings is vast, incorporating the villages of Alford, Cushnie, Tough, Strathdon, Towie, Rhynie and Lumsden, as well as other smaller settlements. The total population is estimated at 8,102. The congregations in this group are very aware of the difficulties they face in terms of their large geographical base for mission and ministry.

The presbytery has identified two important missional aims for this grouping.

The first missional aim recognises the unique rural geography of this grouping. There are a number of isolated communities within the parish that are connected to the existing congregations. The presbytery sees an opportunity of developing mission in this rural context, through the leveraging of technological advances of recent years, continuing a physical presence within Strathdon, and ensuring a welcoming space in 'Fourteen' in Rhynie that can be used to gather in the community. There is a unique missional opportunity in many of the primary schools within this grouping.

The second missional aim centres on Alford as a key base for ministry. Alford is the largest population centre, with a community campus that includes Alford Primary School and Alford Academy, with a combined total of 900 pupils. There is a significant housing development on the point of completion and a new smaller development commencing shortly. As such Alford is a strategic location which requires ministry resources, particularly with a focus on families and the school community.

Considerable work has been ongoing across these two groupings to establish joint working, and there is a recognition of Howe Trinity, Alford as the hub from which a team would operate. Many of the congregations here have already cultivated connections with each other. There is enthusiasm and energy in several of the congregations that prayerfully will be a catalyst for ministry.

The PPRG envisages the creation of a team ministry for a single parish with the union of four existing charges. The team ministry would consist of one FTE MWS, a new MDS post and the deployment of 1 OLM. The MDS post would involve the development of the whole ministry of the people of God within the new single parish to enable mission and worship to happen within the disparate rural communities.

#### Statistics:

Parish	Population as of June 2020	Roll as of Dec 2021	Avg Sunday Worship	New Communicants	Baptisms	Funerals	Ministry & Mission Contributions
Cushnie and Tough	910	216	15	0	0	12	£16,268.00
Howe Trinity	4,290	403	80	0	1	11	£47,249.00
Noth	1,480	177	19	0	1	1	£18,614.00
Upper Donside	1,422	307	44	2	0	14	£26,615.00

#### Classification of Buildings

The condition and location of the buildings in the two groupings were considered. With Alford being a strategic location for mission, and recent investment in the building, Howe Trinity has been identified as the main hub for the new team ministry. In addition, Noth Parish Church and Fourteen (Rhynie) are to be retained, allowing for a community base in Rhynie. Strathdon Hall and Church are currently being used for worship and will be retained as another centre for worship.

The remaining churches and church halls in the combined grouping have been classified B and will be released.

We would encourage the grouping to consider the use of community halls in Towie and Cushnie for mission purposes.

#### The newly formed charge would address the Five Marks of Mission as follows:

##### 1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom

- Through school chaplaincy and building relationships with the various primary schools and one secondary school in the parish.
- Work with Presbytery's Youth Facilitator to develop links with young people and the schools in the parish. In view of the diverse nature of the schools and communities, it is considered important to engage effectively with the young people in the grouping.
- Development of links with community groups and attendance at community events e.g., Cushnie Games, Mary Fair in Lumsden, the Lonach Games and the Rhynie Gala. This is particularly important given that the population is scattered with small clusters of dwellings throughout and community activities are therefore difficult to organise. Working in partnership with organisations such as the

Lonach Highland and Friendly Society creates opportunities for the mission of the parish to be fulfilled.

- Development of online services and connections through social media.
- Special worship services at particular times of the year, including Remembrance, Christmas and Easter. For example, organising a harvest celebration in conjunction with the Vale of Alford Young Farmers.
- Organisation of an annual holiday bible club.

2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers

- Provision of weekly worship services across the parish, with the encouragement of local communities developing worship in their own centres beyond the church walls.
- The goal of weekly bible discussion groups in all areas.
- The goal of weekly prayer meetings in all areas.
- Provision of teaching for children and young people during weekly worship.

3. To respond to human need by loving service

- Pastoral care services provided to Hamewith Court Sheltered Housing Complex in Alford and through the monthly 'Evergreens' Group.
- Worship services in local care homes.
- Provision of space for a number of community groups that would otherwise struggle to find a home. This includes the community playgroup in Alford, the Citizen's Advice Bureau, Grampian Cardiac Care exercise class. In Rhynie it includes the Youth Club, WRI, Mother & Toddler group and the Community Council. The recent storms showed how Fourteen in Rhynie could be used as a base to provide hot meals and warmth to those cut off in isolated areas.

4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation

- Howe Trinity is currently a Fairtrade Congregation
- Support of a variety of charities including Christian Aid, the Church of Scotland HIV programme, the Cyrenians, as well as our partners in Malawi.

5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

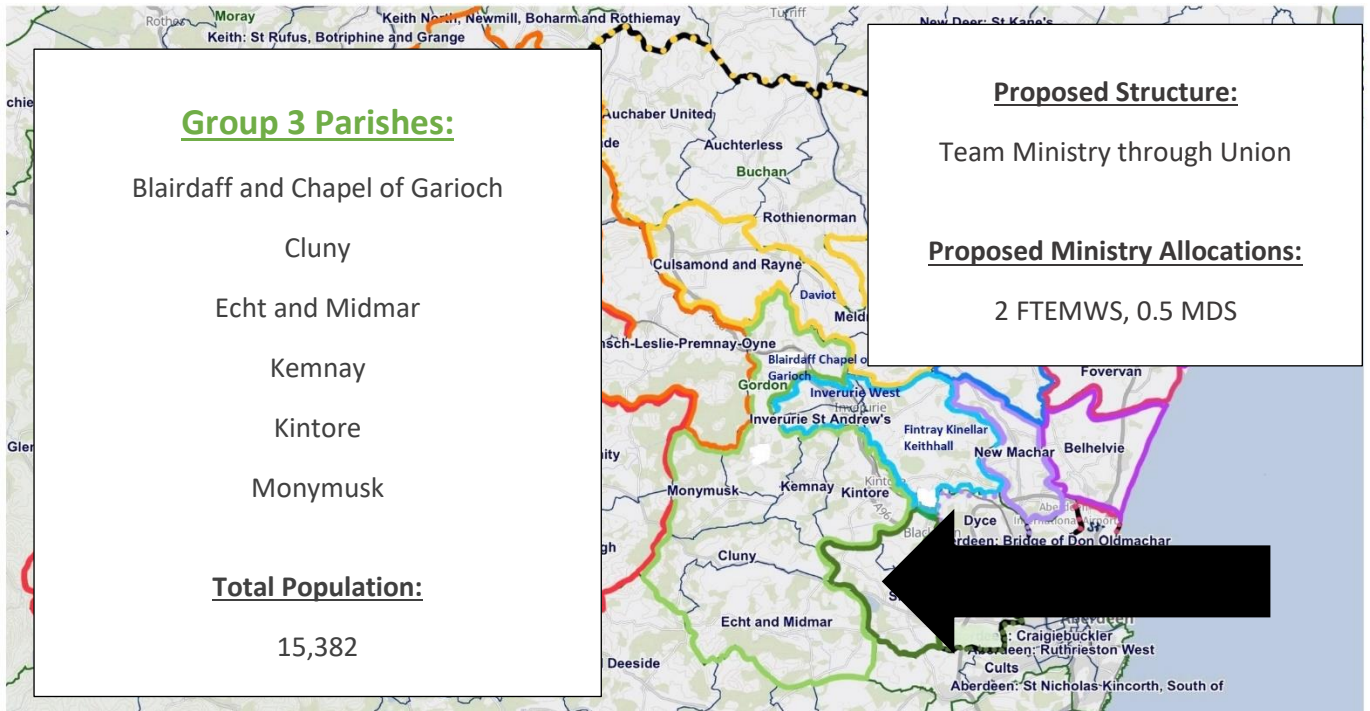
- Incorporation of 57 solar panels mounted on the roof of Howe Trinity Church.
- Exploration of becoming an eco-congregation through Howe Trinity.

Presbytery Mission Plan for Group 1-2:

Parish Grouping	Congregation Name	Current status	Plan for Parish Grouping	Buildings Categorisation	Dates of Closure
1	Upper Donside	Vacant charge with OLM acting as locum.	Adjustment – Team Ministry. Creation of a single parish of both Group 1 and Group 2. Union of four churches.  1 FTEMWS 1 MDS 1 OLM	Lumsden Church/Hall (B) Strathdon Church (A) Strathdon Hall (A) Towie Church (B)	Lumsden & Towie: Date of Union or 31 Dec 2023 (Whichever date comes first)
1	Noth	Unrestricted charge One FTEMWS		Noth Church (A) Fourteen Hall (A)	n/a
2	Howe Trinity	Unrestricted charge One FTEMWS		Howe Trinity Church & Hall (A)	n/a
2	Cushnie & Tough	Vacant charge with OLM acting as locum.		Cushnie Church (B)  Tough Church (B)	Cushnie: End of October 2023  Tough: End of November 2023
			Total: 2 FTE		

## MISSION AND MINISTRY GROUP 3

### IN GORDON PRESBYTERY



### Mission and Ministry Group 3:

BLAIRDAFF & CHAPEL OF GARIOCH, CLUNY, ECHT & MIDMAR, KEMNAY, KINTORE, AND MONYMUSK

**Proposed Structure:** As we seek to prioritise mission, ministry, and a local worshipping presence in Blairdaff & Chapel of Garioch, Cluny, Echt & Midmar, Kemnay, Kintore, and Monymusk (Group 3) we envision a Team Ministry through Union.

**Mission Narrative:** The combined population of the parish grouping is 15,382, with a high proportion of young families. The geographical area incorporates the villages of Echt, Midmar, Monymusk, Sauchen, Kemnay, Kintore, Chapel of Garioch, the hamlet of Blairdaff and the parish of Cluny. There has been increased housing development in Kintore, Kemnay, and Sauchen. There has also been new housing in Echt, Dunecht and Monymusk. There is one secondary school in Kemnay and links within the parish to academies in Alford, Inverurie and Oldmeldrum. Presbytery encourages the team ministry to focus sufficient resources on the significant areas of population in Kemnay and Kintore.

The Presbytery sees this team ministry as strategic for mission due to the strengths related to the proclamation of the Good News of the Kingdom of God, the development and use of technology for different forms of ministry, embracing fresh expressions of ministry (such as Messy Church and Godly Play), holistic community engagement, and sustained concern for the integrity of creation. It considers the geographical area to be significant due to the size of the population, the number of schools, and the increasing presence of young families, each of which offers specific mission opportunities. In addition, there is considerable potential for using retained properties (such as Kemnay Church Centre) as strategic locations for collaborative ministry and mission in the future.

This grouping has been working towards developing its identity as a team ministry, and this has brought considerable energy to the entire grouping. Since 2020, this grouping has produced joint online services which are edited in Kemnay and shared throughout the entire grouping. This has especially benefitted members of the churches who are isolated and alone. Additionally, ministers in the group have also helped to fill the pulpit at Blairdaff/Chapel of Garioch. There is a desire for this team to continue working together by continuing to build on their very good foundation. To facilitate this process, the churches in this grouping have created a steering group which meets regularly to discern the way forward in their shared ministry. We commend their great start in working together and encourage them to continue to develop their missional goals and aims in the time to come.

Ultimately, this grouping will become a Team Ministry through Union, and the united parish would be a union of the existing congregations. The PPRG has determined that the appropriate ministry resources for this grouping should be two FTEMWS and 0.5 MDS post. The remit of the MDS post would be determined based on the current and future ministry and mission needs of the grouping. The PPRG strongly believe that making the 0.5 post a MDS post allows greater flexibility for the grouping in terms of meeting its mission objectives.

#### Statistics:

Parish	Population as of June 2020	Roll as of Dec 2021	Avg Sunday Worship	New Communicants	Baptisms 2021	Funerals 2021	Ministry & Mission Contributions
Blairdaff and Chapel of Garioch	2,229	277	30	0	2	6	£22,900.00
Cluny	1,057	154	15	0	0	10	£18,256.00
Echt and Midmar	1,464	242	44	0	2	8	£21,688.00
Kemnay	4,467	403	80	0	1	6	£52,788.00
Kintore	5325	603	120	0	0	17	£58,204.00
Monymusk	840	87	15	0	2	3	£12,123.00

#### Classification of Buildings

The condition and location of the buildings in this parish grouping were considered.

With Kemnay and Kintore being strategic locations for mission, Kemnay Church, Kintore Church, and Kemnay Church Centre are to be retained. Given the geography of the combined parish and a commitment to enabling worshipping communities, Echt Church, Chapel of Garioch Church, and Monymusk Church are also to be retained.

Blairdaff Church, Midmar Church, Cluny Church and Cluny Church Hall have been classified B and will be released.

We would encourage the grouping to consider the use of the community hall in Midmar (village hall in Glenwood).

## The newly formed charge would address the Five Marks of Mission as follows:

### 1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom

- Preaching the good news of the kingdom on a weekly basis through creative means and the use of technology.
- Exploration of how to reach young families across the communities through involvement in the Growing Young initiative (led through Kintore).
- Sharing worship across the parish using the technological advances of recent years.
- Special worship services throughout the year online and in person throughout the parish
- To continue to develop connections and share the good news of the Kingdom of God within School Chaplaincy in the local primary schools and academy.

### 2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers

- Provision of teaching to children and young people on a weekly basis and development of links through youth organisations and how we can share resources across the group.
- Running new members' classes on a required basis as a group.
- Provision of Messy Church or Sunday Schools in the villages (monthly or weekly)
- 'Meet Jesus' course developed jointed across Kintore and Echt and Midmar.
- Provision of worship in local care homes (again using technology where possible, led by Kemnay)

### 3. To respond to human need by loving service

- Provision of pastoral care across the various communities, involving the elders within the congregations
- Provision of a space for the community and community groups in all the villages.
  - Using the Kemnay Church Centre as a hub for some of these connections. Their mission statement is: *That the love of Christ might flow from this place.'*)
- Building connections and outreach through coffee shops and drop-in coffee times such as Brew 'n Bletcher in Echt, Kintore's Drop-in Cafe, and the Loaves and Fishes Coffee Shop in Kemnay.
- Providing practical help to those in need, such a shopping, providing transport, etc.
- To respond to poverty and mental illness through the development of the Lunch Club for those in need of companionship and fellowship centred at Kemnay
- To build relationships and vital connections and outreach to younger families through Mainly Music type groups centred in Echt, Monymusk, and Kemnay

### 4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation

- Supporting:
  - Famine Relief for the Orphans of Malawi (F.R.O.M.);
  - Charlie's House;
  - The Cyrenians;
  - Foodbanks in Inverurie;
  - Instant Neighbour Trust;
  - Christian Aid; and
  - Toilet Twinning.

5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

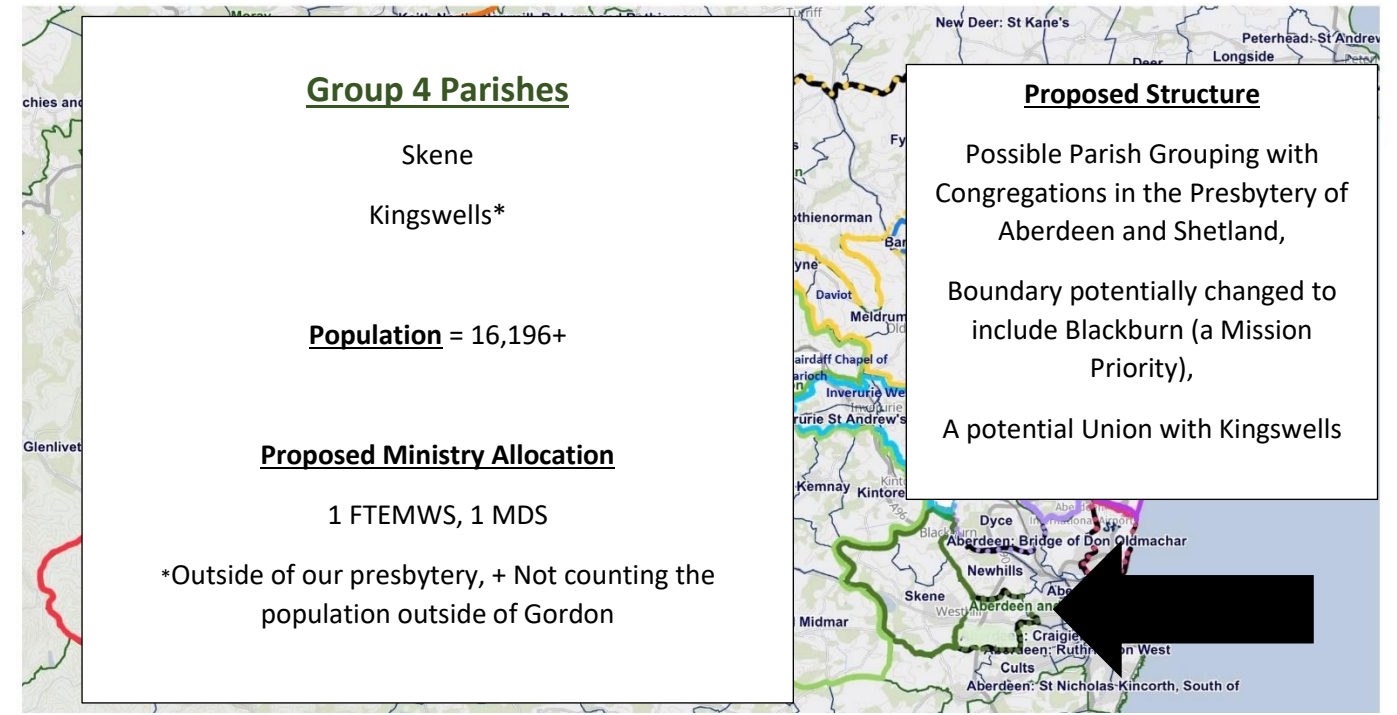
- Providing a base for Sustainable Kintore’s work to raise awareness of issues around the climate crisis. This is an initiative which was established by the church. Working in partnership with the local community, including the farming community. Organising litter picking and promoting gardening. Encouraging the leadership of young people in these events.
- Development of wild-life friendly garden in Kintore and potential pursuit of Eco-congregation status.
- Monymusk’s Wildlife Conservation Project
- Continuing to embrace being Fairtrade and Eco Congregations (such as in Cluny and Kemnay, etc)

**Presbytery Mission Plan for Group 3:**

Parish Grouping	Congregation Name	Current Status	Plan for the Parish Grouping	Buildings	Dates of Closure
3	Cluny	Unrestricted charge. Linked with Monymusk	Creation of a single parish under a Team Ministry  Union of the churches in this parish grouping  2 FTEMWS 0.5 MDS	Cluny Church (B) Cluny Church Hall (B)	31 December 2024
3	Monymusk	Unrestricted charge. Linked with Cluny		Monymusk (A)	n/a
3	Echt and Midmar	Unrestricted charge		Echt (A) Midmar (B)	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2022
3	Kemnay	Unrestricted charge		Kemnay Church (A) Church Centre (A)	n/a
3	Kintore	Unrestricted charge		Kintore Church (A)	n/a
3	Blairdaff and Chapel of Garioch	Vacant charge		Blairdaff Church (B) Chapel of Garioch (A)	Blairdaff Church 31st August 2024
			Total 2.5 FTE		

# MISSION AND MINISTRY GROUP 4

## IN GORDON PRESBYTERY



### Mission and Ministry Group 4:

#### SKENE

**Proposed Structure:** As we seek to prioritise mission, ministry, and a local worshipping presence in the Parish of Skene (Group 4) we envision a possible Parish Grouping with congregations from the Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland, the expanding of the parish boundaries to include the Mission Priority Area of Blackburn and a potential union with the Parish of Kingswells.

**Mission Narrative:** The Parish of Skene incorporates the villages of Kirkton of Skene, Garlogie, Lyne of Skene and the town of Westhill. The population of the parish is 13,136 and it has within its bounds four primary schools and one secondary school. There has been considerable development within the town of Westhill in recent years and the congregation has worked hard to develop its relationship with the community.

The Presbytery considers this parish to be significant for mission due to the considerable opportunities which exist in sharing the gospel through connections in the local schools and with the growing community in their 30s/40s. Trinity Church provides a well-equipped hub for the community and is a significant base for ecumenical working given its shared nature with the local Roman Catholic congregation.

Blackburn is a rapidly growing village northwest of Aberdeen, Scotland, and is currently situated within the Fintray Kinellar Keithhall parish. Local amenities include an industrial estate, primary school, nursing home, post office, Starbucks Drive Thru, local Co-op and a community hall which was publicly opened on 2 March 2005. The estimated population is 3,060. The presbytery considers it to be an important location for mission, given the increasing population of younger families. PPRG intend a revision of the parish boundaries to bring Blackburn into the Parish of Skene. This requires the agreement of the Kirk Sessions of Fintray Kinellar Keithhall and Skene. The boundary line has been agreed by representatives of both Kirk

Sessions and next steps are ongoing to determine if the boundary change is to be formalised. (Please note the maps show the proposed changed boundary).

Skene Parish Church is a single charge with a team ministry of one FTEMWS and one MDS. Given recent developments in the parish groupings in the Presbytery of Gordon, the PPRG instructed Skene Parish Church to enter into conversations across presbytery boundaries to determine the possibility of joining a parish grouping in the Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland. A conversation has emerged between the parish of Skene and the parish of Kingswells with reference to moving towards a union of the churches. In the event that a union proceeds, an additional 0.5 MDS post may be assigned to the union. However, it is noted that Kingswells is also in conversation with Group 3 (Aberdeen West Area) and further exploration with Skene will depend on the outcome of that.

The role of Associate Minister is to be retained on the basis that it enables the congregation to develop mission opportunities within the existing parish with those in their 30s/40s and to allow for a specific missional project to be undertaken with Blackburn.

**Statistics:**

Parish	Population as of June 2020	Roll as of Dec 2021	Avg Worship Attendance	New Communicants	Baptisms	Funerals	Ministry & Mission Contributions
Skene Parish Church	16,196 (Inclusive of Blackburn)	1012	120	0	1	38	£86,111.00

**Classification of Buildings**

The condition and location of the buildings in this parish grouping were considered.

Westhill is a strategic location for mission therefore Trinity Church, Westhill is to be retained. Skene Church is also to be retained, on the basis that the congregation pursues opportunities for partnership that would enable the usage of the building to be increased. This should be reviewed within the lifetime of the plan.

We’re intending for the Parish of Skene’s boundary to be expanded to include Blackburn. Therefore, the PPRG encourages presbytery to explore the status of the Community Hall in Blackburn with the help of the Law Department, with regards to future use. A substantial financial contribution was made at the outset by FKK, and it currently receives free timeslots in the timetable as a consequence.

**The charge address the Five Marks of Mission as follows:**

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
  - Regular Sunday services at both Skene Kirk & Trinity Church.
  - Virtual services (via Facebook etc) in response to pandemic and livestreaming on a regular basis.
  - Development of chaplaincy services to four local primary schools and one secondary school. This has included the provision of assemblies, Prayer Spaces in Schools and Bible Alive.
  - Restart of afternoon tea services which are geared towards the elderly and those who find Sunday worship challenging.
  - Ecumenical, annual, holiday bible club that attracts over 100 kids each year.
  - Involvement with community organisations creating opportunities to share the gospel e.g., presence at Westhill Gala and Christmas Light Switching On.

## 2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers

- Weekly bible study and monthly online ladies' group, particularly aimed at encouraging younger women.
- Weekly prayer meeting and development of 24/7 prayer rooms. Recently this involved working ecumenically in the community and beyond and reaching out to those in the community to ask about prayer needs. Involvement in Westhill monthly ecumenical prayer gathering and developing links with other denominations.
- Development of café church, incorporating space for discussion and prayers for healing.
- Provision of weekly teaching for children and young people.
- Messy Church established and run by Children and Families Development Worker and geared towards families that are unchurched or have a limited connection.
- Chaplaincy and involvement in youth organisations including Boys' Brigade, Girls' Brigade and ATC.

## 3. To respond to human need by loving service

- Development of response to mental health issues through our Children and Families Development Worker.
- Strong pastoral care group incorporating elders and non-elders, visiting all those over 80 on the communion roll.
- Working in partnership with community organisations to provide a response to need e.g., Resilience Group during the pandemic.
- Development of response to loneliness within the community through exploration of the possibility of a lunch club.
- Local youth club run in Kirkton of Skene.

## 4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation

- Partnership working with Citizens Advice Bureau to respond to financial burdens in the community.
- Annual collection for Christian Aid and support for Tearfund partners.
- Regular collections for foodbanks and active involvement in resettlement programme for Syrian refugees.
- Active partner in local forums to help develop the wellbeing of the community and response to needs.
- Support for partners in Malawi through finances and knitting.

## 5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

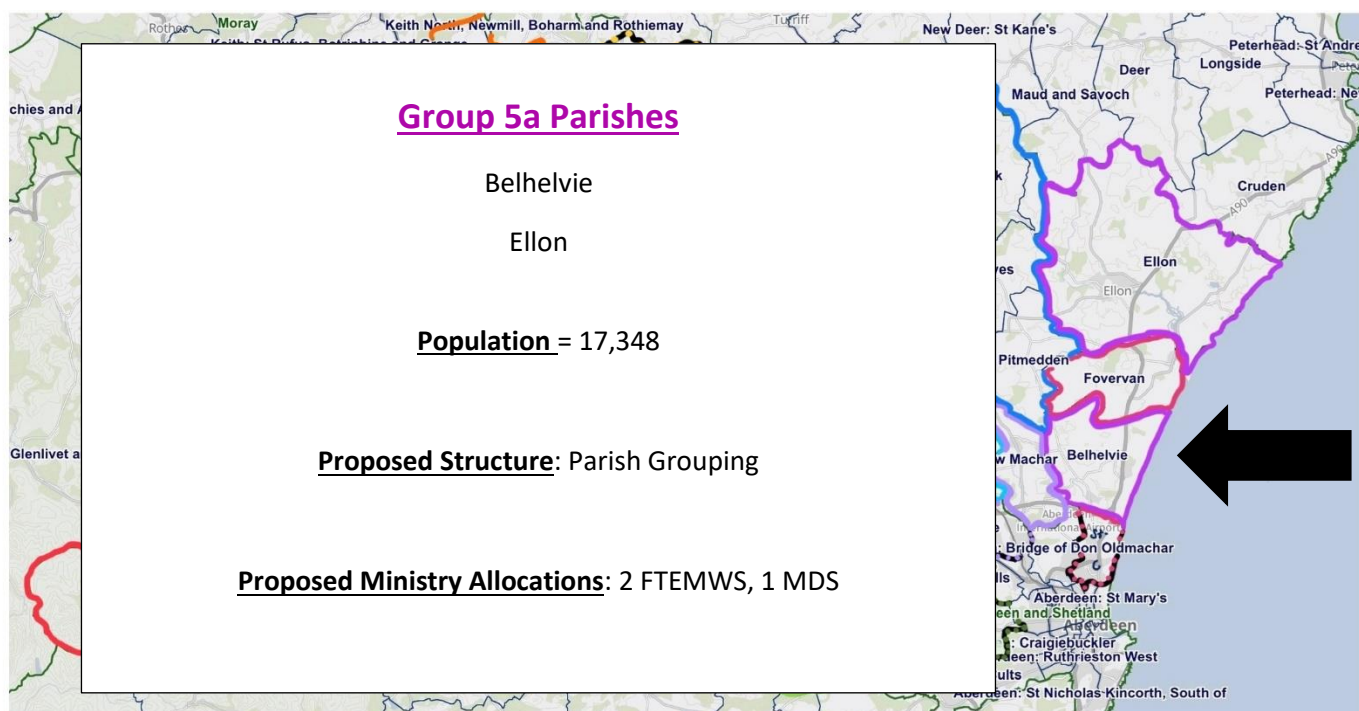
- Eco-congregation with an active Eco group that has developed the garden at Trinity.

Presbytery Mission Plan for Group 4:

Parish Grouping	Congregation Name	Current status	Plan for Parish Grouping	Buildings	Dates of Closure
4	Skene	Unrestricted Charge One FTEMWS One MDS (Currently Associate minister) One Locally Funded Post – Children and Families Worker	Potential Union with Kingswells to be explored subject to conversations in the Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland. Prioritising Mission Area of Blackburn and encourage the congregation to open up conversations with a neighbouring grouping in the Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland.  1 FTEMWS 1 MDS	Skene Kirk (A)  <i>(To be reviewed within the life of the plan)</i>  Trinity Church (A)	n/a
			Total = 2 FTE		

## MISSION AND MINISTRY GROUP 5A

IN GORDON PRESBYTERY



### Mission and Ministry Group 5a:

BELHELVIE, ELLON, AND FOVERAN

**Proposed Structure:** As we seek to prioritise mission, ministry and a local worshipping presence in Group 5a we envision a Parish Grouping between Ellon and Belhelvie.

**Overall Mission Narrative:** During the planning process there have been changes to this particular grouping, which incorporates two larger congregations. However, within the revised grouping there are particular strengths around community engagement, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God, and building relationships with the school communities.

#### Statistics:

Parish	Population as of June 2020	Roll as of Dec 2021	Avg Worship Attendance	New Communicants	Baptisms	Funerals	Ministry & Mission Contributions
Ellon Parish Church	12,140	1,242	159	0	1	53	£109,524.00
Belhelvie Parish Church	5,208	293	80	0	1	13	£56,283.00

## Mission Narrative: Ellon

Ellon is a sizeable town with a population of 12,140 and offers significant mission opportunities for the presbytery, particularly with children, young people and working-aged adults. It encompasses a number of primary schools and a secondary school. Specific work is being done around the development of mission and work with children and families within the team ministry that is currently engaged in the charge. Moreover, the Kirk Centre provides a community facility which is well used for missional purposes and enables ecumenical working. This is another area where development is on-going. Recently Ellon Parish opened a new Community Café / Larder and Shop in the Kirk Centre. Having seen a significant rise in the number of individuals and families being supported by our foodbank, 'Basics Barn' our Mission Development Worker proposed to the Kirk Session that we use the now vacant Coffee Shop space in the Kirk Centre as a way of supporting and engaging the community.

In developing the Community Café / Larder / Shop project we imagine a community where all are welcome, everyone and everything is treated with dignity, generosity and respect, and where everyone feels supported and empowered to support others. We also envisage this to be a way of signposting the community to other activities and services that Ellon Parish can provide such as bereavement care and courses, debt counselling courses, the Alpha Course to explore faith, Holidays Clubs and young people's activities and fellowship groups for adults of all ages.

The PPRG envisages one FTEMWS for this charge, together with retaining two 0.5MDS posts in relation to Children and Families Work and Mission Development. The other current MDS post is to remain until 31 December 2025, at which point the post will be ended.

### The charge address the Five Marks of Mission as follows:

#### 1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom

- Regular Sunday services at Ellon Parish Church.
- Regular services in Care Homes and Sheltered Housing complexes.
- Virtual services (via Facebook etc) initially in response to pandemic and now as an embedded part of our practise.
- DVD delivery of recorded services
- Weekly on-line worship, prayer and discipleship opportunities (Friday Morning Prayer, Bible Ponder & Tuesday Sung Worship)
- Development of chaplaincy services to local primary schools and one secondary school.
- Youth Events with the Girls' and Boys' Brigades and the Cardboard Café Nativity.
- Questers Activity Week for primary aged children.
- Star Squad, Illuminate, Twinkle Stars Sunday
- Star Squad Wednesday Mid Week Primary School aged after school activity group.

#### 2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers

- Increasing numbers of young people and families attending creative worship, with a desire on the part of the church to encourage them to nurture one another's faith.
- Regular Discipleship Courses (Prayer Course, Alpha Course)
- Running a summer holiday club (Questers), as well as in-service day clubs.
- Bible Ponder
- Fortnightly Life Groups (3 groups currently)
- Exploring the establishment of a "Guild"

3. To respond to human need by loving service

- Kirk Centre Community Café / Larder / Shop (see above)
- Provision of space for local community groups e.g., Cardboard Café Mum and Toddlers Group.
- Active Pastoral Care through Neighbourhoods of Care model, post bereavement visitations and flower ministry.
- Community Café / Larder / Shop & food parcel deliveries.
- Exploring the establishment of a “Guild”

4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation

- Fairtrade group which runs a stall on a monthly basis at the end of the service.
- Equity and Justice team, which runs events to raise awareness of Christian Aid, Rwandan Schools Village Project (RSVP), Compassion International and Care for Creation.
- Kirk Centre Community Café / Larder / Shop (see above)

5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

- Equity and Justice Care for Creation Group (‘Oodie’ Service, Outdoor Worship Service)
- Harvest Thanksgiving Service with a focus on Care for Creation.
- Kirk Centre Community Café / Larder / Shop utilises surplus food that would end up in food waste by partnering with local shops such as Co-Op, Bare, Tesco, Costcutter.
- ‘Save a Loaf’ and surplus foods given away for a donation after worship services.

### **Mission Narrative: Belhelvie**

Belhelvie is a younger than average parish. It is also a significantly more secular with more than half of the residents declaring ‘no religion’. The congregation has identified their parish as a clear mission field and have undertaken specific work around engaging with the community in the development of the Annexe building next to the church. The population of the parish is 5,208 and with the recent changes in the road network, the church is now much more accessible to the community of Balmedie. In addition, if all the housing developments locally come to fruition, the parish of Belhelvie could double in population within the next 10 years. There are plans for several hundred new homes in Balmedie and Blackdog.

The presbytery considers the parish to be significant for mission because of the demographics of the population and the work of the congregation in developing links with the community. There is an emphasis on equipping disciples to live out their faith and resources such as ‘Imagine Church’ and ‘Fruitfulness on the Frontline’ are helping to shape the work missionally.

The PPRG envisages one FTEMWS for this charge.

### **The charge address the Five Marks of Mission as follows:**

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom

- Regular Sunday services at Belhelvie Parish Church.
- Virtual services (via Facebook etc) in response to pandemic and livestreaming on a regular basis.
- Engaging effectively with young families through the offering of Mainly Music.
- Building connections with community through local events including the Gingerbread Village event in Advent.
- Operating a summer holiday club for children and young people.

- School chaplaincy with the local primary school including assemblies and classroom work. Potential development of Scripture Union Club at the school.
  - Provision of special services throughout the year, including Christmas services, Remembrance service and Thinking Day and Founders' Day services.
  - Operation of a men's group – drawing in men from outside the congregation.
  - Running Alpha and Discovering Christianity courses.
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- Creation of prayer labyrinths
  - A regular prayer group
  - Weekly church youth group. There is a desire to see this expand to host youthwork with unchurched children in the parish.
3. To respond to human need by loving service
- Working with local primary school to deliver the 'Seasons for Growth' resource, helping young people through experiences of change and loss.
  - Provision of a quiet, reflective space during Advent (SoulSpace).
  - Operating a monthly drop-in café from the Annexe.
  - Running parenting and marriage classes from the 'Care for the Family' stable.
  - Provision of pastoral care, including to Balmedie House, the local Church of Scotland Care Home.
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
- Hosting film nights to raise awareness of justice issues e.g., 2040 for COP26.
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.
- Involvement in local projects such as Better Balmedie and Belhelvie Community Trust.

### **Classification of Buildings**

The condition and location of the buildings in this parish grouping were considered.

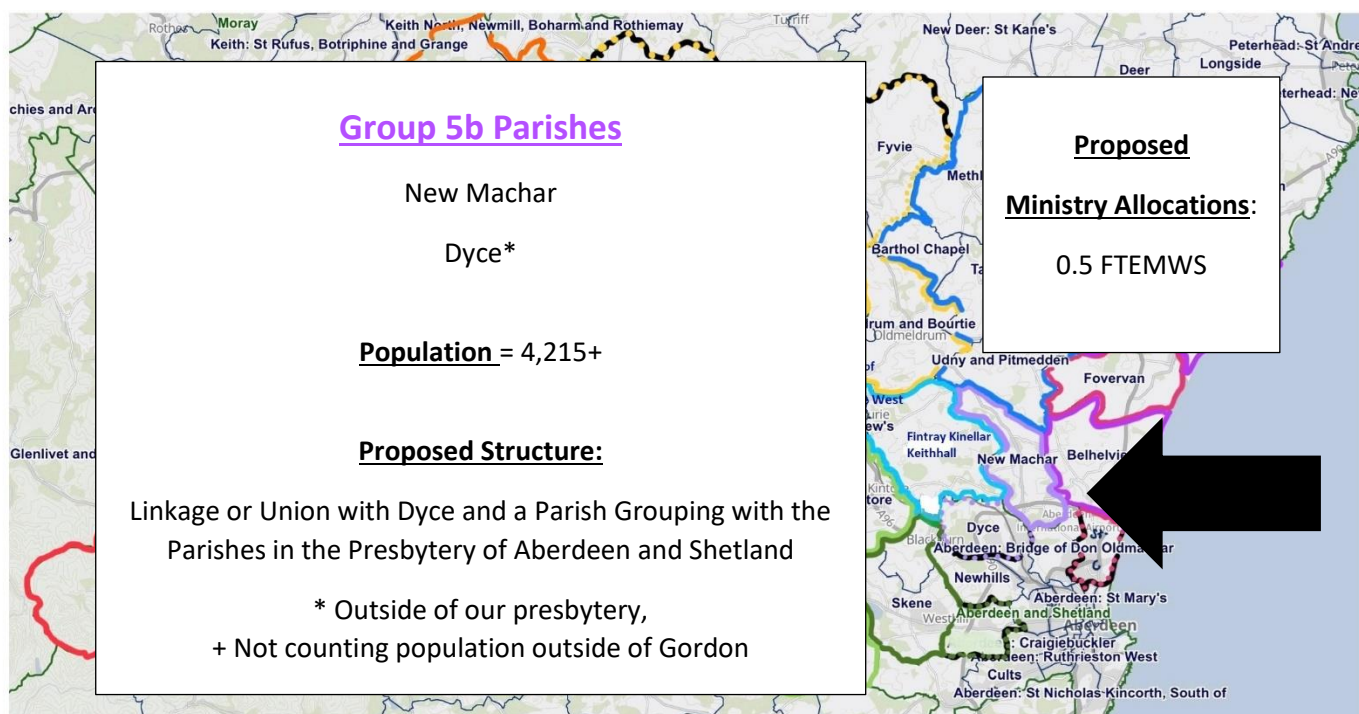
Ellon and Belhelvie are strategic locations for mission, therefore Ellon Parish Church, Ellon Kirk Centre, Belhelvie Parish Church and the Forsyth Hall and Annexe are to be retained. We note the considerable investment that has been made in these buildings, together with external funding. We note the considerable missional opportunities for Ellon Kirk Centre and the Forsyth Hall and Annexe.

Presbytery Mission Plan in Group 5a:

Parish Grouping	Congregation Name	Avg @ Sunday Worship	Current status	Plan for Parish Grouping	Buildings	Dates of Closure
5a	Ellon	159	Unrestricted charge One FTEMWS 1 MDS (1 Ministries) (0.5 Children and Families) (0.5 Mission Development)	Parish Grouping  A covenant agreement to be developed.  Reduction of MDS posts by	Ellon Parish Church (A) Ellon Church Centre (A)	n/a
5	Belhelvie	80	Unrestricted charge	one MDS post. This post will remain on until 31 December 2025.	Belhelvie Church (A) Forysth Hall (A)	n/a
				Total: 3.0 FTE		

## MISSION AND MINISTRY GROUP 5B

### IN GORDON PRESBYTERY



## Mission and Ministry Group 5b:

### NEWMACHAR

**Proposed Structure:** As we seek to prioritise mission, ministry, and a local worshipping presence in Newmachar (Group 5b) we envision a linkage or union with Dyce Parish Church in the Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland.

**Mission Narrative:** Newmachar is a parish with a population of 4,215. There is particular strength in this congregation regarding the ministry of the whole people of God, with considerable work done over the years to train and equip the congregation in leading worship and discipling others. The Pathway Centre provides an excellent space for the development of links with the community.

The combined parish population is estimated at over 10,000. Within the new parish there are a number of primary schools and one secondary school.

The PPRG envisages a linkage or union being put in place between New Machar Parish Church and Dyce Parish Church. The PPRG envisages one FTEMWS for this charge (with 0.5 within the Presbytery of Gordon MP and 0.5 within the Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland MP).

## Statistics:

Parish	Population as of June 2020	Roll as of Dec 2021	Avg Worship Attendance	New Communicants	Baptisms	Funerals	Ministry & Mission Contributions
New Machar Parish Church	4,215	332	35	0	0	11	£42,862.00

## Classification of Buildings:

The condition and location of the buildings in this parish grouping were considered. New Machar Parish Church and the Pathway Centre are to be retained. This is subject to further consultation with the Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland and the discussions with Dyce Parish Church.

## New Machar will address the Five Marks of Mission as follows:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
  - Weekly worship
  - Café church
  - Worship in sheltered housing complex.
  - Prayer group
  - Bible study
  - Prayer walks
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
  - Cool Club (Sunday school)
  - Bible study
  - Bible Explores (external group for primary aged children)
  - Ladies' discussion group
  - Men's fellowship group
  - Christianity Explored/Alpha courses
  - LAFF (Ladies of all ages friendly fellowship)
  - Primary school outreach
  - Holiday club for primary aged children
3. To respond to human need by loving service
  - Kids' games nights for the community
  - Community film nights
  - Community quizzes
  - Coffee mornings with percentage of proceeds to various charities
  - Christmas carol service at sheltered housing

4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation

- Christian Aid week – doorstep collection and fundraising lunch.
- Foodbank – collection of food, etc. and monetary donation from Christmas eve collection

5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

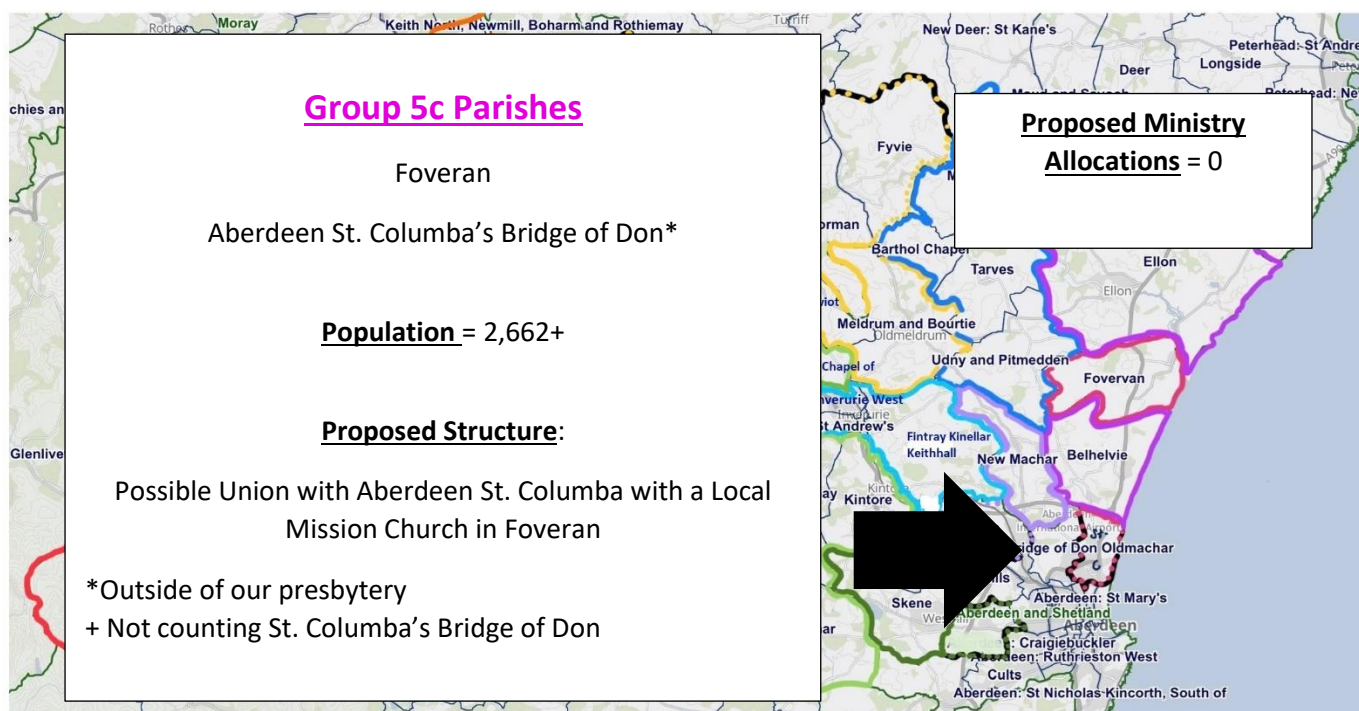
- Eco church
- Harvest service with eco focus
- Minimise waste and recycle whenever possible
- Village litter picks

**Presbytery Mission Plan for Group 5b:**

Parish Grouping	Congregation Name	Current status	Plan for Parish Grouping	Buildings	Dates of Closures
5b	New Machar	Vacant Charge	Enter into a linkage or union with Dyce Parish Church in the Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland	New Machar Church (A) Pathway Centre (A)	n/a
			0.5 FTE		

## MISSION AND MINISTRY GROUP 5c

### IN GORDON PRESBYTERY



#### Mission Narrative: Foveran

The population of Foveran is 2,662, with the distinct community of Newburgh. Geographically it is located in between the parishes of Ellon and Belhelvie and bounded by the sea. The presbytery recognises the commitment to maintain worshipping, witnessing and serving Christian congregations throughout Scotland. The congregation shows a real desire to engage missionally in their community and has entered into conversations with St Columba's Bridge of Don regarding working together. This is a change from the previous draft of the MP.

The PPRG envisages Foveran Church continuing discussions with St Columba's Bridge of Don, with a view to exploring the possibility of becoming a Local Mission Church in union with St Columba's Bridge of Don.

#### Statistics:

Parish	Population as of June 2020	Roll as of Dec 2021	Avg Worship Attendance	New Communicants	Baptisms	Funerals	Ministry & Mission Contributions
Foveran	2,662	180	--	0	1	6	£27,750.00

#### Classification of Buildings

The condition and location of the buildings in this parish grouping were considered. With the establishment of a Local Mission Church, Foveran Church Hall is also to be retained and has been categorised as 'A'. This decision was taken by the congregation, supported by the PPRG.

Holyrood Chapel is categorised as 'B' and is to be released.

**The Local Mission Church would address the Five Marks of Mission as follows:**

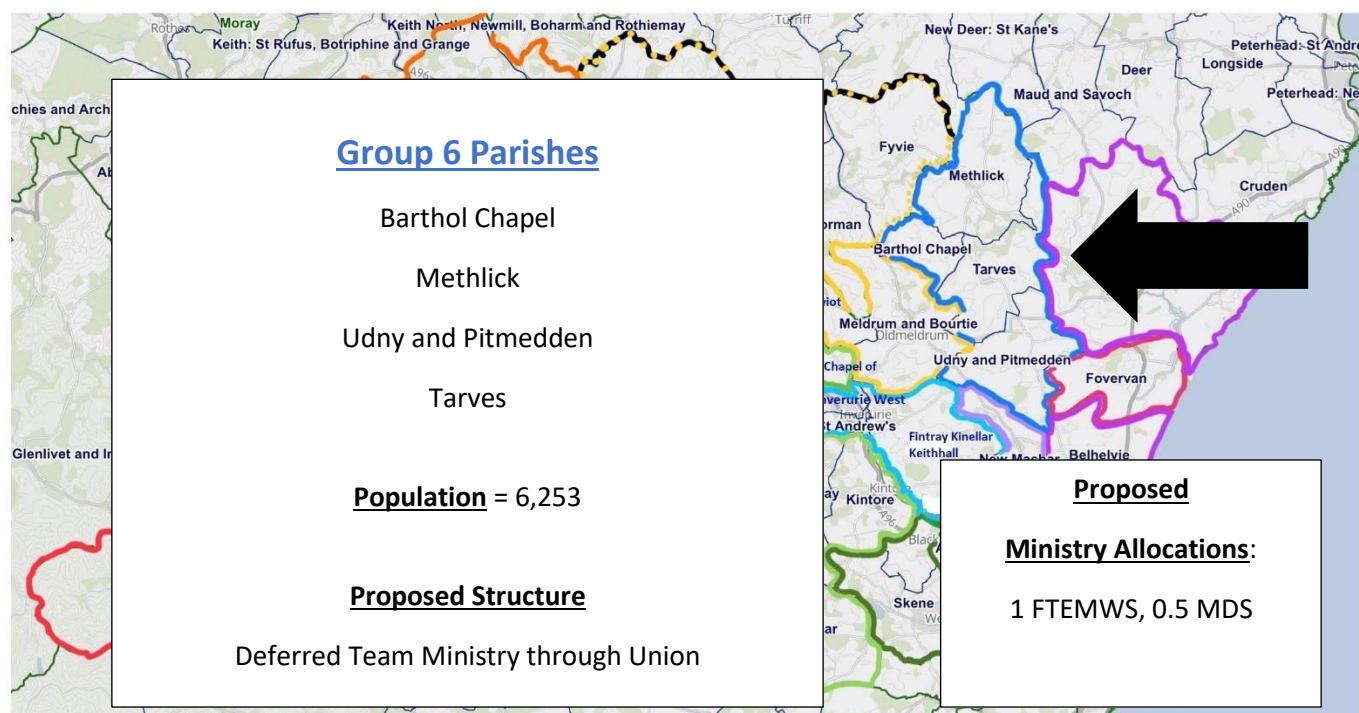
1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom  
 Weekly Sunday services at Foveran Parish Church.  
 Additional special services throughout the year, including Christmas and Easter.  
 Continued support to the three local school communities – school services, school assemblies, Easter Journey, SU Groups.  
 Operation of young married couples’ group.
  
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers  
 Regular prayer meetings and desire to learn on behalf of the existing congregation.  
 Continue provision of holiday club, summer and October and Holiday Club Meet Up once a month.  
 Weekly Bible Study groups, which are led by Elders.  
 Continue running of Soul Food Sunday once a month.
  
3. To respond to human need by loving service  
 Church run Mother and Toddlers’ Group.  
 Church run Knit and Natter group for the community.  
 Community Outreach Café run by the Church for the community every Thursday.
  
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation.  
 Church member running Alcoholics Anonymous in Foveran Church.

**Presbytery Mission Plan for Group 5c:**

Parish Grouping	Congregation Name	Current status	Plan for Parish Grouping	Buildings	Dates of Closures
5c	Foveran	Vacant Charge	Conversation with St Columba’s Bridge of Don to continue regarding entering into a union with St. Columba’s Bridge of Don in the Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland and becoming a Local Mission Church	Holyrood Chapel (B) Foveran Church Hall (A)	Holyrood Chapel November 2027

## MISSION AND MINISTRY GROUP 6

### IN GORDON PRESBYTERY



### Mission and Ministry Group 6:

BARTHOL CHAPEL, METHLICK, UDNY & PITMEDDEN, AND TARVES

**Proposed Structure:** As we seek to prioritise mission, ministry, and a local worshipping presence in Group 6 we envision a Team Ministry through Union in Barthol Chapel, Methlick, Udny & Pitmedden, and Tarves.

**Mission Narrative:** This grouping has been working together for a number of years in relation to the Formartine Youth Project, with a shared, locally funded, youth worker. A pro-active management group consisting of representation from the four congregations manages this project. The purpose of the project is to take mission and service to younger people within the local communities and schools, many of whom are 'outwith' the traditional and established church circles. The congregations work closely and have a constructive working relationship with the Presbytery's Youth Facilitator.

The combined population is 6,503. There are a number of primary schools in the combined parish, and it incorporates the villages of Barthol Chapel, Methlick, Pitmedden, Tarves, and Udny. There is new housing in Tarves and more planned in the future. There are strengths in the grouping around the proclaiming of the good news of the Kingdom of God, where technology is being leveraged to engage with more people in the community, development of relationships with young families, and community engagement. There are distinct communities within the parish and a sense in which the congregations are at the heart and soul of each of these communities.

The presbytery considers there to be missional opportunities through the youth work programme; and through the energy and passion of the existing charges to share the gospel with those who are unchurched and to nurture the faith of new believers.

The PPRG envisages, in time, the formation of a single parish through the union of the four churches with a team ministry. Given the current mix of vacancies and ministry, it is intended that a deferred team ministry union be entered into in. The team ministry union will consist of one FTEMWS, a 0.5 MDS post to be developed by the new union, and the locally funded youth worker.

**Statistics:**

Parish	Population as of June 2020	Roll as of Dec 2021	Avg Worship Attendance	New Communicants	Baptisms	Funerals	Ministry & Mission Contributions
Barthol Chapel	487	63	15	0	0	1	£7,502.00
Methlick	1,125	293	74	0	7	27	£44,212.00
Udny and Pitmedden	2,531	219	25	0	1	8	£40,056.00
Tarves	2,110	231	45	0	0	18	£26,307.00

**Classification of Buildings:**

The condition and location of the buildings in this parish grouping were considered.

Given the geography of the combined parish and a commitment to enabling worshipping communities, Pitmedden Kirk, Methlick Church, Tarves Church and Tarves Youth Hall are to be retained. We note the planned investment in Tarves Youth Hall, including external funding.

The sale of Udny Green has already been agreed and is proceeding.

Barthol Chapel and Methlick Stables have been classified B and will be released.

We would encourage the grouping to pursue the interest that has already been expressed by the community of Barthol Chapel to take ownership of the church building.

**The new united charge will address the Five Marks of Mission as follows:**

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom

- Regular services of worship across the combined parish, including livestreaming and the use of technology.
- Running online Alpha courses.
- Provision of special services during the year, including Remembrance, Thinking Day, Founders’ Day and Christmas.
- Provision of school chaplaincy and development of strong relationships with each of the local schools.
- Running Mainly Music and engaging with young families at both Pitmedden and Methlick.
- Provision of Messy Church and holiday clubs, with engagement with children and young families at Tarves.
- Provision in the school holidays of midweek intergenerational events across the grouping

2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers

- Running the Bible Society Bible Course, enabling those who wish to nurture their new faith to explore the Word of God with other Christians.
- Running the Community Bible Experience.
- Home Groups and Bible Studies on a regular basis.

- Provision of youth work through the Formartine youth project.

### 3. To respond to human need by loving service

- Providing space to community groups across the combined parish, such as the Knit and Natter in Methlick, WRI, Community Councils. The Tarves Youth Hall provides a home for groups such as Toddlers Group, Playgroup, Keep fit, Karate, Football training, Dancing and many other users.
- Providing a monthly drop off point for donations of food and toiletries for Aberdeenshire North Foodbank.
- Pastoral care provided across the combined parish, with particular emphasis on responding to need e.g., Tarves Church became the base for making up bags of necessities for the elderly and food bags for young families who were struggling. This work won an award from AVA.
- Pastoral care to the bereaved through special services and pastoral care to those in the sheltered housing complex.
- Monthly community café in Barthol Chapel addresses issues of rural isolation.

### 4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation

- Provision of financial support to charities locally and mission partners overseas such as New Life Home Trust, which works with orphans and abandoned babies
- Support of Christian Aid.

### 5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

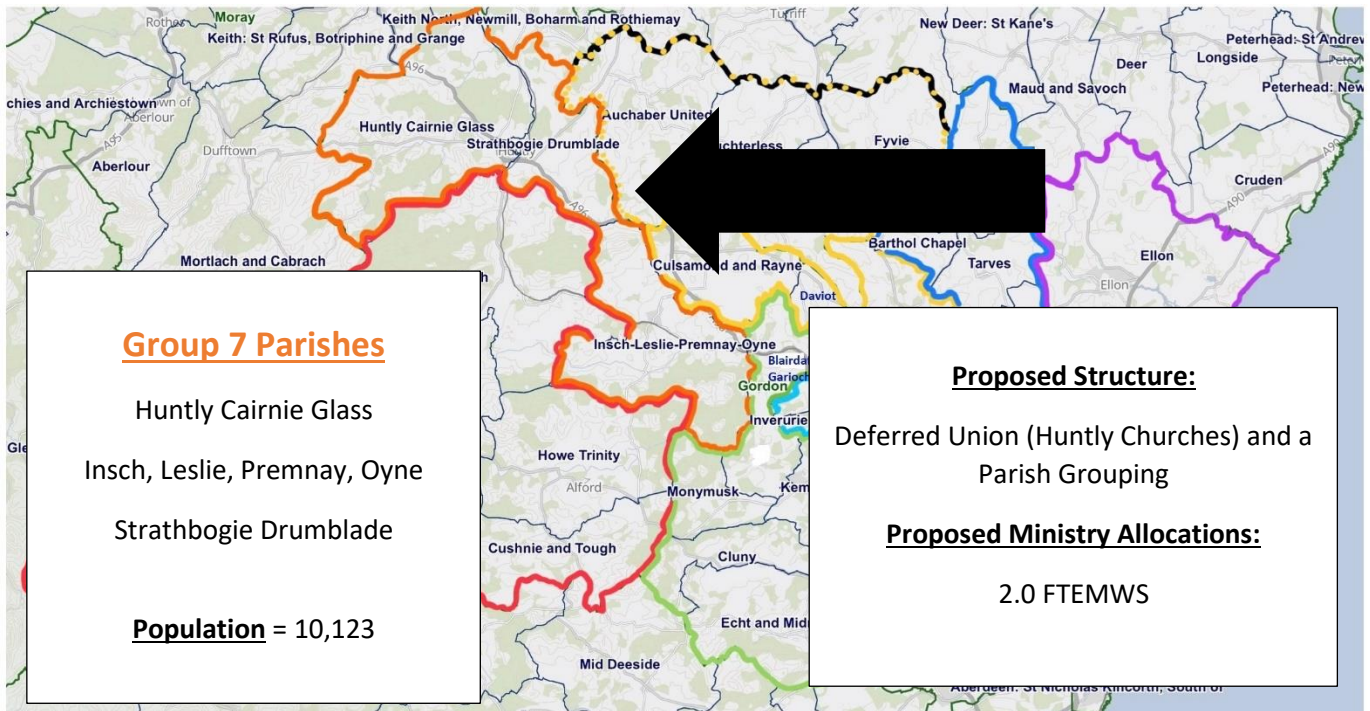
- In the aftermath of Storm Arwen, exploration of potentially helping facilitate and promote ways to replant/replace the tens of thousands of trees that were lost on Haddo Estate.
- Potential development of a community woodland in Tarves.

Presbytery Mission Plan for Group 6:

Parish Grouping	Congregation Name	Current status	Plan for Parish Grouping	Buildings	Dates of Closure:
6	Methlick	Unrestricted charge	A single parish grouping to be created in time. A deferred Team Ministry Union of all the churches in the parish grouping to be entered into.  1 FTEMWS 0.5 MDS 1 locally funded shared youth worker	Methlick Church (A) Methlick Stables (B)	Methlick Stables October 2027
6	Barthol Chapel	Unrestricted Charge linked with Tarves		Barthol Chapel Church (B)	30 <sup>th</sup> June 2023
6	Tarves	Unrestricted Charge linked with Barthol Chapel		Tarves Church (A) Youth Hall (A)	n/a
6	Udny & Pitmedden	Unrestricted charge		Udny Church (B) Pitmedden Church (A)	Udny Church - Already on the market
			Total: 1.5 FTE		

## MISSION AND MINISTRY GROUP 7

### IN GORDON PRESBYTERY



## Mission and Ministry Group 7:

HUNTLY CAIRNIE GLASS, STRATHBOGIE DRUMBLADE, AND INSCH LESLIE-PREMNAY OYNE

**Proposed Structure:** As we seek to prioritise mission, ministry, and a local worshipping presence in Group 7 we envision a Deferred Union in Huntly between Huntly Cairnie Glass and Huntly Strathbogie Drumblade and a Parish Grouping to include the Parish of Insch Leslie Premnay Oyne.

**Mission Narrative:** Huntly is a market town in the north of the Presbytery of Gordon. The combined parishes have an estimated population of 7,500 with a considerable schools' presence. There is work currently being done to bring regeneration to the town, which attracted £2.49m of funding from the Scottish Government. Therefore, from a mission perspective, the PPRG believes Huntly is a strategic location, which requires ministry resources.

There is a particular emphasis on Fairtrade and sustainable living, which the congregations have a desire to participate in. This would fit with both the fourth and fifth marks of mission.

In addition, according to recent statistics, Huntly has the highest level of income deprivation and unemployment in the presbytery. Together with the second highest crime rate, Huntly is an important focus for mission given the Church of Scotland's priority to the poor.

The congregations of Huntly Carnie Glass and Strathbogie Drumblade have identified that the best way to enable mission within the town and to continue a Christian witness is to come together in a union.

The PPRG believes the combined church would be outward looking and engaged with its community. The church has “a commitment to maintain worshipping, witnessing and serving Christian congregations throughout Scotland,” and the PPRG believe that the combined church would enable this within Huntly.

**Statistics:**

Parish	Population as of June 2020	Roll as of Dec 2021	Avg Worship Attendance	New Communicants	Baptisms	Funerals	Ministry & Mission Contributions
Huntly Cairnie Glass	3,517	551	23	0	1	16	£36,790.00
Strathbogie Drumblade	2,536	361	75	2	3	12	£36,582.00
Insch Leslie Premnay Oyne	4,070	299	71	0	3	39	£35,31.00

**Classification of Buildings:**

The condition and location of the buildings in this parish grouping were considered. Huntly is a strategic location for mission. Of the two churches, Strathbogie Drumblade is to be retained. Huntly Cairnie Glass Church and Huntly Cairnie Glass Church Hall have been classified B and are to be released.

**As an indication of this, the churches have provided the following evidence in relation to the first three marks of mission:**

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom

We proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom through corporate worship mainly through our Sunday services. We are developing more participative worship with congregational responses and occasional reflections that involve discussion. We are also affirming and encouraging more leadership in worship with a rota of Scripture readers and those who can lead prayer.

We also proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom in our daily lives through our relationships with others and our personal lifestyles. We have a ‘Time for Reflection’ slot every second week in ‘The Huntly Expressed’ which rotates around the three denominations in Huntly (C of S, plus Scottish Episcopal and Roman Catholic) and newsletters are delivered to members of the churches.

Other examples of corporate worship, which will return once Covid restrictions ease, include:

- Ecumenical Service of remembrance for all who had lost loved ones during the last 18 months
- Harvest Thanksgiving Service, donations taken for Christian Aid
- Christmas Services: Nine Lessons and Carols
  - Early Service Christmas Eve with mince pies and coffee
  - Christmas a Party for children in community
  - School Service for Secondary pupils
  - Service for Primary Schools
- Care home services

2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers

- The churches follow up infant baptisms with children being sent birthday cards until 3 years of age, then invited to join Sunday School
- It is intended that provision for children on Sundays will restart soon.
- We are trying to start a new group based on young people's passion to see climate change halted. We wish to enable the youngsters to help us become both Eco Congregation and a Fairtrade church.
- We are planning to offer workshops to develop elders/other interested members' pastoral and worship skills and also specific elder training.
- A bible study group will be restarted post-Covid and there is interest in starting a prayer group linked to a mid-week church opening at lunch time.

### 3. To respond to human need by loving service

- Collection for Christian Aid, organised by Guild
- We contribute continually and also have special collections for the local Foodbank and more recently also the new Baby Bank. Huntly Strathbogie Drumblade are hoping to co-operate with Huntly Cairnie Glass by assisting with their Thrift and Shop and summer Café. We are aware that we need to seek to serve the community further. Ideas have been suggested for post-Covid Stovie nights, movie nights, games nights etc to encourage fellowship and interaction with the whole community.
- Knitting groups sending knitting to Romania and Malawi. The groups consist of members and non-members.
- We have recently formed a Pastoral Care Team to assist the minister by communicating to him/her those in need of card, flowers, phone-call or visit and carrying out any of the aforementioned where that is appropriate. This team also oversees the process of the ministry of flowers and transport to church for the less mobile.
- Pre-Covid visits to care homes.
- We offer an annual community service of 'Love and Light' on All Saints' night for those recently bereaved or for anyone wishing to remember a loved one.

## INSCH LESLIE PREMAY OYNE

**Mission Structure:** The PPRG envisage that the united church in Huntly will form part of a parish grouping with Inch Leslie Premay Oyne Parish Church of Scotland.

**Mission Narrative:** The parish is growing though extensive house building in Inch, Premay and Oyne and has potential for mission, particularly through community engagement. There are 3 primary schools, a sheltered housing complex, a nursing home and a community hospital, together with a private nursery. The population is 4,070.

The PPRG envisages 1.0 FTEMWS for this charge, within the Parish Grouping.

### **Classification of Buildings:**

Given the geography of the combined parish and a commitment to enabling worshipping communities, Inch Parish Church and Inch Parish Church Hall are to be retained.

## The charge address the Five Marks of Mission as follows:

### 1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom

- Sunday Morning worship with rota of readers for responsive scripture readings
- Children are involved in Sunday Worship through the use of drama
- Monthly service at the Sheltered Housing complex
- Monthly care home service
- Thinking Day service
- Holy Week services on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday; Easter Holy Communion and Family Services.
- Founders Day/Thinking Day Services for the Uniformed Organisations
- Annual Doric Service
- Harvest Thanksgiving
- Nine Lessons and Carols
- Nativity Play followed by mince pies and mulled wine
- Christingle service on Christmas Eve in the evening and Watchnight Candlelight Service
- “From Darkness to Light” service for the recently bereaved or those missing a loved one
- Annual “Young at Heart” Christmas Party for the elderly
- Promoting mission and discipleship through the use of social media and the Parish website
- Weekly Bible Study Group
- Guild activities 14
- Funerals
- Facebook Services during lockdown
- Virtual Fun Week extended to children across the Parish Grouping
- Teaching Doric to South African Ministers

### 2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers

- Baptisms with follow-up birthday cards
- Sunday Club with children participating in the Church on a Sunday
- Fun Week in August that regularly attracts 80 children, postcovid this moved from face-to-face to virtual including the distribution of activity packs to children
- Planning to restart Shake Rattle and Roll Group for toddlers
- Planning to restart Friday Youth Group
- Chaplaincy for 3 Primary Schools and Schools Services at Christmas and end of School Year
- The Minister is Padre for ATC Squadron 1298
- Work with the uniformed organisations meeting locally
- Drama production, which has in the past raised funds for the schools, uniformed organisations and Church
- Bible Study Film nights
- St. Andrew’s Night Supper and Doric Call My Bluff which is always a sell out and shows the church in a different and attractive light

### 3. To respond to human need by loving service

- Collection for Christian Aid
- Running the Community Larder
- Providing 50 meals each week to vulnerable household.
- Teas and home bakes after morning worship
- Fun and Friendship Afternoon for the elderly and especially those living alone
- Soup and Sweet lunch for Christian aid
- 2 programmes on Keith Community Radio
- Led the local covid response including food shopping, delivering prescriptions and telephone calls to the vulnerable; dog walking
- Organising and running the local Scarecrow Festival which has in the past raised funds for the schools, uniformed organisations and Church
- Regular letters to members; birthday cards and flowers sent to everyone
- Hospitals visits which are now being allowed (ARI and Roxburgh House)

### 4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation

- Support of Christian Aid

Presbytery Mission Plan for Group 7:

Parish Grouping	Congregation Name	Current Status	Plan for Parish Grouping	Buildings	Date of Closure
7	Huntly Cairnie Glass	Unrestricted Charge	It is proposed that a deferred union take place between the two congregations in Huntly with 1 FTEMWS.  Insch Leslie Premnay Oyne to retain 1 FTEMWS  Covenant Agreement to be developed within a 2-year period in the new parish grouping	Huntly Cairnie Glass Church (B) Huntly Cairnie Glass Church Hall (B)	To be confirmed, as appropriate, following appeal process.
7	Strathbogie Drumblade	Unrestricted Charge		Strathbogie Church (A)	n/a
7	Insch Leslie Premnay Oyne	Unrestricted Charge		ILPO Church (A) ILPO Hall (A)	n/a
			Total: 2.0 FTE		

## MISSION AND MINISTRY GROUP 8

IN GORDON PRESBYTERY



### Mission and Ministry Group 8:

FINTRAY KINELLAR KEITHHALL, INVERURIE ST. ANDREW'S, AND INVERURIE WEST

**Proposed Structure:** As we seek to prioritise mission, ministry, and a local worshipping presence in Group 8 we envision a Deferred Team Ministry Union in Inverurie between Inverurie St. Andrew's and Inverurie West and a planned Union between Inverurie St. Andrew's and Fintray Kinellar Keithhall within the next two years.

#### Mission Narrative:

Inverurie is a large and vibrant market town, which is continuing to grow. There is a considerable school presence in the community, with four primary schools and a relatively new secondary school campus. The combined parishes in Inverurie have a population of 14,188. Fintray and Keithhall are rural communities with strong ties to Inverurie and particular strengths around the development of the ministry of the whole people of God. Their population sits at 1,994 bringing Group 8's total population to 16,112.

New housing is still very much a feature of Inverurie. On the other end of the age scale the town is a popular retirement place and there are two nursing homes and several sheltered housing complexes. The Acorn Centre provides a well-equipped space in the community and provides opportunities for collaborative mission/work with local businesses and organisations. St. Andrew's hosts a playgroup which was originally established as a community wide service by St. Andrew's Parish Church 51 years ago. It is now a stand-alone registered charity, which St. Andrew's continues to actively encourage and nurture.

The Inverurie Parish Grouping sub-group is currently working on a community audit to try to identify what other local organisations and groups consider to be the local needs/priorities in order to assess the way forward.

There are considerable strengths within the grouping around proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God, integrity of creation and community engagement.

The presbytery considers it to be strategic location for mission and therefore the deployment of ministry resources. The missional aims include sharing the gospel with children, young people and adults of working age and development around the fourth and fifth marks of Mission.

The PPRG envisages a deferred team ministry union between the two Inverurie churches. The PPRG recognises that there are differing identities, histories, styles, approach, resources and priorities of these two congregations. Forging a shared identity and sense of mission will take a good deal of time and effort. It believes the united charge would be outward looking and engaged with its community.

St. Andrew's and Fintray Kinellar Keithhall have already begun to work together towards a Union, and we commend them on the progress they have made.

The PPRG considers 1.5 FTEMWS to be the appropriate staffing for the united charge. In addition, a 0.5MDS post will be deployed to this group for a period of 3 years. The MDS remit would be specifically around youth work and the post will end on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025.

#### Statistics:

Parish	Population as of June 2020	Roll as of Dec 2021	Avg Sunday Worship	New Communicants	Baptisms	Funerals	Ministry & Mission Contributions
Inverurie St Andrew's	4,832	835	80	0	0	15	£63,926.00
Inverurie West	9,286	516	120	0	0	18	£51,453.00
Fintray Kinellar Keithhall	1,994 (excluding Blackburn)	125	20	0	3	5	£26,065.00

#### Classification of Buildings:

The condition and location of the buildings in this parish grouping were considered.

Inverurie is a strategic location for mission. The two church buildings, with combined halls, offer different missional opportunities within the town. Both are to be retained.

Inverurie West Church Hall and St Andrews New Hall have been classified A. However, a working group has been put in place to consider which of the buildings should be retained and/or whether a new building should be considered. This group has already met, and the review is underway.

Fintray Church has been classified B and is to be released.

#### The Parish Grouping would address the Five Marks of Mission as follows:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
  - Regular Sunday worship in person, live streamed, and available as recordings
  - Pre-covid, Inverurie West live streamed Sunday worship into one of the local nursing homes, with volunteers attending the nursing home to support and provide fellowship for residents.
  - Joint worship/events with ecumenical partners in IDCT, especially at Christmas and Easter.
  - Special worship services during the year including for Remembrance.

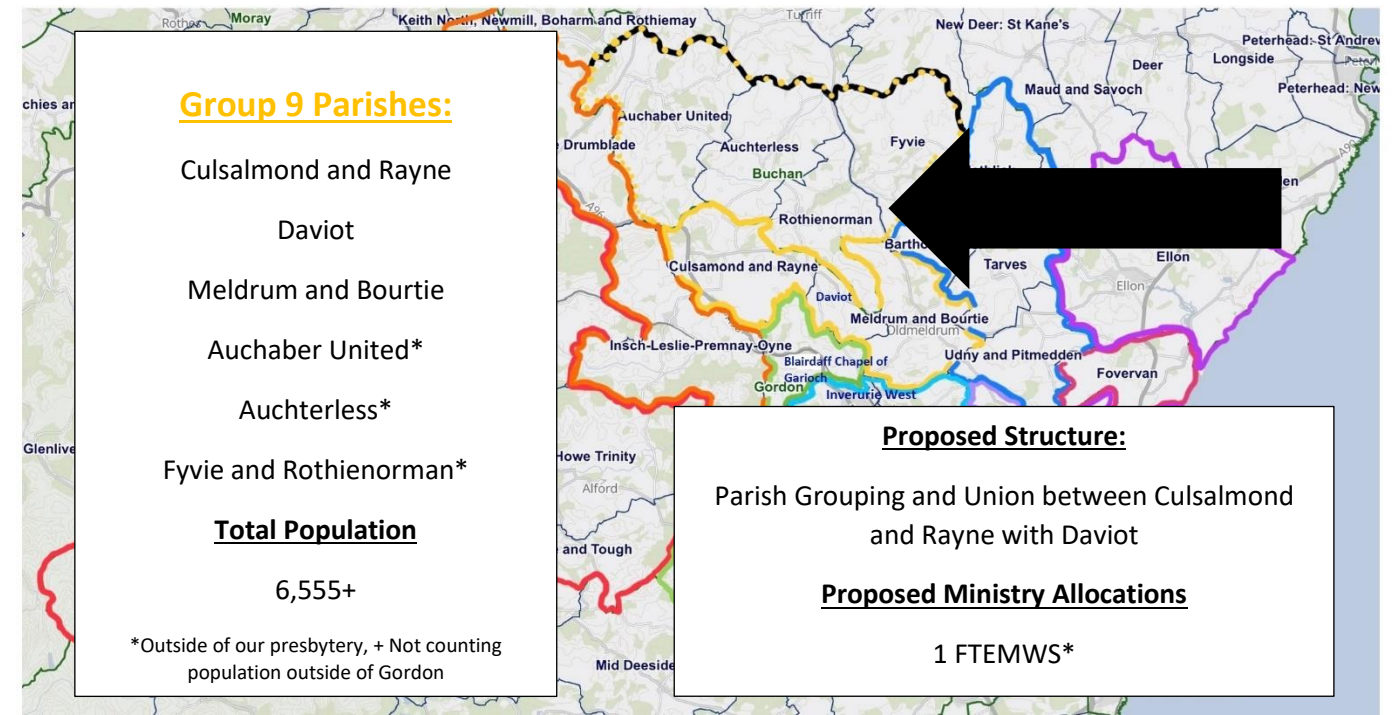
- Some sharing of the gospel is possible through school chaplaincy.
  - The St. Andrew's playgroup meets the standards set in National pre-school curriculum guidelines, promoting the exploration of faith.
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- Work with young people and young families continues via junior church, Mainly Music, young families group and baptisms.
  - Involved in an ecumenical Messy Church pre-covid.
  - School chaplaincy and work with local youth organisations such as BBs also provide teaching and nurturing opportunities (recognition is given that this covers all the marks of mission)
  - Running a Christianity Explored course and follow-on possibilities.
  - Bible studies (in person and online) are held regularly.
  - Conversations in the Acorn café with staff, volunteers, customers etc also lead to faith development in many ways.
3. To respond to human need by loving service
- St. Andrew's Playgroup: The playgroup is an essential resource for young families including, as per national policy, reserved places for children with special needs.
  - The Acorn café operates as a meeting and support space for hundreds of people throughout the week via formal groups and informal encounters. Inverurie West consciously works to alleviate issues of loneliness and isolation through their physical space and café and the connections made by their pastoral volunteers.
  - Funeral work and bereavement support also continues on a regular basis.
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
- Fairtrade is highlighted via the Ubuntu shop in the Acorn centre and the products used in the café. Climate justice issues were highlighted recently through artwork in the café and porch.
  - Issues of justice are also regularly highlighted as part of the preaching cycle.
  - Support for Christian Aid.
  - Provision of space for community and social events, enabling engagement with the community.
  - Support for mission partners in Malawi through knitting.
  - Support for local foodbank through regular collections.
  - The playgroup meets the standards set in National pre-school curriculum guidelines, promoting the importance of diversity, equality and tolerance.
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.
- This is evolving into a potential new missional strength, in particular via the development of the space behind the Inverurie West Hall as a kitchen/community garden. The project was developed in collaboration with Amal (local new Scots support group) in the hope of providing produce for both church and New Scots, opportunities for training and development, relationship building, and a shared outdoor community space. Currently they grow produce for the café, reducing their food miles to metres, and they have a polytunnel and plans for fruit trees. They hope to involve schools and other community groups as well. Work is ongoing on disabled access, and a seating area (a neighbour has built some pallet furniture for us) for volunteers. The project is new and still finding its feet, but the potential is great.
  - The St. Andrew's playgroup meets the standards set in National pre-school curriculum guidelines, promoting exploration and understanding of, and care for, the environment.

Presbytery Mission Plan for Group 8

Parish Grouping	Congregation Name	Current Status	Plan for Parish Grouping	Buildings	Building Closure Dates
8	Inverurie West	Unrestricted charge	A deferred union to take place with between Inverurie Churches.  A Union with St. Andrews and FKK to take place.	Inverurie West Church (A)  Inverurie West Hall (A) [A review is underway as to the long-term future of the building]	n/a
8	Inverurie St. Andrew's	Unrestricted charge	0.5 MDS post and 1 FTEMWS  Congregations to consider the appointment of locally funded staff.  Parish Boundary with Blackburn will be revised	St. Andrew's Church and Hall (A)  New Hall (A) [A review is underway as to the long-term future of the building]	n/a
8	Fintray Kinellar Keithhall	Vacant Charge		Fintray Church (B)	November 2027
			Total = 1.5 FTE		

## MISSION AND MINISTRY GROUP 9

### IN GORDON PRESBYTERY



### Mission and Ministry Group 9:

CULSALMOND & RAYNE, DAVIOT, AND MELDRUM & BOURTIE

**Proposed Structure:** As we seek to prioritise mission, ministry, and a local worshipping presence in Group 9 we envision a Parish Grouping working across presbytery boundaries into the Presbytery of Buchan.

**Mission Narrative:** This grouping will include the parishes of Fyvie, Rothienorman, Auchaber and Auchterless. The combined grouping incorporates the growing town Oldmeldrum, together with the rural communities of Culsalmond, Rayne and Daviot. Oldmeldrum is a hub with a primary and secondary school, a considerable number of young families, and more housing planned.

The population of the combined parishes of Culsalmond and Rayne, Daviot, and Oldmeldrum is 6,555.

The presbytery has a two-fold mission in this grouping. Firstly, recognising Oldmeldrum as a strategic location, there is an aim to engage with children, young people and families, particularly through school connections.

The second missional aim recognises the rural geography of the wider planned grouping and the distinct communities within it. The presbytery sees an opportunity of developing mission in this rural context, through the leveraging of technological advances of recent years and developing the ministry of the whole people of God.

The PPRG encourages the ongoing conversations towards the creation of a parish grouping and envisages staffing within Gordon Presbytery to be one FTEMWS. It is recommending exploration of the union between the linked charges of Culsalmond and Rayne and Daviot proposed in the 2006 plan takes place within the next year.

## Statistics:

Parish	Population as of June 2020	Roll as of Dec 2021	Avg Worship Attendance	New Communicants	Baptisms	Funerals	Ministry & Mission Contributions
Culsalmond and Rayne	1,576	152	17	0	2	2	£10,401.00
Daviot	890	133	25	0	0	4	£8,884.00
Meldrum and Bourtie	4,089	332	98	0	2	7	£47,154.00

## Classification of Buildings:

The condition and location of the buildings in this parish grouping were considered.

Oldmeldrum is a strategic location for mission. Meldrum Parish Church is to be retained. Given the geography of the combined parish and a commitment to enabling worshipping communities, Daviot Church and Daviot Church Hall are also to be retained.

Meldrum Church Hall has been classified A. On successful redevelopment of the church, we note that there are plans in place to dispose of the hall but this may take longer than 5 years.

Bourtie Church has been classified B and is to be released.

Rayne Church has been classified B and is to be released.

This is subject to further consultation with the Presbytery of Buchan and the other congregations in the grouping.

## The parish grouping will address the Five Marks of Mission as follows:

### 1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom

- Weekly worship
- Working with other denominations and shared services at particular times during the year.
- Use of social media such as Facebook and YouTube – this allows those who cannot get to church, especially in current times, to still feel involved. This use of technology will be particularly important in the Parish Grouping.
- School chaplaincy and the development of links with the primary schools and the Academy. This includes hosting special events to help the schools meet their curriculum criteria such as Experience Easter. Another example within Meldrum and Bourtie is the presentation of an Advent Bag to all the children in the primary school (around 400) which contained a small gift, crafts and a devotional item relating to the Christmas message. An Advent Bag suitable for adults was also given to all who attended services in the Christmas period.

### 2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers

- Bible Study open to all.

### 3. To respond to human need by loving service

- Reaching out to those in our Parish who have lost a loved one or in need of support and/or comfort - Special services such as 'Longest Night' reflective service

- Pastoral Care visiting team extending reach to all in the Parish – those who are housebound, ill, lonely, or those who would just like a chat
- In Oldmeldrum the Community Connect Café Project – new project starting 2022 (Covid allowing). This is a fundraising project for us and for other youth and community groups which will help us reach groups who have no current connection with the church in a positive manner
- Providing a space for community groups to meet e.g., Guides, Brownies and Rainbows, Toddlers, SWRI and, the AA.
- Outreach events in some of the communities within our area in order to show how we value people and want to develop our relationships with them. Examples of these events have included Meldrum Sports' Day, afternoon teas in Meikle Wartle, A Soup and Sweet in Culsalmond, and Sponsored Walk on Tillymorgan Hill.

4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation

- Special collections for local and international charities
- Supporting Christian Aid through being a collection point and the Christian Aid thrift shop – a well-established highlight during Christian Aid week raising £1,000s each year for Christian Aid.
- The churches have also been very keen to raise awareness regarding human trafficking and modern slavery and to affirm the importance of supporting refugees
- Working in partnership with the local communities to collect for Aberdeenshire North Foodbank and Aberdeen Cyrenians.

5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

- A very recent example of the churches involvement with Christian Aid was the Eco Trails arranged (on behalf of the Garioch Christian Aid Group). A significant sum of money was raised for Christian Aid's Harvest Appeal (with a climate justice theme) and through the quiz questions on the Trails through House of Daviot Estate they hoped to raise awareness of environmental issues and concerns as COP26 approached and took place.

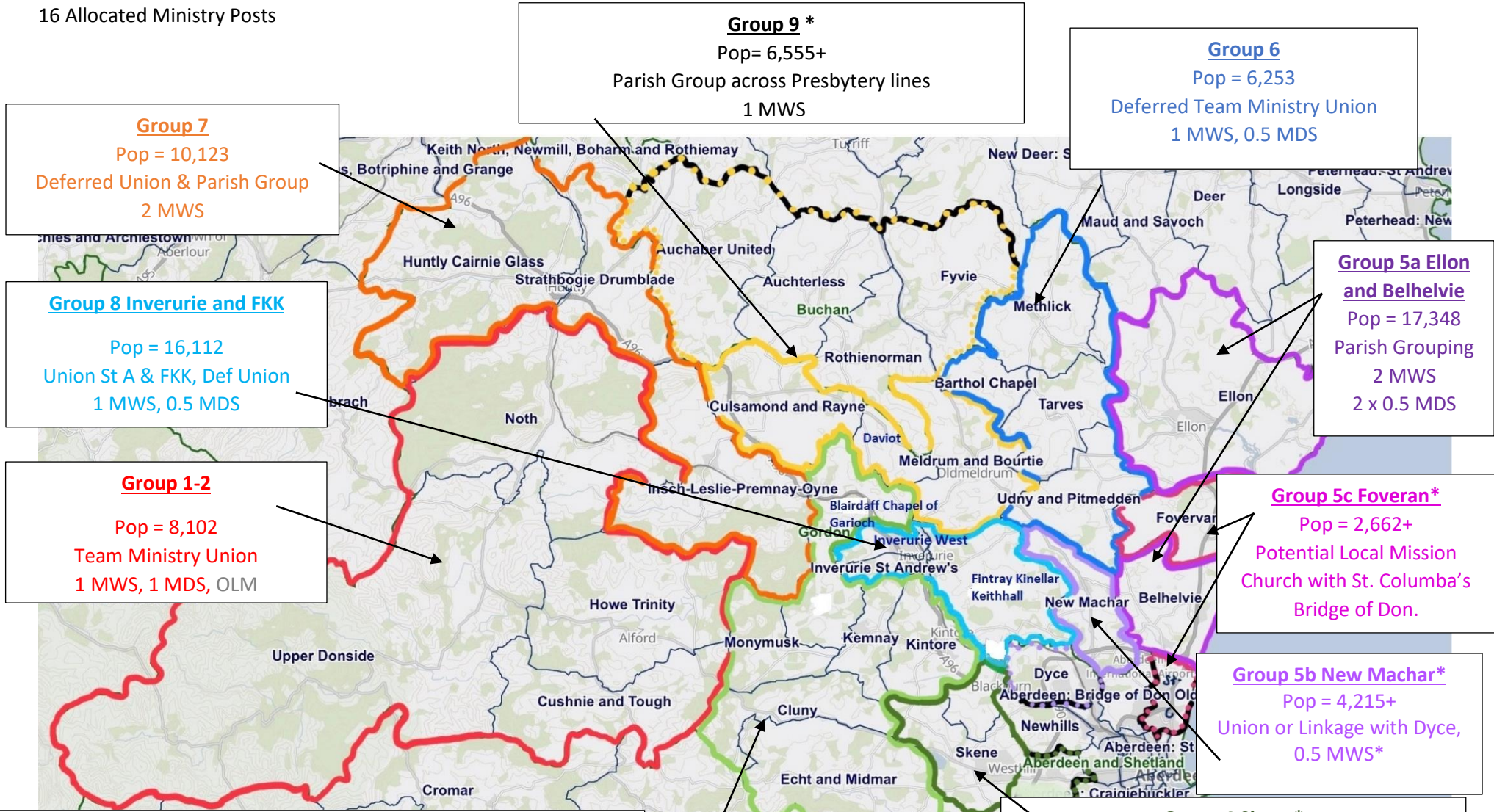
Presbytery Mission Plan for Group 9:

Parish Grouping	Congregation Name	Current status	Plan for Parish Grouping	Buildings	Building Closure
9	Culsalmond & Rayne	Unrestricted Charge linked with Daviot	<p>The three congregations form part of a wider Parish Grouping across the Presbytery Boundary. There will be a reduction of 1 FTEMWS.</p> <p>Exploration of a Union Between Culsalmond and Rayne and Daviot</p> <p>Covenant Agreement to be developed within a 2-year period.</p>	Rayne Church (B)	November 2027
9	Daviot	Unrestricted Charge linked with Culsalmond & Rayne		Daviot Church (A) Annex (A)	n/a
9	Meldrum & Bourtie	Unrestricted charge		Meldrum Church (A) Church Hall (A) Bourtie Church (B)	Bourtie Church December 2023
			Total: 1 FTE		



# MISSION AND MINISTRY GROUPS OF GORDON PRESBYTERY

16 Allocated Ministry Posts



**Key Terms:**  
 MWS = FTEMWS = Full-time equivalent Minister of Word and Sacrament  
 MDS = Ministry Development Staff  
 OLM = Ordained Local Minister and does not count within our allocation  
 \* = Post to be shared across Presbytery lines with other Presbyteries contributing additional posts  
 + = Not counting population in another presbytery

## SUMMARY TABLE

Mission and Ministry Grouping	Ministry Posts
Groups 1 & 2	1 FTEMWS, 1 MDS, 1 OLM
Group 3	2 FTEMWS, 0.5 MDS
Group 4	1 FTEMWS, 1 MDS
Group 5a	2 FTEMWS, 2 x 0.5 MDS
Group 5b	0.5 FTEMWS
Group 5c	0 FTE
Group 6	1 FTEMWS, 0.5 MDS
Group 7	2 FTEMWS
Group 8	1.5 FTEMWS
Group 9	1 FTEMWS
Total	12 FTWMWS, 4 MDS, 1 OLM 16 MINISTRY POSTS

## **APPENDIX A - METHODOLOGY**

The following proposal sets out the methodology used to agree a new Presbytery Mission Plan. It was designed to provide clarity around how decisions would be made and who will be involved in making them, and to provide a timetable for the process. The proposal was approved by the Presbytery of Gordon in November 2021.

### **Who is involved?**

The Presbytery Plan Review Group (PPRG) was established in 2017/18 and includes:

Rev Alastair Bruce  
Rev Stella Campbell (Convenor)  
Rev John Cook  
Rev Carol Ford  
Mr James McPherson (Elder)  
Rev Joshua Mikelson  
Rev Heather Mikelson (MDS)  
Mrs Margaret Pate (Elder)  
Mr Graham Smith (Elder)  
Rev Alison Swindells (Vice-Convenor)

The group has been developed to include individuals from across the geography of presbytery and to have representation from elders as well as ministers. During the planning process, Rev John Cook, Convenor of the Presbytery Property Committee, and Rev Alastair Bruce, Convenor were invited onto the team.

A joint meeting was held with the Presbytery Mission and Discipleship Committee to assist in drafting the MP.

Finally, the NE Buildings Officer will be invited to attend meetings where his support is required.

### **How will decisions be made?**

#### **Buildings**

In the new MP every building must be categorised as follows:

- (a) to be retained beyond the five years from the date at which the Mission Plan is approved or annually reviewed, or
- (b) to be sold, let or otherwise disposed of by a specified date which is within five years from the date at which the ecclesiastical building is first categorised as (b).

The following process will be following to determine the categorisation

1. Each building in presbytery will be subject to an AMBA (Audit Management Buildings Audit). The spreadsheets will be submitted to the General Trustees and the PPRG will be provided with a set of scores for each parish grouping.
2. Each Kirk Session will be asked to provide the following information with regards to the buildings in their parish by the end of November 2021:
  - a. What opportunity does the building give for mission and can you provide evidence of how it is already used for mission?

- b. Is the building of specific historical or architectural interest?
3. The information collated will be analysed by the PPRG and a determination will be made regarding the categorisation of each building. This will take into account the geography of the parish grouping and the ministry resources planned for that grouping. As far as it is possible, this will be in line with the previously agreed targets of closing buildings (i.e., where there are four buildings in a parish grouping, one will close and where there are five buildings or more in a parish grouping, two will close). However, any building producing a low score on the AMBA will need to be considered.
4. Where it is not possible for the PPRG to make a decision based on the information collated, the NE Buildings Officer will be asked to conduct a more in-depth survey of the relevant buildings and provide that information to the PPRG. For example, where two or more buildings have a very similar scoring.

### **Allocation of Ministry Posts**

Through consultation the previous Presbytery Plan allocated each congregation to a Parish Grouping and gave a projected allocation of Full Time Equivalent Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Ministry Development Staff posts. It is intended that these Parish Groupings will be maintained.

The new MP will be developed in accordance with the Presbytery Mission Plan Act (Act VII 2021) and any guidance provided by the Faith Nurture Forum. This includes adhering to the Code of Practice produced in 2021. Mission will be prioritised in the MP. Included in the factors that will be taken into consideration are geography, population, ecumenism, financial responsibility, and working with the whole people of God. (A full list can be found in Section 5 of the PRESBYTERY MISSION PLANNING ACT: GUIDANCE & CODE OF PRACTICE V1.4)

Each Kirk Session will be asked to provide information on the life of their congregation and the mission opportunities which exist locally. This will be via the same survey as mentioned above and responses will be expected by the end of November 2021. The questions will be as follows:

1. What opportunities for mission exist within your parish and can you provide evidence of mission being prioritised currently? [You may find it helpful to refer to the Five Marks of Mission in your response].
2. Is there anything within the life of your congregation that we should take into consideration when determining the future provision of ministry posts?

### **Gathering of Information and Communication.**

Where additional information is required, the PPRG will gather it through a questionnaire circulated to each Kirk Session. All information will be collected prior to the middle of February 2022.

If a Parish Grouping wishes to make a recommendation/suggestion for the new MP, it should be submitted in writing to the PPRG convenor by the middle of February 2022. (**Deadline February 15<sup>th</sup>**).

Information will be shared with the presbytery through regular updates on the presbytery website. The PPRG will endeavour to make sure that information is provided in such a way as to make it accessible to everyone reading it. Plain language will be used where possible, and where congregations are cited to attend meetings, a brief synopsis will be provided to counteract the formality of the legal language required

for citation.

It is the responsibility of the Presbytery Elder and Minister/Interim Moderator to ensure that information is disseminated from the presbytery to the Kirk Session/congregation in a timely manner.

When the draft or final MP is proposed, materials will be prepared and circulated in advance to the presbytery for consideration and to Kirk Sessions. Congregations will be cited to attend the presbytery meeting.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

Each member of the group will absent themselves from any decisions relating to their own parish grouping or where they are related to a member staff in post. This includes both buildings categorisation and allocation of ministry posts. Conflicts of Interests will be noted at the beginning of each meeting.

### **Checks/Balances**

The PPRG will regularly report to the Business Committee, on progress against the agreed timeline. Minutes of each meeting will be kept.

### **Timeline**

- Proposal on the process to be agreed in November 2021
- The process document will be made available online following the November 2021 Presbytery meeting and the Presbytery Planning section on Presbytery website will updated to include the new act and guidance on it.
- Gathering additional information for the new MP and input into the union of Presbyteries – November 2021 to February 2022.
- Consultation with the Faith Nurture Forum facilitator for our presbytery November 2021 to February 2022 and the draft to be shared with them prior to Presbytery for comment.
- Production of a first draft of the new MP – March 2022 Presbytery meeting.
- Kirk Sessions to provide feedback to the PPRG on the first draft by the middle of April 2022 via an extract minute.
- Final MP to be voted on in the May 2022 Presbytery meeting.
- The MP is submitted to the relevant bodies for approval.

### **Updated Timeline (September 2022)**

Due to the discovery of an issue with the weighting for Gordon Presbytery, the production of a final MP was delayed until September 2022 and voted upon in October 2022. The Buildings Categorisations were presented to presbytery in June 2022 for acknowledgement.

## APPENDIX B – SURVEY OF PRESBYTERY

### Background:

A **Presbytery Review Group** was formed in 2017 to help Gordon Presbytery discern if there was a more effective approach for presbytery, and surveyed each church (either minister, kirk session, or a group of leaders). The group asked how Gordon Presbytery could better support them. At the conclusion of these surveys, the main elements that arose were as follows:

- Clarify the Role of Presbytery
- Prioritize Relationships
- Create space for the Sharing of Stories/Best Practices
- Help Build Connections/Networking
- Help Support Local Churches
- Provide Resources
- Provide Trainings
- Provide clear Communication in various forms
- Provide Spiritual Support

To live into this calling, the following elements were used to change the way we carry out the life and work of Gordon Presbytery.

**Local Church Reviews:** These became a way to connect to local congregations, to hear how God is at work, and to learn how Gordon Presbytery could be helping the local congregations. To prioritize sharing of stories and best practices, it was agreed that half of our yearly Presbytery gatherings would now be for a particular congregation (known as the “focus church”). Each focus church would first meet with the LCR team for discussion and planning, and would then share their stories, resources, and questions with Presbytery.<sup>2</sup>

**Mission and Discipleship:** in conjunction with presbytery and the national church, two Mission and Development Workers (MDS) are working across Presbytery to help enable the local congregations to continue the holistic work of ministry, mission, and discipleship. Additionally, the Mission and Discipleship Team restructured and began offering training and resources in the form of T.I.M. Talks (Theology, Imagination, Mission & Ministry training evenings). These events were created and offered in person and online several times a year. In addition, resources were created to help support churches in evaluating their local mission and discipleship such as the Mission Cycle. A desire to begin to formally train and equip elders for worship leadership was renewed and will be implemented in the spring of 2022.

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<sup>2</sup> to create space for the voice of the local church, Presbytery business meetings were limited to the other half of the calendar year.

## APPENDIX C – MISSION CYCLE

### Mission Audit 2021/2022:

#### Introduction:

In the winter of 2021, each Kirk Session was sent a set of questions by the PPRG. Many of their responses to these questions were then placed within the Mission Cycle (see graph at beginning of the document). The Mission and Discipleship Team met in 2022 to review the data. Their audit is below.

#### Audit:

From the 'Mission Cycle' information, Gordon Presbytery lives out its call to mission in communities through goodwill and engagement. There is ample evidence that congregations are living into the 3<sup>rd</sup> Mark of Mission, "*responding to human need by loving service*" based Jesus' call "*to see God in the hungry, naked, outcast / prisoner and stranger*" is met in some way.

Many of our individual churches put great effort into running community events (e.g., Community Cafes, Carol concerts, music groups) supporting community organisations (e.g., schools, care homes, uniformed organisations) and caring for those in need (e.g. pastoral visiting, telephone calls, running / supporting foodbanks). This approach takes seriously the hope that God is Emmanuel is with us in every circumstance of our lives; and reflects the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Marks of Mission (*to proclaim the good news and to respond to human need by loving service*). Many of our churches are also living out creation care (the 5<sup>th</sup> Mark of Mission), and those elements are represented in all parts of the Mission Cycle pending on where they are in their faith and understanding.

Nevertheless, there are areas where our missional activities are less developed. Reaching the young (defined as 40 and under) is a huge gap. Many programs exist for children but do not necessarily engage the whole family, nor are there commensurate ministries for adults who are single. The Mission and Discipleship team have identified these as a growth area, while also recognizes it is hard for aging churches to reach younger generations.

From the evidence in the Mission Cycle, it is also clear that Gordon Presbytery is less effective in finding ways to enable individuals in our community and congregations to ultimately own a living faith. This would relate to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mark of Mission. While all churches hold worship services and many also offer Sunday School and Bible studies on a regular basis, it is unclear how effective these are at bringing individuals into a living relationship with Jesus Christ. Some of this reticence can be explained by the Northeast culture we live in, but our cultural reality does not excuse us from our call to move beyond the prevailing culture by being more intentional about our part in building the kingdom (or culture) of God. The Mission and Discipleship team feel that focusing on "owned faith" within our congregations and communities would help to strengthen the church, to advance the Gospel, take Christ-centred risks, and enable congregations to live out *all* 5 Marks of Mission.

In summation, what the Mission Cycle highlights is that we excel at coming alongside our communities in goodwill and engagement, but we struggle to live out our faith in ways that would transform society or to proclaim the good news of Jesus or nurture the faith of new believers (Marks of Mission 4, 1 and 2). The Mission Cycle would say that two things are clear: we need a change of emphasis, and we need to be explicit about our fidelity to Jesus Christ as the basis for our outreach.

## APPENDIX D

### BACKGROUND TO PRESBYTERY PLANNING

#### 2021 PRESBYTERY PLAN

The Presbytery of Gordon developed and agreed its most recent Presbytery Plan in March 2021. This plan was subsequently concurred with by the Presbytery Planning Task Group (PPTG) of Faith Nurture Forum.

In 2018 Ministries Council presented new advisory figures for full time equivalent Ministries of Word and Sacrament (FTEMWS) to the GA. These figures were a best estimate of the number of parish ministers likely to be ministering in each presbytery in 2023. The figures took into account ministerial retirement rates, the numbers of candidates accepted for training and the number of ministers coming from other denominations.

At this point in time Gordon Presbytery had 25 charges comprising 28 congregations. There were 21 FTEMWS in post, with 4 vacancies. In addition, there were 5 MDS (Ministry Development Staff) positions within the Presbytery Plan, located as follows:

- one deacon at Skene Parish Church of Scotland;
- one FTE parish worker (Ministries), 0.5 FTE parish worker (Children and Families); 0.5 FTE parish worker (Mission Development) (at Ellon Parish Church of Scotland);
- one Youthwork Facilitator working across Presbytery; and
- one Mission and Development Facilitator working across Presbytery.

The advisory figures for Gordon Presbytery stipulated that **by 2023** we could expect to have **14.9 FTEMWS**.

During the autumn of 2018, Gordon Presbytery agreed to establish a new Presbytery Planning Review Group (PPRG) to review the 2012 plan and the impact of the advisory figures. In April 2019 correspondence was issued by the Presbytery Planning Task Group (PPTG) confirming the necessity for each presbytery to use the figures in their planning, as well as information regarding the cap on MDS posts.

Following consultation with the presbytery, which was hampered by COVID19, a plan was developed along the lines of parish groupings. Each group was encouraged to develop a Covenant Agreement over a two-year period. The plan highlighted the numbers of buildings that were likely to be closed per grouping over a ten-year period but set out that the detailed review work would be done in the coming year.

## APPENDIX E – BASIS OF PARISH GROUPING

The congregation of \_\_\_\_\_ (SCO \_\_\_\_\_) and the congregation of \_\_\_\_\_ (SCO \_\_\_\_\_) (and others if appropriate) shall form a Parish Grouping for a period of \_\_\_\_\_ years from the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, and that on the following terms and conditions:

1. **Name:** The name of the Parish Grouping shall be \_\_\_\_\_.
2. **Territorial Responsibility:** The bounds to be served by the Parish Grouping shall be \_\_\_\_\_ or as the Presbytery may determine.
3. **Property and Funds:** The property and funds belonging to or held on behalf of each congregation shall remain the property and funds of each congregation as at present.
4. **Kirk Sessions:** *[Statement defining the Moderator(s) of each Kirk Session concerned and whether or not the Kirk Sessions will come together as a joint meeting. If they are coming together, a definition on frequency and purpose is important.]*
5. **Congregational Management:** The temporal affairs of each congregation shall be administered as at present. The office-bearers of the congregations shall meet together annually or as they deem necessary to decide on their portion to related expenses, listed expenses and maintenance of the manse(s) and the salaries and related expenses of the other team members.
6. **Ministry Team:** *[Statement of those who will comprise the Ministry Team to serve the Parish Grouping, with details of method and terms of appointment(s).]*
7. **Ministry Team Support:** The stipend of the minister(s) shall be payable in terms of the National Stipend Scheme.
8. **Manse(s):** *[Statement concerning Manses available at time of agreement of Basis.]*
9. **Areas of Co-operation:** *[Statement about areas in which congregations agreeing to the Parish Grouping wish to co-operate, e.g., youth work, pastoral care, mission, etc.]*
10. **Power to Adjust:** While the articles and terms shall form the Basis of Parish Grouping for the congregations now agreeing, the congregations shall be free, like any other congregation, to adjust arrangements under the authority of the Presbytery as need may arise.

## Presbytery of Kincardine and Deeside (K&D) Presbytery Mission Plan 2022

### 1. The PRESBYTERY MISSION PLAN ACT (ACT VIII 2021)

The PRESBYTERY MISSION PLAN ACT (ACT VIII 2021) was agreed on 26 May 2021. The Act includes a variety of adjustment options for the future shape of congregations/charges. By this Act the Church of Scotland seeks to:

- underscore the Church's priority as participating in Christ's mission
- provide a framework for a Presbytery to express that priority in forming a rolling five-year Mission Plan
- ensure that a Presbytery makes best use of the ministry posts allocated to it by the General Assembly
- insist that a Presbytery take decisions about the future of Church buildings

According to the Act the driver for this planning exercise is the effective mission of the local church as measured against the 'Five Marks of Mission' as agreed by the General Assembly:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

#### 2. Our Vision is for a **network of vibrant, fruitful, sustainable churches in recognisable communities**

- where the Good News of the Kingdom of God is proclaimed in worship, outreach, and service with all generations in ways that resonate with today's culture, helping people outside the church family take steps closer to Jesus
- where new believers are invited, taught, baptised, and nurtured in faith in appropriate gatherings and groups
- where believers respond together to human need by loving service in and with their communities
- where the local church prays for and engages with activities and organisations that work to transform unjust structures of society, challenge violence of every kind, and pursue peace and reconciliation
- where all generations strive together to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

Our Plan is grounded in:

- an understanding of **mission as 'mission in context'** (all mission happens in a local context and must be shaped accordingly),
- an aim for **effective local leadership**,
- and a goal of **encouraging sustainability and fruitfulness** in local churches.

### 3. Our Priorities & Principles

**Mission** – “A draft Mission Plan which does not demonstrably prioritise mission will not be approved.” (From the Guidance to the Act)

The Church’s mission is the mission of Christ. Mission in the local church is the beating heart of the Act and is our priority and passion. We recognise that it is the local congregation, with the support of Presbytery, that is responsible for taking forward the Church’s mission as agreed in the Presbytery Plan. This document can be seen as our plan for distributing available resources for mission (such as staffing & buildings).

**Bottom Up – Mission in Context** - Our plan is unashamedly ‘bottom up’. The perception persists that many things in the Kirk appear ‘top down’. We re-affirm the role of Presbytery as supporting and enabling local mission. If our key priorities include: an understanding of mission as ‘mission in context’, an aim for effectiveness in local leadership, and a goal of encouraging sustainability and fruitfulness in local churches, we will ensure that those on the front line feel that they are trusted to make decisions, and that they have appropriate support to engage in effective mission in their context, within the limits of resources available.

**Not the Status Quo** - The church has a rich history of being constantly reformed, and we need to plan and respond to changing contexts with purpose. We intend to support and encourage change in a variety of forms, some yet to be developed or imagined, within a supportive framework.

**Financial Sustainability** – “We intend to review how we could best ensure that congregations are self- financing, self-propagating and self-governing within a Presbyterian polity, taking advantage of the insights to be offered by Indigenous Church Mission Theory and the experiences of churches elsewhere in the world. That seems to the Council to sit comfortably alongside our Church Without Walls vision.” (Council of Assembly JWG 2015).

It is not unreasonable to aim for local churches to be self-financing, self-propagating and self-governing within the Presbyterian system. We aim to challenge churches who can, to aim to meet these goals, including meeting the costs of ministry, and to encourage those who cannot, to be realistic and creative with the resources that are allocated.

**Priority of All Generations** - “Youth and children’s workers are the most effective types of lay workers for a growing church” Church of England Growth Research 2013, “Common Ingredients in declining churches include: no children or under 16s, leaders forced to focus energy only on administrative burdens and Sundays, or the majority of congregational energy spent on maintaining buildings” (From Anecdote to Evidence, Church Growth Research 2013).

Experience and research make it plain that churches that have no engagement with 0-25’s are unlikely to have a future. The whole church needs to be engaging with young people as an urgent priority. We have five secondary school catchments in our Presbytery with 600-800 teenagers in each and these offer a clear focus for mission. Scripture reveals, and research affirms that faith is most effectively passed on by communities of all generations. All churches in K&D must strive to engage with children, young people, families, and carers to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom, and to teach, baptise and nurture new believers.

**Local Leadership** - Research into flourishing churches\* suggests that a key ingredient is clearly defined local leadership, and a sense of local church identity. This means that uniting charges into ever larger units may not help promote flourishing churches. We will have to find ways to recognise and support local leadership in emerging forms. (\*From Anecdote to Evidence, Church Growth Research 2013).

**Ministry of All God's People** - There are church communities, centres of mission and worship, whose vision of the future does not depend on a full-time stipendiary parish minister. They choose to give up the right to call a full-time minister in the interests of building new and flexible models. Our presbytery has experience in equipping and deploying the gifts of volunteers; Readers, OLM's, Local Preachers, and other church members, to exercise local leadership. We will aim to continue to recognize, support, and deploy more non-stipendiary leaders working in Local Ministry Teams, and to recognise, support and encourage the thousands of volunteers who make up the frontlines of mission in the local church.

**Protecting Green Shoots of Growth** - *“Within every denomination there are congregations which thrive. They seem to buck all trends and contradict every stereotype. However, having worked with many such exceptional churches, I am left with the sense that they tend to flourish despite their institutional context and heritage, rather than because of these. They find institutional space in which to prosper, developing ways of working within an institutional framework, while avoiding it becoming a straitjacket. They do not allow institutionalism to squeeze them into a mould but find a way of living in the Spirit, find ways of benefiting from the positives of being in an institution, while avoiding the negatives. They often hold loosely to the tradition they have inherited and feel free to search for riches in other traditions.”* (Steve Aisthorpe - *The Invisible Church 2016*).

We pray that all our churches find a way of living in the Spirit, find ways of benefiting from the positives of being in an institution, while avoiding the negatives. Thriving churches resource and support the whole church. Ensuring health and fruitfulness in local churches means not only caring for our vulnerable churches, but also supporting and encouraging our thriving churches to continue to flourish. Our Plan will not risk the health of churches showing growth by a temptation to impose inappropriate burdens simply from a desire to “share the pain”. This would go against the principle of mission being shaped in context.

**Recognizing That Things Can End Well** - *“Depending on the situation, options facing a congregation may just postpone inevitable decline. Sometimes, sustained prayer and conversation about mission leads to the realization that God is calling a congregation to close. Grief is inevitable, but closing may also be an opportunity to use the congregation's resources to continue God's mission in another way or in another place.”* (A Resource for Closing Congregations ELCA). If we are to be constantly pruned to allow health and fruitfulness, we will give permission for certain ways of being church to end well. We recognize that a church can have a natural life cycle. This can provide opportunities to re-direct resources to the emerging. There are examples of where a church has chosen to come to a good end but their “legacy” in terms of resources has gone on to nourish the seeds of something new. This is to be supported. Dissolution offers one way to end well, re-distribute resources, and leave space for the new. Another way could be entering a Union, and/or maintaining presence and identity by establishing a Local Mission Church. *“A Local Mission Church is a Christian community whose purpose is to worship, witness and serve in a distinct geographical setting led by a local leadership team rather than a Kirk Session.”* (From the Act)

### **Principles (as directed by the ACT)**

- a. Mission. The stated driver for this planning exercise is the **effective mission of the local church** as measured against the ‘Five Marks of Mission’.
- b. Secondary School Catchment Areas: In a geographically diverse presbytery we have used the informal planning & discussion tool of five Secondary School catchment areas (Aboyne, Banchory, Portlethen, Mackie, Mearns) to “cluster” churches for conversation around a critical point of shared community focus and mission. Within

these areas there are other clear opportunities for mission and outreach including community projects, tourist visitors, and substantial new housing developments. Churches have been encouraged to develop appropriate relationships for local mission, not necessarily limited to these catchment areas.

c. Financial Responsibility: A degree of financial realism is required, and it is appropriate that consideration is given to congregational financial responsibility. It is essential for Presbyteries to consider the complex financial picture and allocate appropriate ministerial resources to churches that take financial stewardship seriously, including meeting the costs of ministry. (Sample Information can be seen in table 8 on page 9)

d. Buildings: There is a connection between ministry and buildings. There is a consensus that the Church of Scotland has too many buildings, numerous buildings that are underutilised, buildings that are too large for present day needs, and buildings that are in the wrong place. There is no simple solution to this problem. The starting point should be seeing buildings as resources for mission. Our buildings decisions are based only on assessing buildings as tools for mission, the “right spaces, in the right places”. Buildings need to be accessible, flexible, efficient and sustainable.

e. Communities: Every community of every size in every location within Scotland is part of a Church of Scotland Parish. While population should no longer be the only principle in shaping Presbytery Mission Plans, it remains the starting point. Our calling as a church is mission to everyone in the land.

f. Ecumenism: Reaching the people of Scotland is an ecumenical task. The General Assembly of 2021 instructed the Faith Nurture Forum to include a principle of ecumenical working, affirming that churches should act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately. Our Presbytery has a rich history of churches of all kinds working together.

g. The Poor: The General Assembly has repeatedly affirmed that the gospel imperative is priority to the poor. At a time when resources are scarce, it is tempting to take away from the most marginal communities where churches are often fragile and small. This must be resisted because it makes a mockery of the gospel and the repeated commitments of the General Assembly. However, as in every part of the Church, this does not mean that existing patterns of ministry should not be evaluated and reviewed, and different forms of church life introduced.

h. Whole People of God: One aim of the Act is to assist the church in making the most effective use of paid ministries. However, this takes place in the context of the ministry of the whole people of God. This may well involve an increasing number of communities where mission is exercised largely by the eldership and membership, the many volunteers who are on the frontline of mission, supported by available staffing in the area. We aim to continue to support volunteers in a supportive local team approach.

i. Congregations: The church has “a commitment to maintain worshipping, witnessing and serving Christian congregations throughout Scotland.” One of the ways in which the gospel finds visible expression is in committed congregations under the power of the Holy Spirit. They both express the gospel and commend the gospel. In their Planning, Presbyteries will identify congregations that are outward looking, which engage with their communities and the wider church and consider how they might build on these strengths.

j. Mixed Economy: Whilst affirming the importance of the Parish system and recognising the importance of a sense of ‘place’ the General Assembly stated that this needs to be expressed in a variety of ways. For the Church to find its place in the modern world, it will have to create new spaces for new communities and different opportunities for differentiated niche groups. The Church will need, for example, to discover how to relate to those whose belonging is primarily through networks or the virtual world. Many of our churches have developed their online presence. We will continue to encourage and support mission in a variety of context-shaped emerging forms, and where multiple churches exist in one area we expect them to meet the needs of distinctive demographics.

#### 4. K&D Consultation – Beginning with Listening

We have used the five Secondary School catchment areas (Aboyne, Banchory, Portlethen, Mackie, Mearns) to “cluster” churches for informal conversation around a point of shared community focus and mission. Local Churches have then been encouraged to develop appropriate relationships for mission, not necessarily limited to within these clusters.

Kincardine & Deeside Presbytery began consultation in October 2021. The Ministries, Appraisal & Vacancies Committee (MAV) invited feedback from Ministers, Kirk Sessions, Cluster Groups, and individuals via:

- a. Ministers meetings
- b. Individual Kirk Sessions discussing written material & questions\*
- c. Cluster Areas meeting for conversations if needed.
- d. Visits to Kirk Sessions for Q&A if required

MAV provided written material, video material, and in person/Zoom attendance as required. The material explained more about the process, and the various new models of being church outlined in the ACT.

\*Questions

*The MAV Committee invite you to pray, to reflect on the Five Marks of Mission, to discuss this material, and then to give feedback on the following:*

1. *Recognising the limits of the 10.5 FTE ministry resources available, what would be appropriate staffing to resource mission in your local situation (congregation, parish, catchment area, etc)?*
2. *Based on local mission; and on working relationships with other congregations, what shape of charge/congregation would appropriately resource mission in your local situation?*
3. *Which buildings are the “right spaces in the right places” to resource mission in your local situation? Which buildings required to be disposed of?*
4. *What are some of the key opportunities, and challenges facing your congregation? What are your hopes? What are your concerns?*
5. *What kind of support would help you taking the next step?*

#### 5. Assessing Buildings – “The Right Spaces in the Right Places”

The Presbyteries of the North East and Northern Isles (NE&NI) Building Officer Ian Murray facilitated a team of volunteers to carry out the Asset Management Building Audit (AMBA) across the Presbytery. The Presbytery Mission Plan will categorise each ecclesiastical building as either: **(a) to be retained** beyond the five years from the date at which the Mission Plan is approved or annually reviewed, or **(b) to be sold, let or otherwise disposed** of by a specified date which is within five years from the date at which the ecclesiastical building is first categorised.

Building Designations are decided in consultation with General Trustees, the Faith Nurture Forum, and our K&D Stewardship, Finance & Property Committee (SFP). The kind of questions that inform Building Designations include: 1. What is the feedback from the Kirk Session on the building as a resource for mission? 2. Is the building in a strategic location for mission (“in the right place”)? 3. If it is, is the building fit for purpose? (“the right space”) and if not are potential maintenance or upgrade costs required sustainable? 4. Are there alternative buildings nearby? 5. What does the AMBA Assessment indicate? **The aim is for necessary Buildings that are accessible, flexible, efficient, and sustainable.**

## 6. K&D Staffing Allocation – 10.5 FTE (Full-Time Equivalent)

The General Assembly 2021 set **limits** on the amount of centrally funded staffing to be allocated to our Presbytery, which is currently made up of seventeen charges, two of which are linkages, one is in Guardianship, and one is served by a 0.5 FTE Ministry. Kincardine & Deeside (K&D) has now been allocated **10.5 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)** ministry posts. This is the maximum number of ministry posts which will be funded by the Parish Staffing Fund. This is a reduction from the current allocation of 16.8.

Until the Presbytery Mission Plan is agreed, all vacancies and recruitment of nationally funded posts are paused. Once the plan is agreed and vacancies occur, these 10.5 posts can be filled by either Parish Ministers of Word and Sacrament (full-time or part-time, called by the vacancy process), or by what is known as MDS (Ministries Development Staff) who are recruited and appointed by Kirk Sessions after interview. MDS can include a variety of posts such as Associate Minister, Parish Worker, Outreach Worker and so on. (This will also encourage us to recruit, train and encourage Worship Leaders, Readers, OLM's & Local Preachers to support local worship teams and our volunteers on the frontline of mission.)

The preferred option would be for Parish Groupings to consider and agree adjustment to enable future recruitment of staffing in sustainable units such as **0.5 or 1 FTE**. Our Presbytery Mission Plan will allocate a certain amount of **Staffing Allocation** to each grouping.

NOTE: Staffing changes will typically happen once a vacancy occurs.

## 7. Options for Adjustment

a. Step One in our Plan is the expectation that all K&D churches join a **Parish Grouping**. This arrangement can facilitate mutual support in mission, with flexibility in how relationships develop both formal and informal. This aligns with our understanding of mission as mission shaped in context.

*PARISH GROUPINGS – “The Presbytery may declare that two or more charges shall have responsibility for a single area. The Basis of such an Adjustment shall determine the extent to which the charges shall operate as a Parish Grouping, for instance in the sharing of worship, personnel, education resources, mission initiatives, congregational organisations etc.” (From the ACT)*

b. We then expect Parish Groupings to consider any further **ADJUSTMENT OPTIONS**. Based on current feedback we note suggested options here. More are outlined in the Act (including the option of new forms yet to be worked out).

*“Congregational groupings should move towards fewer decision-making bodies and fewer buildings, with effective numbers of office bearers.” (Note From PMP Guidance).*

*1. UNION – “Two or more congregations may be united to form one congregation under the Unitary Constitution, and such union shall involve the union of charges, parishes, Kirk Sessions, Financial Boards, property and funds and, except in special circumstances where provision is made to the contrary in the Basis of Union, all congregational agencies and organisations.” (From the ACT)*

2. **LINKING – One Charge – Multiple Kirk Sessions** (this can maintain local Kirk Session leadership where geography and/or other factors mean a Union is not as appropriate, while sharing ministry resources). **LINKAGE** - *“Two or more charges may be linked to form one charge in terms of a Basis of Linking, so that the congregations are served by one ministry, the constitutions of the said congregations being in no other way affected.” (From the ACT)*
3. **DEFERRED UNION OR DEFERRED LINKING** - *“When for any reason it is not possible to unite/link a vacant congregation with another congregation under the minister of the other congregation, the Presbytery may decide to unite them on the understanding that the implementation of such decision shall be deferred to take place as soon as practicable after that minister has moved on.” (From the ACT)*
4. **LOCAL MISSION CHURCH** - One of the new options for adjustment in the Act is Local Mission Church. Local Mission Church has the potential to support and encourage new expressions of church shaped by mission in context, or to offer a flexible way to maintain local leadership, identity, worship & mission in a location without the formal requirements of Kirk Session, Trustees, and Office Bearers, etc. **LOCAL MISSION CHURCH** – *“The Presbytery may determine in its Mission Plan that a Local Mission Church shall be created, either (a) following a union or dissolution effected in terms of this Act, or (b) as a new venture. A Local Mission Church shall be a Christian community whose purpose is to worship, witness and serve in a distinct geographical setting. A Local Mission Church shall have a Leadership Team as set out in the Basis. The life and witness of the Local Mission Church shall be co-ordinated by its Leadership Team, subject to the oversight of a local Kirk Session and the Presbytery. The Leadership Team shall be responsible for: (a) developing appropriate expressions of worship, witness and service; (b) ensuring that the Local Mission Church is adequately organised; (c) ensuring good communication with the supervising Kirk Session; and (d) assisting with the upkeep of buildings (if any).” (From the ACT)*
5. Dissolution was discussed as a realistic option in some of our feedback. **DISSOLUTION** – *“A charge may be dissolved by the Presbytery of the bounds. The Basis of Dissolution shall provide for: (a) The issuing of certificates of transference to all members of the congregation; (b) The allocation of the parish to another charge or charges; (c) The transfer to the General Trustees, prior to dissolution, of any heritable property held by or on behalf of the congregation title to which is not yet vested in the General Trustees; (d) The transfer, prior to dissolution, of funds to enable the General Trustees to discharge their obligations (including maintenance, security and insurance) in relation to any heritable property held by or on behalf of the congregation which is designated as a Historic Property; provided that such funds shall include (i) all restricted funds (including organ funds) held for fabric purposes and (ii) such proportion of all unrestricted funds as may be reasonably required for such purposes by the General Trustees; and (e) The destination of all other property and funds of the charge(s).” (From the ACT)*

*More Options are outlined in the Act (including the option of new forms yet to be worked out).*

## 8. What can be negotiated?

The only limit imposed on our presbytery is the total allocation of **10.5 FTE** posts funded from the Parish Staffing Fund.

Our Presbytery Mission Plan is a plan for distributing resources. This will include:

- **Staffing Allocations** for each Parish Groupings,
- **Building Designations.** Buildings categorized as (b) will be disposed of.

Once the Presbytery Mission Plan is approved, we expect Parish Groupings will be formed. Future recruitment will be based on these Staffing Allocations, and those Buildings categorized as (b) will be disposed of with the support of the General Trustees.

The following tables will also offer **suggestions** on options for adjustment (based on the feedback from local congregations). We expect these to be discussed within the Parish Grouping. We expect a decision on these options (or alternatives) within 12 months of the Parish Grouping being formed. If agreement is not reached on an alternative, then one of the suggestions is expected to become the plan by default.

## 9. A Note on joining the new Presbytery of the North East and Northern Isles.

From 1 January 2023 K&D Presbytery is uniting, with others into The Presbytery of the North East and the Northern Isles (NE&NI). It has been agreed by the constituent presbyteries that the approved Presbytery Mission Plans of the six existing presbyteries will be amalgamated unchanged to form the first Mission Plan for the united presbytery. It is our understanding, confirmed by our Faith Nurture Forum facilitators, that the new Presbytery of the NE&NI will ensure that the commitments of each plan are retained through the first years of the new Presbytery. It is our understanding that as the Kincardine and Deeside Presbytery Mission Plan is carried on into the Presbytery of the NE&NI – that, at least in the short term, the decisions, and proportional allocations of staffing, and so on, should be respected as would be the case for all the preceding Presbyteries.

**10. Snapshot of Statistics**

Name	Pop.	% of Pop.	Pop.x 10.5	M&M/£44K	M&M/£44K	M&Mx10.5	Child Attend*	Adult Attend*	In Small Group*	Prof. Faith 2012-22
ABERLUTHNOTT (1173) link LAURENCEKIRK (3316)	4489	6.64%	0.70	0.54	0.54	0.35	1	15/25	4	0
ABOYNE & DINNET (3,280) LINK CROMAR (1,679)	4959	7.34%	0.77	1.00	1.18	0.73	7	30/30	23	10
ARBUTHNOTT, BERVIE & KINNEFF	4438	6.57%	0.69	0.86	0.99	0.64	4	10/50	12	11
BANCHORY TERNAN EAST	4577	6.77%	0.71	1.06	1.18	0.76	6	45	8	16
BANCHORY TERNAN WEST	4577	6.77%	0.71	1.38	1.53	0.98	20	95	100	33
BIRSE & FEUGHSIDE	1476	2.18%	0.23	0.54	0.63	0.41	4	40	10	3
BRAEMAR & CRATHIE	852	1.26%	0.13	0.81	0.92	0.59	4	40	10	0
DRUMOAK - DURRIS	2131	3.15%	0.33	0.79	0.91	0.58	2	30	6	3
GLENMUICK	1760	2.60%	0.27	0.54	0.59	0.38	2	30	20	1
MARYCULTER TRINITY	3184	4.71%	0.49	0.63	0.68	0.44	1	30	10	0
MEARNS COASTAL (ST. CYRUS)	2843	4.21%	0.44	0.52	0.59	0.38	0	35	0	8
MID DEESIDE	3559	5.27%	0.55	0.86	0.98	0.63	10	60	0	4
NEWTONHILL	3658	5.41%	0.57	0.43	0.49	0.31	2	23	0	3
PORTLETHEN	9390	13.89%	1.46	0.84	0.92	0.59	5	30	0	0
STONEHAVEN CARRONSIDE	6072	8.98%	0.94	1.02	1.16	0.75	2	50	7	4
STONEHAVEN FETTERESSO	6072	8.98%	0.94	1.90	2.12	1.36	38	95	80	19
WEST MEARNS	3555	5.26%	0.55	0.84	0.96	0.62	5	22/18/20	12	6
*rough estimates reported end 2021	67592	100.00%	10.50	2021	2022	10.50				

Pop.x10.5 = a notional ratio of the 10.5 FTE based on population only

M&M/£44K = portion of the estimated cost of a 1.0 FTE Ministry that a congregation's proposed M&M contribution covered in 2021 & 2022

M&Mx10.5 = a notional ratio of the 10.5 FTE based on the total M&M contributions of K&D

This is only a sample of the various data that has been used in making allocation decisions.

## 11. Headline Results of Asset Management Building Audit (AMBA)

Congregation	Building	Score
Aberluthnott w/ Laurencekirk	Marykirk Church	70
Aberluthnott w/ Laurencekirk	Laurencekirk Church	70
Aberluthnott w/ Laurencekirk	Luthermuir Church	68
Aboyne-Dinnet w/ Cromar	Aboyne Hall	74
Aboyne-Dinnet w/ Cromar	Aboyne Church	71
Aboyne-Dinnet w/ Cromar	St Moulag's Church Tarland	68
Aboyne-Dinnet w/ Cromar	Coull Church	43
Arbuthnott, Bervie & Kinneff	Bervie Church Centre	85
Arbuthnott, Bervie & Kinneff	Bervie Church	72
Arbuthnott, Bervie & Kinneff	Arbuthnott Church	58
Banchory Ternan East	Hall	79
Banchory Ternan East	Church	70
Banchory Ternan West	Church & Old Hall	88
Banchory Ternan West	Centenary Hall	88
Birse & Feughside	Finzean Church	81
Braemar & Crathie	Crathie Church Hall	74
Braemar & Crathie	Crathie Kirk	66
Braemar & Crathie	Braemar Kirk/Hall	64
Drumoak-Durris	Drumoak Church Hall	77
Drumoak-Durris	Drumoak Church	42
Drumoak-Durris	Durris Church	41
Glenmuick	Ballater Church & Hall	79
Maryculter Trinity	Maryculter Church & Halls	77
Mearns Coastal (St. Cyrus)	St Cyrus Church	75
Mid Deeside	Torphins Church & Halls	76
Mid Deeside	Mid Deeside Parish Hall Lumphanan	68
Newtonhill	Hall Church	79
Portlethen	Halls	77
Portlethen	Church	75
Stonehaven Carronside	St Bridget's Hall Church	83
Stonehaven Carronside	Dunnottar Church	71
Stonehaven Carronside	South Church & Hall	64
Stonehaven Fetteresso	Church & Hall	81
West Mearns	Fettercairn Church Hall	66
West Mearns	Auchenblae Church	62
West Mearns	Auchenblae Church Hall	62
West Mearns	Fettercairn Church	56
West Mearns	Glenbervie Church	53

(Colours are indicative score bands from General Trustees: over 75% green, 60% < 75% amber, and <60% red)

## 12. Parish Grouping Tables

### Upper Deeside (Aboyne Academy Catchment) – Snapshots

Braemar & Crathie have the smallest population of all our parishes, with a healthy attendance by head of population, mainly elderly. They are keen to develop closer partnerships with the other Upper Deeside parishes. A factor will include how the historic 'Royal Chaplaincy' might be organised and resourced. Conversations continue considering a potential link with the Chapel Royal. Previously there has been a weekly Bible Study Group, children's events, and partnership with the Roman Catholic congregation to put on Alpha Courses. A unique opportunity in the area is to reach out to the many 'strangers and pilgrims' who visit the parish on a year-round basis. There is a passion to engage more meaningfully with 'ecclesiastical tourism' and find an effective and sustainable means of generating new income. One possibility is to work in partnership with Crathie Opportunity Holidays and others from the community to develop a Log-cabin/Glamping Pod business in the Glebe. Another is the potential repurposing of the Crathie Manse and Glebe (and perhaps the Church Hall). There is scope in the area to work with other denominations with a view to making more effective use of all buildings. There is a fresh commitment to an online community – including conversations about becoming a 'satellite hub' for Sanctuary First'.

Glenmuick have an attendance age range 30-90 tending towards the upper. While Ballater appears at times a busy tourist town, there are many “second homes” and holiday lets, and the population tends towards the elderly. This is reflected in the attendance and volunteers at church. Financial sustainability is a real challenge. The opportunities for mission and outreach in the area have been identified as tourism, hosting music and creative events, and partnering with the life and work of the local estates and schools. They have an overlap in this, and with the Royal connections, with Braemar-Crathie and are keen to explore working together more with Braemar-Crathie, and with Aboyne-Dinnet linked with Cromar.

Aboyne-Dinnet linked with Cromar.

Aboyne-Dinnet have a majority attendance age range 55-75. And an additional online community. They see that reduced staffing can be dealt with along with neighbouring congregations such as Glenmuick and Braemar Crathie, with the agreement of existing ministers. They feel the current system of linkage works well for mission to distinct communities, with a geographic spread of rural communities across the communities they serve. Opportunities for mission include working with young families with an offer of activities appropriate for their needs and abilities e.g. messy church, playgroup activities; working with community groups seeking to develop shared spaces and resources; and working with young people through school and community groups. Support is needed in terms of youth and community work. They are keen to share resources with sister congregations. Online services could be made available eg worshippers at a 'satellite hub' in another parish. There could be shared IT and people who know how to use it; shared resources for primary school age eg kids' nativity plays; and Aboyne could contribute to the ecclesiastical tourism of the Upper Valley. Aboyne church and hall are next to one another and have excellent media resources. Aboyne Academy is in the Parish. Aboyne is the largest settlement in the area.

Cromar's attendance is very similar to Aboyne's. They have a similar outlook to staffing in the rural area as Aboyne. The linkage is effective. They also share the same range of opportunities and support needs. Cromar church building has no hall, and media resources exist but in an elementary form.

		Upper Deeside (Aboyne Academy Catchment)					
Congregation Name and Roll	Population	Current Status	Next Step (By 01 June 2023)	Building Designation	Suggested Staffing*	Notes:	Suggestions (Final proposals to be agreed by 01 June 2024)
Braemar & Crathie (172)	852	UT	Upper Deeside Parish Grouping	Crathie Kirk (a) Crathie Church Hall, Kirk Cottage (a) Braemar Kirk/Hall (b) (Dispose by June 2025)	0.5 FTE	Discussions ongoing about possible separate part-time locally funded post via Royal Court for Royal Chaplain duties e.g. 0.5 FTE.	Consider Union with Glenmuick Consider alternate venue for worship and mission in Braemar
Glenmuick (235)	1,760	UT		Ballater Church & Hall (a)		A locally-funded additional post could mean an overall 1 FTE equivalent ministry.	Consider Union with Braemar & Crathie
Aboyne Dinnet (259) LINK	3,280	UT L/w Cromar		Aboyne Dinnet Church & Halls (a)	1.0 FTE	Aboyne is a strategic location for mission.	Consider how to share resource and support across grouping
Cromar (177) LINK	1,679	UT L/w Aboyne Dinnet		St Moulag's Church (Tarland) (a) Coull Church (b) (Dispose by June 2025)			
		3 FTE		<b>Staffing Allocation:</b>	<b>1.5 FTE</b>	*Permission to call would be informed by Suggested Staffing	

**Aims and Opportunities**

- mission to 'strangers and pilgrims' who visit on a year-round basis
- engage with 'ecclesiastical tourism' and find an effective and sustainable means of generating new income
- work with other denominations with a view to making more effective use of all buildings
- develop online community – including conversations about becoming a 'satellite hub' for Sanctuary First'
- tourism, hosting music and creative events
- partnering with the life and work of the local estates and schools
- engage with children, young people, families, and carers
- working with young families e.g. messy church, playgroup activities
- working with school and community groups
- build team chaplaincy to schools and staff
- recruit, train and encourage Worship Leaders, Readers, OLM's & Local Preachers to support local worship teams

*Note: The cluster of the five or six charges of the Banchory area and surrounding work well together across the area, however it is felt that two smaller Parish Groupings, offering outreach wider to West and East, can be most effective.*

### **Lower Deeside West (Banchory Academy Catchment and Wider) - Snapshots**

Mid Deeside has a good mix of ages attending. They are a successful union and have a vision and mission to become a vibrant and growing congregation, with a Local Mission Plan to become a stronger living expression of Christ in the parish. They are close to covering the cost of Ministry. They have appointed a locally-funded part time Youth Worker (25% FTE) and are developing new forms of church life through an evolving online ministry and a Messy Church initiative. Folks are learning the church is kind and caring, the traits of Jesus. They plan to encourage and train people who could become Local Preachers. Working relationships with neighbouring congregations are informal. They have extensively refurbished and fully equipped the main church and halls. The Parish Hall Lumphanan maintains a presence with minimal cost. If things were to change in the area Mid Deeside are open to sharing resources, under an appropriate structure, with a neighbouring congregation (such as Birse & Feughside or Banchory Ternan West) whose leadership may have a similar ambition and outlook. They sit between Academy catchment areas (Aboyne & Banchory).

Birse & Feughside have one of the smallest populations of our parishes, with an older age profile. They have worked hard at becoming a successful union of distinct communities. They continue to reflect and serve that community diversity using local talents, and their buildings provide well-equipped and flexible spaces for mission and community engagement. This has borne fruit in a high level of engagement and attendance per head of population. In previous planning conversations Birse & Feughside took the difficult but forward-thinking decision to embrace part-time ministry and are served by a 0.5 FTE Minister of Word & Sacrament. This has involved challenge, but the Kirk Session and congregation have made this a positive and fruitful arrangement and their experience is valuable for others. They believe the most effective model for future mission and outreach is to continue this model, while working more closely with other congregations such as Mid Deeside or Banchory Ternan West. They sit between Academy catchment areas (Aboyne & Banchory).

Banchory West Church is an inter-generational congregation in one of the largest population areas. They aim to fulfilling God's call to be a "blessing machine" to the community inviting all to join in God's project. They have a local team-based approach to ministry served by a Full-time Parish minister, two locally-funded Youth-Coordinators, Church Administrator, and Lay Pastoral Assistant (unpaid). Local worship leaders include four recognized as Local Preachers by Presbytery. They have a history of investing in Youth Ministry and are part of the Growing Young Church movement. As a "Freedom Church" they partner with International Justice Mission in their work to end modern day slavery. Aberdeenshire South Foodbank is run under the charity. They partner with Deeside Climate Action Network. They promote whole life discipleship, have over 100 in small groups and encourage Alpha type courses. Their buildings, IT system, AV & Music & Worship resources have been entirely upgraded, for worship and community use. A single charge with one Kirk Session and Full-time Minister is fruitful, effective and keeps their vision focussed. They enjoy a close relationship with Banchory-Ternan East and the other churches in the town while reaching a different demographic and offering a different style of worship. They are keen to listen to what God is saying about ways they can be helpful and supportive resource to other neighbouring churches like Birse & Feughside & Mid Deeside.

Lower Deeside West (Banchory Academy & wider)							
Congregation Name and Roll	Gross Population	Current Status	Next Step (By 01 June 2023)	Building Designation	Suggested Staffing	Notes	Suggestions (Final proposals to be agreed by 01 June 2024)
Mid-Deeside (485)	3,559	UT	Lower Deeside West Parish Grouping	Torphins Church (a) Ha'Berry Cottage (a) Parish Hall Lumphanan (a)	0.5 FTE	Locally-Funded Youthworker 0.25 FTE Torphins is a strategic location for mission.	Consider how to share resource and support across grouping  Consider if 1 FTE or 2 x 0.5 FTE is best for resourcing mission
Birse & Feughside (197)	1,476	UT 0.5 FTE P/T		Finzean Church & Halls (a)	0.5 FTE	Experience of P/T ministry available to others	
Banchory Ternan West (565)	4,577	UT		Church & Old Hall (a) Centenary Hall & Store (Old Fire Stn) (a)	1 FTE	Locally-Funded Youthworkers 2 x 0.5 FTE Banchory is a strategic location for mission.	Consider how to share resource and support across grouping
		2.5 FTE		<b>Staffing Allocation: 2 FTE</b>		*Permission to call would be informed by Suggested Staffing	

**Aims and Opportunities**

- continue wider Lower Deeside area joint outreach activities such as Foodbank, Christian Aid, School Chaplaincy, Care Homes, Climate Action
- continue intergenerational focus
- develop online ministry
- develop Messy Church initiative (Mid Deeside)
- encourage and train people who could become Local Preachers
- share experience of p/t ministry at Birse & Feughside
- partnering with the life and work of the local estates
- engage with children, young people, families, and carers
- develop youthwork across area
- build on team chaplaincy and support to schools and staff
- climate action network and community engagement
- develop small groups and courses for whole life discipleship
- build on community links and outreach based on high levels of community use of all buildings
- recruit, train and encourage Worship Leaders, Readers, OLM's & Local Preachers to support local worship teams

## Lower Deeside East (Banchory Academy Catchment and Wider) - Snapshots

Banchory Ternan East Church has a majority ageing congregation that includes a few faithful families. Sunday school is monthly. They have streaming equipment. They aim to continue links with schools and families. They currently employ a locally-funded Children's Worker who offers regular support to families in the community. Other community links include Fellowship lunches, "crafty church" and acts of remembrance. For a time, expenditure has exceeded income highlighting a concern for financial sustainability. They run events with Banchory-Ternan West and other churches in the town including the food bank, Christian Aid and Remembrance while reaching a different demographic and offering a different style of worship. They have five Local Preachers and a Worship Engagement team who can lead services. They arrange and lead services in care homes, with other churches. The church building is the largest in the area, used when other buildings exceed capacity. Their halls are used well by church and community including as a polling station. They have been working closely with Drumoak-Durris including holding shared services, pulpit swaps, 'Fundays', holidays clubs, joint meetings and more. They have also made informal approaches to other congregations along the river East towards Aberdeen.

Drumoak-Durris have an attendance age range mainly over 60 with majority over 70. They can imagine a new way of doing church in the area, possibly based around a community activity with relationship building and with God at the heart of this. They would be open to a more imaginative approach to mission that involved all generations and multiple staff. The question was raised though as to who had the skills and commitment to do this in the current church set up? They have been a Union for over 20 years, yet it is felt that Union had not always been a good experience. Dissolution was an option discussed to allow individuals to make their own choice and to take their lines to a church which suited them best. This was noted as a real possibility which might help healing in members unhappy with Union and its consequences. Difficulties with the financial sustainability of a church renovation project mean some church buildings are unsuitable. Drumoak Hall has proved a useful worship & outreach venue. They have discussions ongoing with neighbouring churches including Peterculter which is currently in Aberdeen Presbytery.

### **\*\*NOTE on Drumoak-Durris**

It is possible that as a result of discussions currently in progress, Peterculter (currently in Aberdeen Presbytery) may choose to link or unite with Drumoak-Durris Church (currently in Kincardine and Deeside Presbytery) after the creation of The Presbytery of the North East and The Northern Isles on 01.01.23. It is hoped that a decision will be made on this possibility by 31.12.22. If Peterculter link or unite with Drumoak Church, then a 0.5 FTE post Staffing Allocation from K&D's 10.5 FTE would go with Drumoak-Durris.

Maryculter Trinity have a middle aged and enthusiastic attendance age range. The Parish has a relatively small population. They recognize that finance and population mean that it is not a given that there will be a full time ministry here in the future. However, it is felt that Maryculter Trinity has a part to play in the future of the church in this area. There is a Youth Café with around 30 attending each week. The Praise Band which is popular and allows for a different kind of worship. There is a small but hardworking Guild. They hold Community Coffee once a fortnight, support the local Friendship Club and the Scouts, "Mucky Boots" and Riding for the Disabled as well as having two Street Pastors and helping with "soup for the homeless". They have been a successful Union for the last 20 years and have reduced buildings to one flexible and modern building, with a loan still to be paid off. They have been operating a continued vacancy with a part time locum (also an OLM), notionally providing 2 days a week plus Sundays. This has been satisfactory for their needs and their mission efforts. They have good ecumenical relationships, and are discussing outreach with the Episcopal Church for the new town of Chapelton of Elsick. They have had discussions with churches both to the east and west for a potential future. They sit between Banchory, Cults, Portlethen, and Mackie academies.

Lower Deeside East							
Congregation Name and Roll	Gross Population	Current Status	Next Step (By 01 June 2023)	Building Designation	Suggested Staffing	Notes	Suggestions (Final proposals to be agreed by 01 June 2024)
Banchory Ternan East (484)	4,577	UT	Grouping still to be determined	Church (a) Hall (a)	0.5 FTE	Locally-Funded Children's Worker 0.5 FTE	Consider Union with neighbour or P/T Ministry
Drumoak - Durriss (368)	2,131	UT	Grouping still to be determined	Drumoak Hall (a) Drumoak Church (b) Durriss Church (b) (Dispose by June 2025)	0.5 FTE	Drumoak is a strategic location for mission.	Consider Dissolution, Linkage or Union with neighbour**
Maryculter Trinity (129)	3,184	UT	Grouping still to be determined	Maryculter Church, Halls & Store (Old Glebe Office) (a) Kirkton Cottage (a)	0.5 FTE	1 OLM	Consider Deferred Linkage (Meanwhile Guardianship counts as 0.25 FTE) Consider how to share resource and support across grouping
		3 FTE		<b>Staffing Allocation:</b>	<b>1.5 FTE</b>	*Permission to call would be informed by Suggested Staffing	

**Aims & Opportunities:**

- continue wider Lower Deeside area joint outreach activities such as Foodbank, Christian Aid, School Chaplaincy, Care Homes, Climate Action
- develop links with schools and families in community
- ministry to care homes
- friendship lunches
- build on community engagement in Drumoak like Toddler Group & Friendship group
- develop discipleship opportunities of youth club at MCT
- engage with children, young people, families, and carers
- recruit, train and encourage Worship Leaders, Readers, OLM's & Local Preachers to support local worship teams

**\*\*NOTE on Drumoak-Durriss**

It is possible that as a result of discussions currently in progress, Peterculter (currently in Aberdeen Presbytery) may choose to link or unite with Drumoak-Durriss Church (currently in Kincardine and Deeside Presbytery) after the creation of The Presbytery of the North East and The Northern Isles on 01.01.23. It is hoped that a decision will be made on this possibility by 31.12.22. If Peterculter link or unite with Drumoak Church, then a 0.5 FTE post Staffing Allocation from K&D's 10.5 FTE would go with Drumoak-Durriss.

### Kincardine North (Portlethen Academy Catchment) – Snapshots

Portlethen has one of the largest populations in the Presbytery. Despite that they have low attendance. It has been difficult to get the congregation back due to COVID. People’s attitudes have changed towards the church. They have one of the largest populations, yet the least participation. Only a few families come currently – and they are not consistent. They face financial challenges. They assume in the future there needs to be a closer amalgamation of churches in the cluster (e.g. Newtonhill, Maryculter and Portlethen). They would benefit from more focus on the community. They need to relate more to younger people and families as currently not many are interested. Portlethen Academy is in the parish. Portlethen is the largest town in the area. The current minister is in post on an arrangement with a denomination in France and that arrangement ends soon.

Newtonhill have an attendance age range heavily biased to older generations. They are concerned about a drift away from church locally and nationally, an aging Roll, potential financial shortfalls and the effects of Covid-19. They need help engaging with children and young people. They would like to explore available mission programmes such as Alpha, Christianity Explored, LICC’s ‘Frontline’ courses etc. They can imagine that based on multiple charges working together (such as Portlethen and Maryculter Trinity) they could possibly operate with less stipendiary ministry in the area, supported by a local worship team. They may need to further explore on-line methods of worship. They would consider one kirk session for the area.

Kincardine North (Portlethen Academy)							
Congregation Name and Roll	Gross Population	Current Status	Next Step (By 01 June 2023)	Building Designation	Suggested Staffing*	Notes	Suggestions (Final proposals to be agreed by 01 June 2024)
Portlethen (261)	9,390	UT	Kincardine North/Portlethen Parish Grouping	Church & Halls (a)	1 FTE Minister 0.5 FTE MDS	Portlethen is a strategic Location for mission	Consider Union with Newtonhill
Newtonhill (215)	3,658	UT		Newtonhill Hall Church (a)			Consider Union with Portlethen
		2 FTE		<b>Staffing Allocation:</b>	<b>1.5 FTE</b>	*Permission to call would be informed by Suggested Staffing	

**Aims & Opportunities:**

- outreach to community
- engage with children, young people, families, and carers
- outreach to schools and team chaplaincy
- mission programmes such as Alpha
- consider a locally employed children or youthworker
- build on shared outreach to Chapelton of Elsick development
- recruit, train and encourage Worship Leaders, Readers, OLM’s & Local Preachers to support local worship teams

## Stonehaven (Mackie Academy Catchment) – Snapshots

Stonehaven Carronside have an older, mostly retired attendance. They have recently become a union with a new Minister who took up post during lockdown. They have a good attendance and are financially sustainable, although the process of union can be stressful. They are in the process of reducing the number of buildings. They are interested in forming a Parish Grouping with Stonehaven Fetteresso. They enjoy a close relationship with Fetteresso and the other churches in the town. Dunottar Church is on the outskirts of town, St Bridget’s Hall is in the centre.

Stonehaven Fetteresso have a wide attendance and age range. They share with Stonehaven Carronside one of the largest populations in Presbytery. They employ a locally-funded Youthworker and have multi-generational membership, with families and children, and they have financial sustainability. Their new Minister took up post in January 2021. Their ambition is numerical growth, through mission and evangelism, rather than decline. They think that an informal church grouping in Stonehaven is the best way forward, working closely with Carronside church on matters of common interest. The congregation will change naturally as generations develop. They plan to work together with Carronside and the other churches in the town to reach out to youth by setting up a youth club in the town centre. They are about to start an online Alpha Course at the start of the year. They enjoy good relationships with Carronside and the other churches in the town.

Stonehaven (Mackie Academy)							
Congregation Name and Roll	Gross Population	Current Status	Next Step (By 01 June 2023)	Building Designation	Suggested Staffing*	Notes	Suggestions (Final proposals to be agreed by 01 June 2024)
Stonehaven Carronside (742)	6,072	UT + 0.5 FTE MDS	Stonehaven/Mackie Parish Grouping	Dunnottar Church (a) St Bridget's Hall (a) South Church & Hall (b) (Dispose by June 2025)	1 FTE	Stonehaven is a strategic location for mission.	Consider how to share resource and support across grouping
Stonehaven Fetteresso (519)	6,072	UT	Stonehaven/Mackie Parish Grouping	Fetteresso Church & Hall (a)	1 FTE	Locally Funded Youth Worker 1 FTE	Consider how to share resource and support across grouping
		2.5 FTE		<b>Staffing Allocation: 2 FTE</b>		*Permission to call would be informed by Suggested Staffing	

### Aims & Opportunities:

- develop mission and evangelism
- develop outreach through youth club in town centre
- continue with Alpha type courses
- build team chaplaincy to schools and staff
- ministry in care homes
- continue to develop community links
- engage with children, young people, families, and carers
- recruit, train and encourage Worship Leaders, Readers, OLM's & Local Preachers to support local worship teams

## **Kincardine South – (Mearns Academy Catchment & Wider) - Snapshots**

Aberluthnott linked with Laurencekirk have an elderly attendance, and low numbers. The charge has gone through an extended period without a Minister which has been a painful experience and the congregations are still fragile. They are hoping to flourish with the current Minister who took up post recently. All their buildings have problems, but Laurencekirk Church is in the biggest area of population. They enjoy informal working relationships with West Mearns and St Cyrus and are involved in joint mission and community projects. Mearns Academy is in Laurencekirk Parish.

West Mearns have an on average over 60 age range attendance. They have made progress in unifying the parish after Auchenblae, Fettercairn and Glenbervie churches joined. They have explored doing church differently, to engage better with communities beyond church walls and in neighbouring parishes. Their aim is to be mission focused, Parish team-led, IT enabled, financially sound, sustainable, and relevant. They are committed to ever closer partnership and teamwork with neighbouring parishes and beyond, and to building deeper ecumenical relationships. Local team ministry is at the heart of what they do to engage their communities and beyond through new forms of mission, worship, pastoral support, delivery, outreach, and partnership. The local team brings together experienced clergy and lay members from within the Parish under the leadership of a minister. The team is ecumenical in composition. They would like to find a young person to lead mission to younger people, in partnership with neighbouring parishes. They aim to broaden the Parish's leadership base, increase the diversity of the Kirk Session and reduce the average age of elders. They enjoy close relationships with the congregations and Kirk Sessions of Laurencekirk, Aberluthnott and Mearns Coastal (St. Cyrus) - the other Church of Scotland Parishes in southern Aberdeenshire.

St. Cyrus (recently changed name from Mearns Coastal) have an elderly age range attendance 80% over 70. They have successfully and fruitfully maintained mission and engagement in a Guardianship with an OLM as local leader and the support of neighbouring churches West Mearns and Aberluthnott w/ Laurencekirk. They recognised that M&M contribution and population did not justify a full-time Ministry. Guardianship allowed a local model of leadership and administration, while engaging in joined up ministry with other churches in the cluster. This arrangement is working well.

Arbuthnott, Bervie & Kinneff have an attendance age range of 60-65 average. They have a new Minister who is committed to serving for a lengthy period. They have restructured – bringing on new and passionate people to establish a dedicated local mission team. They have a 5 Year Plan, with the mission of God at its core. There is a sense of positivity and hope for the future, with potential for growth. They are committed to small groups & to have a large percentage of the worshipping church family within a group for discipleship. Their goal is to see the Kingdom of God grow, and are willing to partner with other congregations– Church of Scotland or not. They have close ties with the independent *Living Rooms* in Bervie. They work with others in the annual Holiday Club, and the minister has friendships with staff in varying denominations/groupings. They know that members of congregations will need to be involved in the worship, and mission of the church. They recognise that collaborative/ team ministry can be positive – though not guaranteed. They also recognise the (research-proven) missional benefits that having a designated leader brings – to spend time on preparing & leading worship, enabling mission, developing leaders, or pastoral care. They believe their current model works. They have the resources to support expenditure and are committed to fully 'pay their way' in terms of ministry. They have good relationships with Mearns Cluster Churches and beyond.. They are open to parish boundaries expanding e.g. so that funeral burden/school chaplaincy role might be eased. They have plans to keep only buildings effective for mission. ABK sits between catchment areas - Stonehaven (Mackie) & Laurencekirk (Mearns) Academies.

<b>Kincardine South (Mearns Academy &amp; wider)</b>								
Congregation Name and Roll	Gross Population	Current Status	Next Step (By 01 June 2023)	Building Designation	Suggested Staffing*	Notes	Suggestions (Final proposals to be agreed by 01 June 2024)	
Aberluthnott (99) LINK	1,173	UT I/w Laurecekirk	Kincardine South/Mearns Parish Grouping	Luthermuir Church (a) Marykirk Church (b) (Dispose by June 2025)	1 FTE	Luthermuir is location of an outreach initiative at the glebe	Consider deferred Union	
Laurencekirk (337) LINK	3,316	UT I/w Aberluthnott		Laurencekirk Church* (a)		Laurencekirk is a strategic location for mission. (*requires upgrade)		
West Mearns (410)	3,374	UT + 0.5 MDS		Fettercairn Church* (a) Fettercairn Church Hall* (a) Auchenblae Church (b) Auchenblae Church Hall (b) Glenbervie Church (b) (Dispose by June 2025)		Fettercairn is a strategic location for mission. (*requires upgrade)		
St Cyrus (204)	2,843	Guardianship		St Cyrus Church (a)		I OLM St Cyrus is a strategic location for mission.		Consider Deferred Linkage (Meanwhile Guardianship counts as 0.25 FTE)
Arbuthnott, Bervie & Kinneff (324)	4,438	UT		Bervie Church (a) Bervie Church Centre, Old Manse Garage (a) Arbuthnott Church (b) (Dispose by June 2025)		Bervie is a strategic location for mission.		Consider how to share resource and support across grouping
		3.75 FTE		<b>Staffing Allocation: 2 FTE</b>		*Permission to call would be informed by Suggested Staffing		

**Aims & Opportunities:**

- build on joint mission and community projects such as horticultural project “The Field”
- develop chaplaincy and support for schools and staff
- expand local team ministry approach
- engage with children, young people, families, and carers, recruit person to lead mission to younger people
- establish local mission team (ABK)
- enable mission, develop leaders
- develop online mission, recruit, train and encourage Worship Leaders, Readers, OLM’s & Local Preachers to support local worship teams
- use small group resources such as Alpha type course.

\*\*NOTE - Presbytery recognises that the emerging Local Team Ministry approach depends on maintaining the deployment of an OLM or equivalent to this grouping

This is the Presbytery Mission Plan prepared by the Ministries, Appraisal, and Vacancies Committee and approved by the Presbytery of Kincardine and Deeside at its meeting held on September 6th, 2022, at Fetteresso Church.

Signed: Convener of Ministries, Appraisals and Vacancies Committee

Signed: Presbytery Clerk

## Appendix I - Summary of Building Designations

Congregation	Building	AMBA Score	PMP Decision
Aberluthnott	Marykirk Church	70	b
Aberluthnott	Luthermuir Church	68	a
Aboyne-Dinnet	Church Halls	74	a
Aboyne-Dinnet	Church	71	a
Arbuthnott, Bervie & Kinneff	Bervie Church Centre	85	a
Arbuthnott, Bervie & Kinneff	Bervie Church,Old Manse Garage, Herd Hall	72	a
Arbuthnott, Bervie & Kinneff	Arbuthnott Church	58	b
Banchory Ternan East	Hall	79	a
Banchory Ternan East	Church	70	a
Banchory Ternan West	Church & Old Hall	88	a
Banchory Ternan West	Centenary Hall,Store (Old Fire St.)	88	a
Birse & Feughside	Finzean Church & Hall	81	a
Braemar & Crathie	Crathie Church Hall, Kirk Cottage	74	a
Braemar & Crathie	Crathie Kirk	66	a
Braemar & Crathie	Braemar Kirk/Hall	64	b
Cromar	St Moulag's Church	68	a
Cromar	Coull Church	43	b
Drumoak-Durris	Drumoak Church Hall	77	a
Drumoak-Durris	Drumoak Church	42	b
Drumoak-Durris	Durris Church, Portacabin	41	b
Glenmuick	Ballater Church & Hall	79	a
Laurencekirk	Laurencekirk Church	70	a
Maryculter Trinity	Maryculter Church & Halls, Store, Kirkton Cottage	77	a
Mearns Coastal (St Cyrus)	St Cyrus Church	75	a
Mid Deeside	Torphins Church & Halls, HaBerry Cottage	76	a
Mid Deeside	Mid Deeside Parish Hall Lumphanan	68	a
Newtonhill	Hall Church	79	a
Portlethen	Halls	77	a
Portlethen	Church	75	a
Stonehaven Carronside	St Bridget's Hall Church	83	a
Stonehaven Carronside	Dunnottar Church, Marischal Aisle	71	a
Stonehaven Carronside	South Church & Hall	64	b
Stonehaven Fetteresso	Church & Hall	81	a
West Mearns	Fettercairn Church Hall	66	a
West Mearns	Auchenblae Church	62	b
West Mearns	Auchenblae Church Hall	62	b
West Mearns	Fettercairn Church	56	a
West Mearns	Glenbervie Church	53	b

## Appendix 2 - Scenarios

### Sample Scenario I

#### Present Situation:

Congregation A – Buildings: Church A, Hall A Staff – 1 Minister

Congregation B – Buildings: Church B, Hall B, Church B1, Hall B1, Staff — 1 Minister

Congregation C - Buildings: Church C, Hall C, Church C1, Church C2, Church C3, Staff – 1 Minister

#### Presbytery Mission Plan:

**Next Step:** Parish Grouping of all three congregations. **Staffing Allocation** for all three to be 1.5 FTE.

**Building designations:** Disposal of Church B1, Hall B1, Church C, Church C2, Church C3 due to buildings not in strategic locations, there being better alternatives, and/or not being considered sustainable to upgrade or maintain.

**Suggestions:** Consider Union of all three.

#### Possible Process of change:

Building Disposal - General Trustees/Buildings Officer advise / take responsibility for disposal of buildings.

Step One – Entire area forms a Parish Grouping – by June 2023. Process – Arrange a Joint meeting of Kirk Sessions, draw up a covenant document, agree it at each Kirk Session. Part of that arrangement is to decide how often joint meetings will occur.

Step Two – Further Discussions 2023-24. Joint Kirk Sessions meet regularly and discuss adjustment suggestions and staffing – by xxx 2024. In this case they agree to form Local Mission Churches in two locations via Union of all three. One Kirk Session to be formed for whole area (limited to a reasonable number e.g. 12-15). They decide that B & C locations merit becoming Local Mission Churches with local leadership teams. B will use Church B and Hall B, C will use Hall C to meet. They decide a full-time minister of Word and Sacrament, and a 0.5FTE Associate Minister would be ideal staffing to support local worship leaders.

Step Three –Adjustment. Agree a Basis of Union document for all three. The Unified Kirk Session membership then agreed. Max number of Kirk Session agreed at e.g. 12-15. Basis of Local Mission Church document drawn up for two Local Mission Churches named B and C. B&C Local Leadership teams formed.

Staffing: The current Ministers continue to serve until retirement or called elsewhere. Union is deferred until one Minister left, or all in vacancy. Current Ministers may want to operate an informal team approach meantime, or not. Since Allocation is 1.5 FTE Staff for Area. They aim for 1 FTE Minister called through vacancy process (moderates Kirk Session and occupies manse). And a 0.5 MDS Associate Minister to be recruited & appointed via interview & Kirk Session approval.

Local Leadership teams B&C take local responsibility for worship, outreach and upkeep of buildings. They report regularly to the new Kirk Session. Worship & Mission continues in A, B and C with leadership in a local team approach of lay / ordained supported by the 1.5 FTE Ministry staff.

All arrangements continually reviewed and refined in line with changing contexts.

## Sample Scenario 2:

### Present Situation:

Congregation X – Buildings: Church X, Hall X Staff – 1 Minister

Congregation Y & Z (linkage) – Buildings: Church Y, Hall Y, Church Z Staff — 1 Minister

### Presbytery Mission Plan:

**Next Step:** Parish Grouping of two charges. **Staffing Limit** to be 1.5 FTE.

Suggested to consider Union

**Building Designations:** Disposal of Church Y and Church Z, due to building not in strategic locations, there being better alternatives, and/or not being considered sustainable to upgrade or maintain.

### Possible Process of change:

Building Disposal - General Trustees/Buildings Officer advise / take responsibility for disposal of buildings.

Step One – Entire area forms a Parish Grouping – by June 2023. Process – Arrange a Joint meeting of Kirk Sessions, draw up a covenant document and agreed it at each Kirk Session. Part of that arrangement is to decide how often joint meetings will occur.

Step Two – Further Discussions 2023-24. Joint Kirk Sessions meet and discuss any further adjustment & staffing recommendations – by xxx 2024. In this case they decide that a Union would reduce admin, and they can maintain local presence by forming a Local Mission Church in housing development location Z. Local Mission Church Z will use Hall Z for worship and outreach and focus on young families, and the new housing developments. Worship and outreach continues from Church X and Hall X.

Step Three –Adjustment. Agree basis of Union document. Unified Kirk Session membership agreed. Max number of Kirk Session agreed at e.g. 12-15, Basis agreement drafted for Local Mission Church named Z Local Leadership teams formed.

The current Ministers continue to serve until retirement or called elsewhere. Until one or all ministers leave post Union is deferred. Ministers may want to operate an informal team approach meantime, or not.

Since Allocation is 1.5 FTE Staff for Area recruitment can happen when one minister is left in post.. 0.5 MDS Associate Minister can be recruited & appointed via interview & Kirk Session approval. Associate given focus on outreach to new emerging community in location Z, with support from Church X

All arrangements continually reviewed and refined in line with changing contexts.

**Presbytery Mission Plan**  
**for the Presbytery of Moray**  
***Growing a Shared Future:***  
***Planning our future together with God***

**Revised June 2023**

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## 1 Introduction

This Mission Plan is offered to assist the Presbytery of Moray in “*Growing a Shared Future: Planning our future together with God*”.

There is much more in subsequent sections about what has shaped this document. It may also be helpful to be clear what this document is not.

It is not perfect, but is offered after a lengthy time of listening, learning, gathering information and prayerful discernment. It is the best attempt within human limitations using the information at our disposal.

It is not totally comprehensive. There are parish boundaries that may need renegotiated as adjustments are implemented. The most appropriate manse to retain are not yet recommended.

It is not proposing a new permanent shape to church life, but offers a first step with some longer term directions of travel. It is a five year plan and will be reviewed annually.

It is not indicating any lack of commitment or faith of the congregations in Moray. The gardener in John 15 prunes the branches that bear fruit and those that are overstretched or exhausted.

It is not comfortable to write or read, but it is offered trusting that God is still at work in the Church of Scotland in Moray, so there can be hope for new growth as well as lament of loss.

It is not primarily about buildings. It is about the mission of Christ, which is the mission of the Church, which can be resourced by appropriate buildings.

It is not primarily about Ministers. It is about the mission of Christ, which is the mission of the whole body of the Church, within and beyond the Church of Scotland, within and beyond Recognised Ministries. It is about the ministries and mission of the whole people of God.

It is not a reshaping of business as usual. The roles of those in paid posts in the Church will have to be reimagined, as it will not be possible to live up to past

expectations and some tasks will need to be laid aside. God's call to the whole people of God will also need to be recognised.

This is offered trusting in God, whose Church this is. It is the result of a huge investment of time and energy by people across the Church of Scotland in Moray. Thanks to all those who have engaged with the process, and particular thanks to current and past members of the Presbytery Planning Team.

God,  
vine-grower, true vine, Spirit of life,  
across Moray help us grow together,  
discerning and planning our future with you.  
Help us to remain joined with you  
and accept wise pruning,  
so we might share the fruit of your love more widely.  
Amen

*Moray Presbytery Planning Team (PPT)*

*Rev Jenny Adams (Convener), Mr Scott Anderson, Mrs Ann Bowie, Rev Eddie Enslin, Rev Andrew Kimmitt, Mrs Jane Rossetter, Mrs Fiona Simpson and Rev Wiekus van Straaten*

*Supporting documentation includes:*

*Brendan Research report "Moray Presbytery Plan: Synthesis of congregational documents and associated statistics" February 2022*

*Presbytery Mission Plan Act 2021<sup>1</sup>*

*Presbytery Mission Planning Act: Guidance and Code of Practice<sup>2</sup>*

*AMBA summaries for Moray Presbytery*

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/81835/Presbytery-Mission-Plan-Act-2021-as-passed-31.5.21.pdf](https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/81835/Presbytery-Mission-Plan-Act-2021-as-passed-31.5.21.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/presbytery-planning/presbytery-mission-plan-act-guidance-code-of-practice>

## 2 Overall mission narrative for Moray

The vision of the mission planning process for Moray Presbytery is summed up in the strapline “*Growing a Shared Future: Planning our future together with God*” which has been used since the process began.

The imagery of the vine in John 15, including God’s pruning of branches that are bearing fruit, shaped the listening and information sharing with office-bearers and focus groups from all congregations (see section 3). While pruning brings loss, pain and uncertainty, it can create space for new ways of being Church to grow if God leads the pruning and new growth.

God is at work in every local congregation and community, so listening to local congregations is listening to discern the mission of Christ for the church. That listening included hearing stories, hopes and fears, as well as gathering quantitative data. That listening has continued in the constructive responses to the draft plan from officebearers across congregations, facilitating the decisions of the whole of Moray Presbytery that form the final mission plan.

A key theme heard across the local church in Moray was God’s call to engage with local communities. This led to reflection on the start of Luke 10, where Jesus’ followers are sent into communities to bring God’s peace and good news. That acknowledges our total dependence on God to provide the labourers to do so, and recognises many challenges. It also highlights that the mission of Christ is always done alongside others, receiving as well as offering hospitality, and varying in response to the specific context. That shapes the mission of the Church as the mission of the whole people of God, working together within and beyond the Church of Scotland.

Through Christ and the Holy Spirit, God calls, gathers and builds up the Church for the mission of the Church, which is the mission of Christ. That has been helpfully summarised in the Five Marks of Mission, which are key to this mission plan:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service

4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

In Moray, members of the Church of Scotland have been gathered in congregations who are called to Christ's mission. The report of the Theological Forum on the Five Marks of Mission recognised the integrity of all aspects of mission, reminding all congregations and members that "in being invited to share God's mission for the world, we are called to contribute across that whole mission so far as we are able." However, different parts of Christ's body are given different gifts and have different roles to play in specific contexts - not every congregation, member or denomination is required to fulfil all aspects of Christ's mission.<sup>3</sup>

This directs attention back to the mission of Christ always being done alongside others, with ecumenical and community partners, in and between congregations, with other disciples of Jesus and with those of goodwill who offer hospitality. The mission of the Church of Scotland in Moray will be shaped on that basis:

- discerning the gifts and calling of existing congregations;
- discerning the potential for new growth in contexts where people do not know God's good news;
- discerning relationships possible between and beyond congregations and ministries to work together as Christ's body.

In listening to congregations across Moray, God's call was discerned in many common concerns across the whole of the presbytery area:

- a) the Church in Moray will continue to engage with all our local communities. This call to serve encompasses the breadth of the Five Marks of Mission, including meeting needs, supporting local organisations and global charities, witnessing to those who do not know the gospel or who are alienated from it, and nurturing people in faith. This comes with widespread generosity, commitment and passion. Local Sunday worship is seen as a primary vehicle

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/69749/Church-of-Scotland-Theological-Forum-Five-Marks-of-Mission.pdf](https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/69749/Church-of-Scotland-Theological-Forum-Five-Marks-of-Mission.pdf)

for proclaiming God's good news and nurturing believers. Implementation of the mission plan will require commitment to listening to the needs of communities, with partners and appropriate expertise.

- b) the Church in Moray has a particular concern for children and young people. This includes service and witness through close relationships with local schools, and a strong desire to teach, baptise and nurture new believers. This will build on strong relationships and good examples across Moray, while needing considerable development.
- c) building on the experience gained through the COVID-19 pandemic, the Church in Moray needs to engage with communities through an online presence, which requires support, training and capacity.
- d) the future of the Church in Moray will include working with other churches. The particular shape that will take will vary between communities.

The fifth mark of mission was mentioned as a strong call in only a few congregations but is an aspect of Christ's mission that will get increased focus by all congregations through the Church of Scotland's Net Zero Carbon target of 2030. The priority of engaging with children and young people will also require greater emphasis on care for creation in a time of ecological crises. In many cases this aspect of mission will be exercised through the commitment to Christian Aid that is found in all congregations, as Christian Aid focus on climate justice.

While these priorities for mission have been identified across the breadth of Moray Presbytery, these will find different expressions within each local area, depending on the gifts, callings and partnerships of congregations; the other expressions of church already working missionally in an area; and the needs of the communities being served. More specific mission narratives are shared for each Area in sections 4 to 9 below.

### 3 Process

#### 3.1 Overview of process

This timeline summarises the mission planning process so far, with sections in italics completed so far:

<i>Aug – Nov 2020</i>	<i>Presbytery Planning Team (PPT) consider priority actions, estimate timescales, plan process</i>
<i>Oct 2020</i>	<i>PPT draft, agree and send out initial “heads-up” letter, based on best current information, including from General Assembly (GA) of October 2020.</i>  <i>Aim – keep Presbytery informed; and start the robust and imaginative planning for our local context instructed by GA 2020.</i>
<i>Nov 2020</i>	<i>Prepare report to December Presbytery meeting, including outline process and method to be used in preparing a Plan.</i>
<i>Nov 2020 - Mar 2021</i>	<i>Based on Planning Principles, gather information about congregations, parishes, communities and areas from different sources (including from congregations and relevant committees of Presbytery).</i>
<i>Nov 2020 - May 2021</i>	<i>Keep up to date with latest budgets and projections from the Assembly Trustees and Faith Nurture Forum, to inform information and consultation packs and Presbytery.</i>  <i>Respond, where possible, to questions and comments from Presbytery.</i>
<i>Feb - May 2021</i>	<i>Plan format and content of meetings of PPT with Ministers and representatives of congregations, including clear purpose and outcomes regarding mission and the ministry posts and buildings that might enable mission in the future.</i>
<i>Feb - May 2021</i>	<i>Consider the information being gathered (based on the Planning Principles, and in consultation with relevant committees of Presbytery) and how such information will be processed and used.</i>
<i>Feb - May 2021</i>	<i>Engage with Presbytery’s Stewardship, Finance &amp; Property committee about using the General Trustees’ toolkit to plan a process of information-gathering, assessment and recommendation for all church buildings within Moray Presbytery.</i>
<i>May 2021</i>	<i>General Assembly brings greater clarity of ministry post numbers, and potential changes to financial, property and planning legislation.</i>
<i>June 2021</i>	<i>Review this planning process in the light of General Assembly decisions.</i>

<i>Jun-Jul 2021</i>	<i>Assemble a draft 'footprint' for each congregation, drawing information from existing sources. (Step 1)</i> <i>Allocate and train members of PPT (in visiting pairs) for meeting with Ministers and representatives of congregations.</i>
<i>Jul-Oct 2021</i>	<i>Visiting pairs of PPT meet online with Minister, Session Clerk and 2 or 3 key stakeholders in each congregation. (Step 2)</i> <i>Revise footprint and share with Kirk Sessions for their approval. (Step 3)</i> <i>Arrange dates for visiting pairs to meet with focus group from each congregation Oct-Dec 2021.</i>
<i>Nov 2021</i>	<i>Meetings of PPT with congregational focus groups. (Step 4)</i>
<i>1 Dec 2021</i>	<i>Collated footprints and focus group notes shared with Brendan Research for analysis and synthesis to assist the PPT</i>
<i>Dec 2021 - Jan 2022</i>	<i>PPT, with advice of PMPIG and relevant research, shapes criteria for use of gathered data in creating a draft plan, to present to February Presbytery</i>
<i>Jan-Feb 2022</i>	<i>Asset Management Buildings Audit of "Well equipped spaces in the right places" led by General Trustees and SFP committee. Outcomes by 28 Feb 2022.</i>
<i>1 Feb 2022</i>	<i>Presbytery agrees this process and general criteria for formation of a draft plan</i>
<i>1 Feb – 7 April 2022</i>	<i>PPT receives Brendan Research output reports</i> <i>PPT shapes a draft Mission Plan for Moray Presbytery, in consultation with SFP committee, PMPIG and General Trustees. Draft plan will specify any geographical clusters of current parishes, ministry posts and other ministries allocated within that; what adjustments are proposed for existing charges; and categorising ecclesiastical buildings to be retained or not. There will be supporting documentation indicating the rationale behind the proposals, in terms of the Mission Plan Act and the information gathered from the earlier stages of the process.</i>
<i>by 7 April 2022</i>	<i>The proposed draft Mission Plan, supporting documentation, links to the relevant Act and Code of Practice, and a response proforma will be sent to all members and corresponding members of Presbytery, for circulation to all congregations. That documentation will also be sent to the General Trustees and PMPIG for their comment.</i>
<i>3 May 2022</i>	<i>At the May meeting of Moray Presbytery, PPT will present the draft plan, along with any feedback from the General Trustees and</i>

	<i>PMPIG. Presbytery will be asked to accept it as a draft for discussion.</i>
<i>7 April – 30 June 2022</i>	<i>All Boards and Kirk Sessions will be encouraged to discuss the draft plan, including with relevant neighbouring congregations and ecumenical and community partners. All Boards and Kirk Sessions will be encouraged to use the response proforma to make any proposals for amendments to the draft.</i>  <i>All Members and Corresponding Members of Presbytery will be encouraged to consider the draft plan and use the response proforma to make any proposals for amendments to the draft.</i>  <i>Any alternatives proposed by any parties must be within the criteria agreed by February Presbytery and within the Mission Plan Act 2021 and its associated Code of Practice.</i>
<i>1 July – 23 August 2022</i>	<i>PPT get feedback on proposed amendments to the draft plan from General Trustees and PMPIG. PPT with Business Committee collate proposed amendments in appropriate sections of deliverance for the consideration of Presbytery.</i>
<i>by 23 August 2022</i>	<i>Proposed amendments to draft Mission Plan (as collated sections of deliverance), with all relevant supporting documentation, sent to all members and corresponding members of Presbytery, for circulation to all congregations. All congregations cited to attend September Presbytery meeting.</i>
<i>6 Sept 2022</i>	<i>At the September meeting of Moray Presbytery, Presbytery discussed and voted on proposed amendments to draft Mission Plan. Presbytery also agreed PPT would represent Moray Presbytery in any discussions with PMPIG and GTs regarding possible amendments.</i>  <i>Presbytery voted to approve a Mission Plan so the PPT's process was sisted and an extract minute of the decision and a copy of the Mission Plan documentation was sent to the Faith Nurture Forum and the General Trustees for their approval.</i>
<i>September - November 2022</i>	<i>Upon receipt of the Mission Plan, the Forum and the General Trustees considered whether the Mission Plan conformed to the Presbytery Mission Plan Act and thus whether the Forum and the General Trustees could grant final approval of the Mission Plan. The Moray Presbytery Mission Plan was not approved, with recommendations made to revisit some building categorisations and some proposed adjustments and ministries allocations.</i>  <i>Therefore, in the terms of the Presbytery Mission Plan Act, further discussion with the Presbytery was required. The Moray PPT represented Presbytery in those discussions, and the PPT's convener then the PPT met with PMPIG facilitators and</i>

	<p><i>representatives of the GTs. The PPT communicated the recommendations and areas for discussion to affected congregations, and in some cases members of the PPT met with local officebearers to listen to their responses and answer questions. This activity was reported to Presbytery at its meetings in October and November 2022.</i></p> <p><i>From these discussions, PPT agreed possible amendments, brought to an In hunc effectum meeting of Moray Presbytery on the 29th November 2022 for its discussion and potential final approval.</i></p>
29 Nov 2022	<p><i>Presbytery discussed and voted on amended Mission Plan.</i></p> <p><i>As Presbytery voted to approve a Mission Plan the PPT's process was sisted and an extract minute of the decision and a copy of the Mission Plan documentation was sent to the Faith Nurture Forum and the General Trustees for their approval.</i></p>
December 2022	<p><i>Following intimation of PMPIG not approving the Moray PMP, Moray Presbytery (under powers) referred the Mission Plan to the Mission Plan Review Panel for assistance:</i></p> <p><i>Discussion on the Mission Plan among the Presbytery, the Forum and the General Trustees shall continue until final approval of the Mission Plan is given by the Forum and the General Trustees. If final approval is not in place within a period of three calendar months after the Forum's and the General Trustees' receipt of the Mission Plan, the matter shall be referred to the Mission Plan Review Panel by the Presbytery and the Panel shall assist the parties to resolve the matter, so that final approval of the Mission Plan can be given.</i></p>
March-June 2023	<p>Members of the Mission Plan Review Panel met online with members of the NE&amp;NI Presbytery Planning and Deployment Committee, then visited Moray to meet with members of ministry teams, Sessions and congregations in areas where there were matters to be resolved.</p> <p>A report was issued by the group proposing resolutions that appear to be acceptable to local and national bodies.</p>
	<p>Extract minute of final approvals to Presbytery: Once both the Forum and the General Trustees have given final approval of the Mission Plan, the Forum shall send an extract minute to Presbytery indicating that the Forum and the General Trustees have granted final approval of the Mission Plan.</p> <p>When the Forum's and the General Trustees' final approval of the Mission Plan is announced and recorded at a meeting of the Presbytery of the North East and the Northern Isles, the Mission Plan will then be considered an Approved Mission Plan and, subject</p>

	to the right of review (which must be sought within fourteen days), steps shall be taken by the Presbytery towards its implementation.
	Moray's approved Mission Plan will be amalgamated with other approved Mission Plans of the previous presbyteries of the North East and the Northern Isles.

## 3.2 Listening and gathering

### 3.2.1 Footprints

From June-October 2021 the Presbytery Planning Team (PPT) assembled "footprints" of data for each congregation and the communities they serve. That included:

- responses to a questionnaire sent to each Minister/Interim Moderator and Session Clerk in December 2020, asking for information relevant to the subordinate principles described in the *Presbytery Mission Planning Act: Guidance and Code of Practice*: other denominations & fellowships; other significant networks of belonging; current Mission and Ministries contributions; congregational income; number of active worshippers; where people come from to gather in church buildings; and transport options.
- answers recorded in the most recent Local Church Review reports, where available and still relevant.
- information from any recent Parish Profile.
- Statistics for Mission.<sup>4</sup>
- Statistics regarding Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.<sup>5</sup>
- Moray Council's Local Development Plan 2020-2030.<sup>6</sup>

Draft footprints were then added to and amended through visiting pairs from the PPT meeting with Ministers/Interim Moderators and officebearers from each congregation

<sup>4</sup> Statistics for Mission, accessed at [https://cos.churchofscotland.org.uk/church\\_finder/](https://cos.churchofscotland.org.uk/church_finder/)

<sup>5</sup> Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, [www.simd.scot](http://www.simd.scot); and Church of Scotland SIMD stats [https://cos.churchofscotland.org.uk/church\\_finder/](https://cos.churchofscotland.org.uk/church_finder/)

<sup>6</sup> Moray Council Local Plan [http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray\\_standard/page\\_133431.html](http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_133431.html)

(with each congregation choosing who was most relevant to involve). Those meetings also discussed how each congregation might describe its identity, and developed descriptions of missional activity in terms of the Five Marks of Mission.

The final footprints, including descriptions of congregational identity and missional activity in terms of the Five Marks of Mission, were approved by Kirk Sessions.

### 3.2.2 Focus Groups

In October-December 2021 the PPT visiting pairs met with focus groups of up to ten people from each congregation for conversation around two open questions: “What does the future look like for you?” and “What roles can support you in that future?” The membership of their focus group was chosen by each congregation. The discussion outcomes were agreed and noted during the meeting on flipcharts.

### 3.2.3 Synthesis and analysis

Moray Presbytery commissioned Brendan Research to synthesise and analyse the footprints and focus group notes of all twenty one congregations. The resulting report offers six themes that stood out from the focus group responses, with relevant statistical data and selected examples taken from footprints and focus groups. The Brendan Research report also adds related statistics from other sources and summarises the data relating to the Five Marks of Mission across all the congregations.

The report from Brendan Research is not exhaustive – it does not (and could not) include every piece of information gathered. However, it is a helpful addition to the footprints, focus group notes, local knowledge and observations of the PPT.

The full synthesis report is available as a supporting document to this draft plan. Specific details will be referred to in sections 4 to 9 for areas. The wider themes identified for the whole of Moray Presbytery include:

- a) The first two Marks of Mission connect with the many requests for ministers and worship leaders to provide Sunday services, online or digital worship, and the request for youth and children’s workers which emerged in focus groups.

- b) Marks 3 and 4 connect with the generosity found within the presbytery, as well as the theme of connecting with the community as expressed by the focus groups.
- c) Few congregations mentioned the fifth Mark of Mission in their material, but it was noted that there is a desire to develop this, and certain congregations are further ahead.
- d) Community engagement was the most prominent theme.
- e) For all parishes, the future included working with children and young people, with a majority of congregations also identifying the need for a role supporting such work.
- f) Working with other churches was a strong theme, with information gathered about existing ecumenical work and connections between congregations.
- g) The focus group questions asked about roles to support the future, so staffing and volunteers were highlighted.
- h) Concerns about premises were raised by most focus groups.
- i) Digital church and technology is an important theme, building on explorations during the COVID pandemic.
- j) Working with the elderly was also mentioned by a significant number of congregations.

### 3.3 Buildings

The General Trustees have created a Asset Management Buildings Audit process for all ecclesiastical buildings, which was undertaken in Moray in January and February 2022 by volunteers organised by Moray Presbytery's Stewardship, Finance and Property Committee and trained by the North East and Northern Isles Buildings Officer. Audit spreadsheets were passed to the General Trustees who have provided the PPT with a summary of audit results, with scores for "Minimum Standards," "Location Assessment" and total scores. These scores provide an indication of whether a building is a "well equipped space in the right place" or not.

However, buildings must serve the mission of the Church, which means that mission is the ultimate criteria. There are situations where there are multiple well equipped spaces in very close proximity, where it is not desirable to have the burden or perceived competition of multiple properties. There are well equipped spaces which

are no longer in the right place, due to demographic changes. All the ecclesiastical buildings in Moray have been well maintained, with care, respect and sacrificial dedication over decades and centuries.

Therefore, as with other information gathered, the AMBA outputs are one factor shaping proposals about buildings, along with all that has been shared about mission potential through the footprints, focus group notes, local knowledge and observations of the PPT.

### 3.3.1 Historic Properties

The Mission Plan Act instructs that the Mission Plan must record those ecclesiastical buildings that are Historic Properties. The General Trustees advise that a property is to be considered historic if:

- a. The building is A Listed; *and*
- b. The building is Cathedral style in its proportions; *and*
- c. The building is in a prominent setting within a townscape

The historic significance is to be recorded, but the categorisation decisions are to be made based on a building's capacity to provide for mission and outreach within the whole mission plan.

Based on the above criteria, there are no "Historic Properties" within Moray's ecclesiastical buildings.

### 3.3.2 Manses

Ecclesiastical buildings include manses. A manse must be provided to a Minister inducted to a charge in the mission plan, including in a Team Ministry. A manse cannot be provided rent-free to Ministry Development Staff.

The PPT proposes that proposals for retaining the most appropriate manses for the posts described in this Mission Plan and disposing (through let, sales or otherwise) of surplus manses will be brought as part of the first annual review of the Mission Plan, or will be dealt with as part of the negotiation of adjustments during the implementation of the Mission Plan.

### 3.4 Criteria

Good practice guidance emphasised the value of agreeing criteria that will be used in proposing the future shape of the church. The Mission Plan Act 2021 makes clear the prioritisation of the mission of Christ, which has been articulated in the Five Marks of Mission:

The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

The associated Code of Practice offers eight subordinate principles:

- a) Communities
- b) Ecumenism
- c) The poor
- d) Whole people of God
- e) Congregations
- f) Mixed economy
- g) Financial responsibility
- h) Buildings

The PPT collated recent research on church growth and fresh expressions of church to seek wider wisdom and best practice to encourage new ways of being Church.

During the listening stages of the planning process, representatives of congregations have been sharing what is happening in their communities and the potential they see for mission in the future. The mission of Christ and such ideas are often found in narratives rather than statistics, so the formation of the Mission Plan has taken such stories into account as well as quantitative data.

The General Assembly of 2021 agreed numbers for ministry post allocations, based around 600 full-time equivalent (FTE) ministries plus 60 vacant posts by the end of 2025. That number includes Ministry Development Staff (MDS) posts, and has been broken down into allocations for existing presbyteries. The current Moray Presbytery has an allocation of 11.5 ministry posts, a reduction from the current 17 FTE posts (16.8 centrally funded) serving 21 congregations. The Recognised Ministries of Readership and Ordained Local Ministry (OLM) are not included in those target numbers, and those ministries are greatly valued and should be encouraged and supported.

The allocation of posts is for nationally-funded ministry posts. It will be possible for congregations to fund additional posts from local funds, particularly when working in partnerships.

The roles of those in paid posts will have to be reimagined and expectations significantly adjusted. The PPT, along with the whole Church of Scotland, recognises God's call to and the ministries of the whole people of God, so planning for ministries and mission is not limited to or by the number of paid posts. Local leadership will need to be trained and supported as people respond to God's call. We also share ministry to the people of Moray with other denominations and fellowships and should be actively considering ecumenical partnerships which fit our local contexts.

There are many common areas of mission in multiple areas of Moray. That offers the potential for learning communities and networks of all those involved in related ministries to support each other in development, training and experimentation, which research suggests is helpful in supporting growth and fresh expressions of church. Where those commonalities have been identified, relevant networks are highlighted for congregations in an area. In some cases there are recommendations of areas to lead in facilitating such networks.

All of these factors have been taken into account in the formation of this Mission Plan. For a fuller description of the criteria agreed by Moray Presbytery in February 2022, please see Appendix A.

### 3.5 Amending the draft Mission Plan

On 7 April 2022 a draft Mission Plan was offered to Moray Presbytery for discussion and potential amendment, trusting that the discernment of the wider body of Christ was necessary for discerning God's will for this phase of Church of Scotland life in this area.

All Boards and Kirk Sessions were encouraged to discuss this draft plan, including with relevant neighbouring congregations and ecumenical and community partners. The PPT responded to queries and requests for assistance during that period. All Boards, Kirk Sessions and Members and Corresponding Members of Presbytery had the opportunity to propose amendments to the draft, by 30 June 2022.

The PPT gathered feedback on the draft mission plan and proposed amendments from the Faith Nurture Forum's Presbytery Mission Plan Implementation Group and from the General Trustees. That resulted in the PPT proposing amendments in the PPT's name to the draft plan. PPT also shared feedback with relevant parties.

Any alternatives proposed by any parties had to be within the criteria agreed by February Presbytery (see Appendix A) and within the Mission Plan Act 2021 and its associated Code of Practice.

From 1 July 2022 until 23 August 2022 the PPT worked with Moray Presbytery's Business Committee and all parties proposing amendments, collating all proposed amendments into appropriate sections of deliverance for the consideration of Presbytery. Those proposed amendments and relevant supporting documentation from Sessions and PPT were sent to all members and corresponding members of Presbytery for circulation to all congregations. All congregations were cited to attend the Presbytery meeting on 6 September 2022, where Moray Presbytery discussed and voted on the draft Mission Plan and proposed amendments. This resulted in a Moray Presbytery Mission Plan, which was submitted to the Faith Nurture Forum and General Trustees for their approval, as required by the Mission Plan Act 2021.

### 3.6 Further discussions

On 26 September 2022 feedback was received from the Presbytery Mission Plan Implementation Group (PMPiG) that the Presbytery of Moray Mission Plan required

more work and was not ready to go forward for Faith Nurture Forum (FNF) approval. The diligence and the hard work which had gone into the plan was affirmed. In accordance with the Presbytery Mission Plan Act, further discussion was required. The Moray PPT represented Presbytery in discussions with national bodies, and the PPT's convener then the PPT met with PMPIG facilitators and representatives of the GTs. The PPT communicated the recommendations and areas for discussion to affected congregations, and in some cases members of the PPT met with local officebearers to listen to their responses and answer questions. This activity was reported to Presbytery at its meetings in October and November 2022.

From these discussions, PPT agreed possible amendments, brought to an *In hunc effectum* meeting of Moray Presbytery on the 29th November 2022 for its discussion and potential final approval. Presbytery discussed and amended the Mission Plan further and the approved Mission Plan was sent to the Faith Nurture Forum and General Trustees.

On 19 December 2022 feedback was received from the Presbytery Mission Plan Implementation Group (PMPIG) that the Presbytery of Moray Mission Plan still required more work and was not ready to go forward for Faith Nurture Forum (FNF) approval. As had been agreed by Moray Presbytery at its meeting on 29 November, at that point Moray Presbytery referred the matter to the Mission Plan Review Panel for assistance in resolving the remaining issues.

The Mission Review Group was convened in March 2023, and visited the area in April 2023. Extracts from their report and recommendations are outlined in Appendix D. This plan was amended in June 2023 in line with those recommendations.

### 3.7 Implementation

After the final approval of the Mission Plan by Presbytery, Faith Nurture Forum and General Trustees, and when there are no outstanding requests for review, the Presbytery shall proceed to implement the Approved Mission Plan. The Mission Plan Act 2021 also governs that implementation.

The implementation of the Mission Plan will not immediately reach the outcomes described in the plan.

The disposal of ecclesiastical buildings categorised (b) is to be achieved by a date specified in the Plan details below – which Moray Presbytery has chosen as August 2027 (within five years of September 2022) for all buildings. Disposal of buildings can be achieved through sale, letting or otherwise, which will hopefully include working with relevant community partners to achieve the best outcome for the communities being served. Congregations are encouraged to begin the necessary discussions and processes to dispose of buildings as soon as possible, with appropriate advice from Church of Scotland staff. Implementation progress will be reviewed annually.

The target date for reaching the number of nationally-paid post holders within Moray is 31 December 2025. With all the Ministers currently inducted on unrestricted tenure, reaching the new shapes of church life and that number of staff will depend on God's call.

From 1 January 2023 Moray Presbytery is uniting with others into The Presbytery of the North East and the Northern Isles. It has been agreed by the constituent presbyteries that the approved Presbytery Mission Plans of the six existing presbyteries will be amalgamated unchanged to form the first Mission Plan for the united presbytery. It is our understanding that the new Presbytery of the North East and the Northern Isles will ensure that the commitments of each plan are retained through the first years of the new Presbytery. It is our understanding that as the Moray Presbytery Mission Plan is carried on into the Presbytery of the North East and the Northern Isles, at least in the short term the decisions and proportional allocations of staffing and so on, should be respected as would be the case for all of the preceding Presbyteries.

It is also noted that the General Assembly 2022 instructed Presbyteries “to ensure that, in the period up to the General Assembly of 2025, where a weighting of resources is allocated to part or parts of the area of a Presbytery, the allocation of ministry in the Presbytery Mission Plan is demonstrably distributed so as to fulfil the spirit and purpose of the weighting; and instruct the Forum to take this principle into account in approving Presbytery Mission Plans.”

From 1 January 2023 implementation of the Mission Plan that includes the existing Moray boundaries will become the responsibility of the appropriate committee(s) of The Presbytery of the North East and the Northern Isles.

Congregations, Kirk Sessions and those in ministry posts will be given appropriate support in undertaking the tasks necessary to implement the mission plan. That will include help with negotiating and agreeing each Basis of Adjustment set out in the plan. The Presbytery of the North East and the Northern Isles will also provide guidance and training for congregations and ministry teams, including (but not limited to) conducting worship and potential use of technology.

Every mission plan will be reviewed on an annual basis and Kirk Sessions will be required to provide updates on progress against the plan.

Many of the changes being proposed will be painful to work through. This may be particularly difficult with buildings which have meant so much to so many people down the centuries. In this time of transition and with 2022 designated Scotland's Year of Stories, congregations are encouraged to find creative ways of documenting and celebrating the history of their parish and their buildings.

## 4 Buckie Area

### 4.1 Buckie Area Headlines

Current parishes: Findochty; Portknockie; Buckie North; Rathven; Buckie South and West; Enzie; Cullen and Deskford

Population: 13,244 (rural)

Proposed adjustment:

Two unions in a Linkage, with a Team Ministry:

Union of Buckie North, Buckie South and West, Enzie and Rathven;

linked with

Union of Findochty and Portknockie;

with the possibility of working towards a Union.

Cullen and Deskford in grouping with Portsoy, Ordiquihill and Cornhill – to be shaped through Buchan Presbytery Mission Plan, with 0.5 FTE post transferred to Buchan allocation

Number of posts in Moray Presbytery Mission Plan:

1 FTMWS

0.5 FTE MDS Parish Assistant

1 OLM

Local leadership, appropriately trained and supported

	(a) Retain	(b) Dispose (sell / let / other)
Buckie North Church and Hall	a	
Findochty Church	a	
Portknockie Church	a	
Portknockie Seafield Hall	a	
Rathven Church Hall	a	
Buckie South and West Church and Hall		b by August 2027
Enzie Church		b by August 2027
Rathven Church		b by August 2027
Seamen's Hall (Buckie)		b by August 2027
Cullen Hall Church	a	
Cullen Auld Kirk		b by August 2027

Networks: Children's and youth work; Digital Church

## 4.2 Buckie Area Mission Narrative

Many of the Moray-wide mission priorities (see section 2) were articulated in the Buckie area. It will be important as mission is developed and reviewed in the years ahead that the following areas of engagement encompass all five Marks of Mission, including developing care for creation with all groups of people.

This is an area where ecumenical working can clearly assist in fulfilling the commitment to territorial ministry, building on existing relationships (e.g. Ecclesia digital ministry, Holy Week, Keswick in Buckie) and complementing the mission of other fellowships. The shared missional workload across multiple denominations is reflected in the number of paid Church of Scotland posts for the population.

### a) Local engagement:

Central to mission across the Buckie area is the call to engage with local communities across all the Marks of Mission. The PPT hears the distinctive identities of the communities and congregations in the area and the value of a physical worshipping presence. Church growth research recognises identifiable local leadership as helpful, and that small churches grow best, and the PPT wants to build on strong local relationships and identity.<sup>7</sup>

This area of the plan is currently covered by seven Church of Scotland congregations in four existing charges, with many other Christian denominations and fellowships also serving the communities. There were conversations already taking place between Church of Scotland congregations discussing working more closely together. The PPT is aware of the governance burden of finding officebearers for congregations and of the Code of Practice discouragement of multi-linkage charges.<sup>8</sup>

Discussions have led the congregation of Cullen and Deskford to choose working more closely with neighbours in the current Buchan Presbytery boundaries, leaving

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<sup>7</sup> *From Anecdote to Evidence: Findings from the Church Growth Research Programme 2011-2013*, Church of England,

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/church-growth-research-programme/anecdote-evidence>

<sup>8</sup> Presbytery Mission Planning Act: Guidance and Code of Practice 6.6

the Moray Presbytery Mission Plan to explore the shape of church life for the remaining six congregations in the Buckie Area.

Presbytery recognises the value of local identity and knowledge in mission. When Sessions know and have a close relationship with people of their parish, they are aware of local needs, know how to serve, and are able to reach out personally and introduce people to the life of the Church.

The contribution to mission of very local knowledge and relationships has been made strongly by the Sessions of Findochty and Portknockie, who have grown together in a linkage and will move into a Union, to continue their shared mission, particularly with children in their communities.

A further union will be formed by the four congregations responsible for the parishes in Buckie and of Enzie and Rathven, growing from two existing linkages, recognising their shared mission priorities and potential, and reducing governance burdens.

These two unions will be linked, with a Team Ministry, that will enable cooperation and shared missional activities across the Buckie Area. It is hoped that every opportunity will be taken to work together in the linkage, towards the possibility of a wider union in the future.

At this time a linkage is proposed by Presbytery, rather than a full six-way union, for the following reasons:

- i. There will still be a significant simplification in governance and reduction in workload, in a reduction from six Boards and six Sessions to two unitary constitution Sessions.
- ii. Finding officebearers in Findochty and Portknockie is not currently a problem. The congregations have many talented and willing officebearers, plus a large number of others involved in a range of supportive roles. There is concern that a union that is resisted or forced would risk losing volunteers, so damaging the overall situation of those committed to church life and mission.
- iii. As mission is to communities (Code of Practice 5.3.2), the unique context of every community should be taken into account; there is no one-size-fits-all.

Therefore, while the wider preference against linkages is understood, that should not override local considerations.

- iv. The community contexts in the villages of Findochty and Portknockie, and their current missional engagement, are significantly different from the town of Buckie.
- v. In Findochty and Portknockie the congregations, led by their Sessions, have a track record of mobilising rapidly to respond to needs and situations in their communities and beyond. Compared with a wider six-way union, the smaller scale of a Session in a union of these two congregations will allow faster local engagement of the Session to continue, and the Session know their communities well.
- vi. The children's work in Findochty and Portknockie is unique in the proportion of local children involved and the scale of their work. Overall, they also have a particularly close relationship with their communities. This mission activity already works, and it will not be helpful to divert time and energy from these to deal with wider adjustment.
- vii. All the congregations of the Buckie area need time to build relationships and develop joint working together, so that further adjustments can be positive moves which build up the body of Christ and will equip and encourage each other.
- viii. Time is needed to communicate with the communities in the Buckie area so that perceptions of what is happening regarding adjustment are accurate and supportive of ongoing missional engagement.
- ix. The congregations and Sessions of Findochty and Portknockie have a track record of working together in a linkage, so can take that experience into building relationships in a new wider linkage, while also cementing their mission and service together in their union.
- x. The Church of England research *From Anecdote to Evidence* states that "There is a strong negative trend between the more churches amalgamated together and the likelihood of decline (across all categories of church size)."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *From Anecdote to Evidence: Findings from the Church Growth Research Programme 2011-2013*, Church of England,

Where mission is already active and progressing well in Findochty and Portknockie, and there are not concerns about effective governance and excessive workload, it seems unnecessary to take the risk that larger-scale adjustment may cause harm to the existing mission.

b) Children's and youth work:

The PPT heard from the congregations that there is already significant mission work with children and young people across the Buckie area, with potential to build on that. Portknockie and Findochty have active groups, Buckie South and West have a large Boys Brigade company and links with a dancing school, and Buckie North has an active primary school aged Sunday School and Messy Church.

This work in the Buckie area will develop using existing and new volunteers, building connections between these existing ministries to create a learning network to support ongoing work and to explore new missional opportunities.

The work with children in the village of Portknockie currently engages with over 70% of the children attending the local primary school. This is through a Sunday School that shares intergenerational worship in the church before moving to the church hall; and a Thursday Club for Primary 5 to 7 children, who have mostly had their first contact through the Sunday School. Both activities meet needs for inclusion and equality, and address all Five Marks of Mission. Given the nature of the church and hall buildings in Portknockie, both buildings need to be available for this intergenerational community-based mission to continue, with the hall as the children's "safe space" and the church building their "special space". Arrangements with only one of the buildings would lose important aspects of inclusion and welcome across generations, as well as affecting wider engagement with the local school and community. In order to support this mission in Portknockie, and therefore also in the

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<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/church-growth-research-programme/anecdote-evidence>, 28

Buckie Area and Moray through learning networks, both Portknockie Church and Seafield Hall should be retained.

The expertise and experience of those working with children and young people in the Buckie area can also be shared with others across Moray, with volunteers sharing in the intentional creation of supportive networks with people engaged in similar mission activity in all the areas of Moray.

c) Older people:

The PPT also heard that there is significant missional need amongst older people. Some of this is already being met through hospitality which can be built upon. There is further missional potential, evidenced by the higher proportions of older population in the community statistics. There are possibilities being explored with Blackwood Homes and Care, a Scottish charity providing high quality housing, care and support for disabled people of all ages, who are working to co-create a neighbourhood for independent living and healthy aging in Buckie.<sup>10</sup> The conversation with Blackwood is to be encouraged to see if a fruitful partnership is possible, potentially unlocking access to wider funding and more community volunteers, and possibly directing adaptation of the church buildings within Buckie itself.

d) Digital church:

Local ministers in the Buckie area developed the ecumenical “Ecclesia” digital expression of church through COVID lockdown. That experience and expertise should be built upon, in a network with others across Moray who have those skills – that has been particularly recognised in the congregations of Lower Speyside and the Keith Area.

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<sup>10</sup> [www.blackwoodgroup.org.uk/peoplehood](http://www.blackwoodgroup.org.uk/peoplehood)

### 4.3 Buckie Area Buildings

The first annual review of the Mission Plan, in 2023, should include a review of the buildings in the Buckie area categorised (a) for retention in this plan. This review should consider the viability of this number of buildings in close proximity in the area. Evidence should be provided as to viability, including financial information relating to the congregations and buildings, detailing levels of income and expenditure. Items of expenditure or projected expenditure should include all mandatory Health and Safety compliance works such as electrical testing and testing of lightning conductors (where applicable) as well as general running costs and insurance.

	(a) Retain	(b) Dispose (sell / let / other)	Rationale
Buckie North Church and Hall	a		Good location, hall has good combination of spaces. Work needed on indoor accessibility.
Findochty Church	a		Good centre for the community, well used.
Portknockie Church	a		Intergenerational worship and children's work (a mission priority) needs church and hall.
Portknockie Seafield Hall	a		Good centre for the community, well used, necessary for children's work (a mission priority).
Rathven Church Hall	a		Modern accessible hall.
Buckie South and West Church and Hall		b by August 2027	No need for two buildings in Buckie town. Concerns about condition of building and future maintenance.
Enzie Church		b by August 2027	Very small worshipping community, beyond capacity for maintaining.
Rathven Church		b by August 2027	Church Hall a better resource in the community.
Seamen's Hall (Buckie)		b by August 2027	Already in long-term let to community group.
Cullen Hall Church	a		
Cullen Auld Kirk		b by August 2027	Location outside town, historic building not easily flexible or accessible.

## 5 Keith Area

### 5.1 Keith Area Headlines

Current parishes: Keith: North, Newmill, Boharm and Rothiemay; Keith: Kirk of St. Rufus, Botriphnie and Grange

Population: 7652 (remote rural)

Proposed adjustment:

Parish Grouping

working towards a Union with Team Ministry

Number of posts: 2 FTMWS

Locally-funded part-time youth worker

Local leadership, appropriately trained and supported

Buildings categorisations:

	(a) Retain	(b) Dispose (sell / let / other)
Keith Kirk Shop	a	
Keith North Church and Hall		b pending review by 2023
Keith St. Rufus Church		b pending review by 2023
Botriphnie Church		b by August 2027
Grange Church		b by August 2027
Keith St. Rufus Church Hall		b by August 2027
Rothiemay Church		b by August 2027

Networks:

Children's and youth work; Digital Church; Creation care

with a Minister from the Keith Area taking a co-ordinating role in at least one of these.

## 5.2 Keith Area Mission Narrative

The Keith area is a small town with a large remote rural area around it, and the needs of all those more remote and dispersed communities must continue to be recognised in considering mission in the Keith area. The need for active ongoing missional activities in the many rural communities across the extensive area is reflected in the number of paid Church of Scotland posts to equip for and enable mission. The “Previous Geographical Weightings” described in Appendix 12 of the *Report of the Faith Nurture Forum to the General Assembly 2022* suggest a “Rural/urban Weighting” of 2.0 and a “Scattered Rural Weighting” of 3.0. Those suggest a potential equivalence of the Keith Area to 15,000-23,000 urban population.

The higher than average allocation of ministry posts for the population will also allow a Minister from the Keith Area to take a co-ordinating role of one of the mission networks the Parish Grouping will be part of.

At present the parish boundaries of the two congregations create non-contiguous parishes (due to historical developments). The two congregations describe their identity and mission in very similar terms, serving overlapping communities with similar vision. Therefore it is proposed to bring the congregations together into a Parish Grouping responsible for a single area, working towards a Union of the congregations with a Team Ministry.

There are good relationships with ecumenical partners, and the development of team ministry and mission should include ecumenical partnership wherever possible.

### a) Community needs:

Both congregations have a strong sense of call to serve the practical needs of the communities. This is primarily articulated in terms of the third Mark of Mission, responding to human need by loving service, meeting needs for food, connection and financial support. This should be built upon, with a renewed focus on addressing social isolation in the rural areas (where statistics show a high proportion of over 65s). This work will also assist in proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom to those supported, and will nurture believers as people are connected to others and equipped to serve.

The resources of the congregations can combine well, along with new and existing community partners. In the rural areas, many of activities that will address isolation and other needs will be better undertaken in accessible, flexible community hall spaces during the week, rather than through Sunday worship in older buildings. In Keith itself, the Kirk Shop offers a visible presence open to the community and there is a need for flexible, accessible space with good facilities for meeting practical needs of all ages (including children's and youth work – see below) in the town.

The facilities at Keith North Church and Hall can support meeting community needs, undertaking children's and youth work and engaging with social justice, but need upgrading for better accessibility and to tackle a significant problem with a rotten floor. The A-listed Keith St. Rufus' Church is in a prominent location with parking, but would need extensive upgrading and reordering to create useful facilities for meeting the missional needs of the Keith Area, with concerns about the longer-term costs of maintaining the large historic building.

Because of the difficulty of choosing between the two Keith Church buildings, Moray Presbytery propose that the future of Keith St. Rufus Church and Keith North Church and Hall are the subjects of a feasibility study, with a review by 2023 to decide which of those two buildings will be retained, the other to be categorised for disposal. That feasibility study will consider the potential for making either building a flexible, accessible, safe, warm, dry space with facilities fit for the mission in the Keith area. Beyond mission planning criteria, the study will consider the finances of the congregations, and their capacity and willingness to undertake work necessary to make either building fit for purpose, both in terms of capital expenditure for upgrading and ongoing expenditure for maintenance.

The General Trustees are willing to provide advice and financial assistance for such a feasibility study, once the Moray Presbytery Mission Plan is approved. Time and care will be needed to ensure the brief for the study is right, so that the best decision can be made. The General Trustees suggest it may take around six weeks to create the brief (working with Presbytery and the Keith Area mission narrative), four weeks for a tender process, then time for someone to do the work. A target date of 2023 is realistic for the outcome of the study and a review of the categorisations.

In order to avoid any risk of investment of resource in a building which may prove redundant to the Church of Scotland, and to ensure expectations aren't inappropriately set at a local level, the General Trustees advise that both buildings should be categorised B while these further considerations are made. Keith North Church and Hall and Keith St Rufus Church are therefore categorised as (b) for disposal pending review by 2023, with the intention to retain one of them in the longer term.

b) Social justice:

Another area of shared concern is the fourth Mark of Mission, seeking to transform unjust structures of society and more. The Fairtrade ministry of the Kirk Shop, the social justice aspects of addressing community needs, and the ongoing support of Christian Aid and other charities, is to be encouraged. Engaging with Christian Aid should also lead to further activity around the fifth Mark of Mission, safeguarding the integrity of creation, as does work around food waste reduction. This can connect with others in Creation Care networks, including the Lossiemouth Area and Upper Speyside.

c) Children's and youth work:

There is potential for growing mission to children and young people in the Keith area. Existing work, which has included the local employment of a part-time youth worker, gives a strong grounding. This will shape worship and reflection offered in terms of proclamation of good news and teaching, baptising and nurturing new believers, and addressing the context of young people will require an engagement with the fourth and fifth Marks. A desire to build strong relationships with the many local primary and secondary schools will also meet needs through service.

Intentional engagement in a supportive network with people engaged in similar mission activity in all the areas of Moray will help new and existing volunteers to be equipped and develop mission to children and young people.

### 5.3 Keith Area Buildings

	(a) Retain	(b) Dispose (sell / let / other)	Rationale
Keith Kirk Shop	a		Social justice ministry, open visible presence on street.
Keith North Church and Hall		b pending review by 2023	Good location and hall facilities, well used hall. Sanctuary floor rotten, work also needed on indoor accessibility.
Keith St. Rufus Church		b pending review by 2023	Good location and parking. Large sanctuary space would need adaptation for flexible use, A-listed building, concerns about future maintenance.
Botriphnie Church		b by August 2027	Not very accessible or flexible space or location. Better community hall available.
Grange Church		b by August 2027	Rural, no public transport, not very flexible space.
Keith St. Rufus Church Hall		b by August 2027	Hall small, less accessible, less central location.
Rothiemay Church		b by August 2027	Very rural, no public transport, not very flexible space.

## 6 Upper Speyside Area

### 6.1 Upper Speyside Area Headlines

Current parishes: Knockando, Elchies and Archiestown; Rothes; Aberlour; Mortlach and Cabrach

Population: 6432 (remote rural)

Proposed adjustment:

Two two-way Linkages in a Parish Grouping:

Linkage of Aberlour and Knockando, Elchies and Archiestown;  
and

Linkage of Mortlach and Cabrach and Rothes;

with the linked congregations moving to Unions when both congregations are agreeable;

(Dissolving the current linkage of Rothes with Knockando, Elchies and Archiestown)

with the possibility of working towards a Union with Team Ministry covering the Upper Speyside Area

Number of posts: 2 FTMWS

Local leadership, appropriately trained and supported

Buildings categorisations:

	(a) Retain	(b) Dispose (sell / let / other)
Aberlour Church	a	
Knockando Church	a	
Mortlach Church	a	
Rothes Church	a	
Rothes Church Hall	a	
Craigellachie Church		b by August 2027

Networks:

Children's and youth work; Pilgrimage, tourism and heritage; Creation care

with a Minister from the Upper Speyside Area taking a co-ordinating role in at least one of these.

## 6.2 Upper Speyside Area Mission Narrative

The Upper Speyside area covers a large remote rural area, and the needs of all the villages and settlements must continue to be recognised in considering mission. The need for active ongoing missional activities in multiple communities across the extensive area (which includes particularly remote areas around the Cabrach and Knockando), and the limited number of other denominations present in the area, are reflected in the number of paid Church of Scotland posts to equip for and enable mission. The “Previous Geographical Weightings” described in Appendix 12 of the *Report of the Faith Nurture Forum to the General Assembly 2022* suggest a “Rural/urban Weighting” of 2.0 and a “Scattered Rural Weighting” of 3.0. Those suggest a potential equivalence of the Upper Speyside Area to 13,000-19,000 urban population.

The higher than average allocation of ministry posts for the population will also allow a Minister from the Upper Speyside Area to take a co-ordinating role of one of the mission networks the Parish Grouping will be part of.

In the communities where other denominations are present, the good relationships and ongoing discussions should be developed as fully as possible.

### a) Daily life in communities:

All the congregations in Upper Speyside described mission undertaken through the daily life of church members. This will be supported through equipping people to live out their faith wherever they are, including within community organisations meeting local needs. That will include training for workplace chaplaincy for the many businesses and to support the local care home (which contributes to Aberlour’s high proportion of over 65s), for those identified as called and gifted appropriately.

The PPT hears the distinctive identities of the communities and congregations in the area and the value of a physical worshipping presence. Church growth research recognises identifiable local leadership as helpful, and that small churches grow best, and the PPT wants to build on strong local relationships and identity.

It is therefore proposed that a staged approach to closer working is taken, initially moving to two two-way linkages. That will encourage congregations that are thriving

but fragile to continue their significant missional activity in each distinct community, while developing stronger relationships in new linkages that can move to union when ready. The staged approach allows time to consider the most appropriate model of union(s) and the possibility of Team Ministry for the future. Continued equipping of local leadership, including training for leading worship and funerals within communities, will be necessary throughout this period.

At this time linkages are proposed by Presbytery, rather unions, for the following reasons:

- i. As mission is to communities (Code of Practice 5.3.2), the unique context of every community should be taken into account; there is no one-size-fits-all. Therefore, while the wider preference against linkages is understood, that should not override local considerations.
- ii. The community context in the remote rural parishes of Knockando and Mortlach and Cabrach, and their current missional engagement, are different from the towns and villages.
- iii. All four congregations, led by their Sessions, have a track record of responding well to needs and situations in their communities and beyond. Compared with unions, the smaller scale of separate Sessions in linkages will allow each Session to continue to prioritise the most appropriate expression of the Five Marks of Mission within communities they know well.
- iv. There is concern that unions perceived as forced will be resisted, which will risk losing volunteers and finances (which are currently sound), damaging the overall engagement of those currently committed to church life and mission. Local mission activity already works, and it will not be helpful to divert time, energy and good will from valuable work, particularly with young people and the isolated, to deal with wider adjustment.
- v. All the congregations of the Upper Speyside area need time to build relationships, value their differences and similarities, share good practice and develop joint working together, so that further adjustments can be positive moves which build up the body of Christ and will equip and encourage each other.

- vi. Time is needed to communicate with the communities in the Upper Speyside area so that perceptions of what is happening regarding adjustment are accurate and supportive of ongoing missional engagement.
- vii. The Church of England research *From Anecdote to Evidence* states that “There is a strong negative trend between the more churches amalgamated together and the likelihood of decline (across all categories of church size).”<sup>11</sup> Where mission is already active and progressing well in the congregations of Upper Speyside, it seems unnecessary to take the risk that larger-scale adjustment may cause harm to the existing mission.

b) Hospitality:

A strong strand of mission across all these congregations and communities is hospitality, offered through welcome, food and drink, and Fairtrade. This includes hospitality offered to local people and to tourists/visitors. The congregations can continue to meet needs for connection by offering opportunities for people to gather. While primarily undertaken in terms of the third Mark of Mission, responding to human need by loving service, this work will also assist in proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom to those supported, and will nurture believers as people are connected to others and equipped to serve.

Hospitality is also offered through church buildings offered as a resource in communities. In Rothes and Knockando there are no other church buildings, and Rothes Church Hall and Knockando Church are used by community partners. In Dufftown, the Scottish Episcopal Church and Church of Scotland congregations intend to share use of their different spaces, as appropriate for needs of church and community. Aberlour Church is an accessible flexible space in the centre of the village. Craigellachie Church is also a well-maintained, welcoming space, but gatherings may be better resourced by meeting in the community hall in the village.

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<sup>11</sup> *From Anecdote to Evidence: Findings from the Church Growth Research Programme 2011-2013*, Church of England, <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/church-growth-research-programme/anecdote-evidence>, 28

The potential for pilgrimage developments, both in terms of heritage connections and through walking, is very strong. Intentional engagement, and potentially leadership, of a supportive network with people engaged in similar mission activity is proposed, including with the Elgin Area (heritage) and Lossiemouth Area (walking routes).

c) Children's and youth work:

This area of work was identified as important across Upper Speyside. The statistics for the area indicate high proportions of secondary school age children and households with children. There is already a partnership with Scripture Union in schools in Rothes and Knockando, as well as school chaplaincy relationships to maintain and build upon. There are intentions to develop Messy Church. Active engagement concerns for social justice and creation care will also engage with young people.

As for other areas, intentional engagement in a supportive network with people engaged in similar mission activity in all the areas of Moray will help new and existing volunteers to be equipped and develop mission to children and young people.

d) Social justice and creation care:

There is already joint working across Upper Speyside through Christian Aid, which is one strand of concern for social justice, also seen in Fairtrade work and support of local and global charities. This work around the fourth Mark of Mission overlaps with the fifth Mark of creation care, which also has a natural connection with the connections with farming communities and walking. This fifth Mark of Mission is identified as an area to develop across Moray, and should be developed through a Creation Care networks, including the Lossiemouth Area and Keith Area.

### 6.3 Upper Speyside Area Buildings

	(a) Retain	(b) Dispose (sell / let / other)	Rationale
Aberlour Church	a		Flexible, accessible resource in central location.
Knockando Church	a		Flexible, accessible resource shared with community.
Mortlach Church	a		Heritage and tourism mission, large sanctuary space to serve community.
Rothes Church	a		Only sanctuary space in the village, in central location.
Rothes Church Hall	a		Very well used hall.
Craigellachie Church		b by August 2027	Not very flexible space. Better community hall available.

## 7 Lower Speyside Area

### 7.1 Lower Speyside Area Headlines

Current parishes: Bellie and Speymouth; St. Andrew's Lhanbryd and Urquhart (SALU)

Population: 8358 (rural)

Proposed adjustment:

None. Existing charges of Bellie and Speymouth and St. Andrew's Lhanbryd and Urquhart, each served by 1 FTMWS

Number of posts: 2 FTMWS

Local leadership, appropriately trained and supported

Buildings categorisations:

	(a) Retain	(b) Dispose (sell / let / other)
Bellie Church and Hall	a	
Speymouth Church		b by August 2027
St. Andrew's Lhanbryd Church and Hall		b by August 2027
St. Margaret's Church Hall, Urquhart		b by August 2027
Acquisition of new missional space in local communities of Bellie and Speymouth parish (with funds that include proceeds of sale of Speymouth Church)		
Acquisition of new missional space in Lhanbryde village (with funds that include proceeds of sales of St Andrew's Lhanbryd Church and Hall, and St Margaret's Hall).		

Networks:

Children's and youth work; Digital Church

## 7.2 Lower Speyside Area Mission Narrative

The Lower Speyside area includes the villages of Lhanbryde and Fochabers and the settlements in the rural areas around them. The communities are within the catchment area of Milne's High School and the congregations have a history of working together. The two congregations describe their identity and mission in similar terms and both are missionally active with plans for further engagement in their communities. For both congregations the needs of the more remote and dispersed communities must continue to be recognised in considering mission in the area.

However, Lhanbryde is as close to Elgin as to Fochabers, so while the two congregations share mission to Lower Speyside communities, St. Andrew's Lhanbryde and Urquhart (SALU) also has potential for mission on the edges of Elgin in partnership with the Elgin churches. Recent discussions of ministries allocations between Lower Speyside and Elgin areas has built up supportive relationships between neighbours, which will enable assistance to be easily offered across boundaries if and when necessary. This is a reminder of the distinct geographical contexts, callings and missional profiles of the congregations of Lower Speyside, so they are encouraged to work together whenever possible but without formal adjustment. The congregations should continue and develop co-operative approaches together, including Holy Week, Speyfest and on Christian education in the local schools, while taking opportunities for missional co-operation with other congregations and other denominations.

### a) Children's, youth and families work:

There are already a number of areas of work with and for children, young people and families in both congregations, including (but not limited to) Bellie Babes, Messy Church, Take Note music group and online church materials for younger age-groups and the development of the Connect service. SALU demonstrated commitment to this through the local funding of a part-time children's and family worker in recent years. There are also good links to build on with local schools and their community partnerships.

This work can be developed in partnership with others, through intentional engagement in a supportive network with people engaged in similar mission activity in all the areas of Moray. That will support expertise and experience, and will help new and existing volunteers to be equipped and develop mission to children and young people.

b) Lhanbryde village

While the congregation of St. Andrew's Lhanbryd and Urquhart (SALU) has a strong sense of call to mission in Lhanbryde itself, its building is a considerable distance away – it is no longer in the right place. Therefore that building should not be retained, enabling the congregation to explore creative ways to be more missionally active in Lhanbryde village. There is one small fellowship that meets in community premises in the village, but otherwise there is no other worshipping community there. Therefore, mission to Lhanbryde should be developed across all five Marks of Mission, in partnership with the people and groups within the community.

In order to allow SALU to give this work the necessary focus, with continuity of relationships and leadership, no adjustment will be required of the congregation. The Kirk Session can therefore give immediate, significant and sustained attention to replanting the church in the village. Local knowledge and awareness of the unique situation of Lhanbryde and the task given to the SALU congregation to replant church in the village have been recognised by Moray's allocation of additional ministry resource to this context. Recognition of the importance of this mission to Lhanbryde and the need to resource it came first from the congregations of the Elgin Area, who offered 0.5 FTE ministry allocation (from the April 2022 draft Mission Plan) to assist. This shows buy-in from all the local congregations to this allocation in this season. Indications of mission progress and activity in the communities of Lhanbryde and Elgin during 2022 suggest both that the congregations are ready to progress with mission priorities immediately and that the Spirit is at work.

Funds realised from the sale of the congregation's buildings can help in the acquisition of a missional space in Lhanbryde village.

c) Digital Church

The Lower Speyside congregations and ministry teams have developed significant online church experiences and reflections through the COVID lockdowns and beyond. That experience and expertise should be built upon, in a network with others across Moray who have those skills – that has been particularly recognised in the Buckie Area and Keith Area.

7.3 Lower Speyside Area Buildings

	(a) Retain	(b) Dispose (sell / let / other)	Rationale
Bellie Church and Hall	a		A well equipped and flexible sanctuary and hall suite in a central location in Fochabers.
Speymouth Church		b by August 2027	Not very flexible space, not quite in the community. Community hall available.
St. Andrew's Lhanbryd Church and Hall		b by August 2027	Wrong location for where most people live in Lhanbryde village.
St. Margaret's Church Hall, Urquhart		b by August 2027	Community hall available in the very small community.
Acquisition of new missional space in local communities of Bellie and Speymouth parish (with funds that include proceeds of sale of Speymouth Church)			For new possibilities of community engagement and outreach .
Acquisition of new missional space in Lhanbryde village (with funds that include proceeds of sales of St Andrew's Lhanbryd Church and Hall, and St Margaret's Hall).			Mission priority to be active and present in Lhanbryde village.

## 8 Lossiemouth Area

### 8.1 Lossiemouth Area Headlines

Current parishes: Duffus, Spynie and Hopeman; Lossiemouth St. Gerardine's High; Lossiemouth St. James'

Population: 11,796 (rural)

Proposed adjustment:

Union of Duffus, Spynie and Hopeman; Lossiemouth St. Gerardine's High; and Lossiemouth St. James'

with Local Mission Churches in Duffus and Hopeman

Number of posts: 1 FTMWS

0.5 FTE MDS Parish Assistant (pastoral/funerals)

1 OLM

Local leadership, appropriately trained and supported

Buildings categorisations:

	(a) Retain	(b) Dispose (sell / let / other)
Duffus Church and Hall	a	
Lossiemouth St. James' Church and Hall	a	
Hopeman Church and Hall		b by August 2027
Lossiemouth St. Gerardine's High Church and Hall		b by August 2027
Spynie Church and Hall		b by August 2027

Networks:

Children's and youth work; Pilgrimage, tourism and heritage; Creation care

## 8.2 Lossiemouth Area Mission Narrative

This is an area where ecumenical working can clearly assist in fulfilling the commitment to territorial ministry, building on existing relationships (e.g. school chaplaincy teams, community services, local leadership meetings) and complementing the mission of other fellowships. The Church of Scotland is only one part of the body of Christ, alongside Hopeman Baptist Church and a number of denominations and fellowships in Lossiemouth.

The local culture and sense of belonging to the Church of Scotland has brought a high number of funerals (seen in congregational statistics), so an OLM and 0.5 full time equivalent parish assistant are proposed to support the pastoral and funeral workload.

Parish boundaries should be discussed during the first year of implementation of the plan, with the Elgin area around new development at Findrassie, and possibly with Inverness Presbytery about the western boundaries with the current parish of Alves and Burghead.

Local presence in the villages of Duffus and Hopeman should be maintained with local leadership through creation of Local Mission Church(es). A Local Mission Church is a Christian community whose purpose is to worship, witness and serve within their distinct geographical setting, with a local leadership team. The Local Mission Church can organise and develop worship, witness and service, subject to the oversight and governance of the Kirk Session for the Lossiemouth Area.<sup>12</sup>

However, local presence and gathering people together does not necessarily need an ecclesiastical building, and use can be made of the excellent community halls in Hopeman, Duffus and Spynie to serve those communities, as well as developing existing missional activities in local woods, beaches, estates, cafés and homes. Retaining the church building in Duffus brings a presence in the rural (Duffus/Spynie) part of the parish, while coastal identity is shared by Lossiemouth and Hopeman. The majority of officebearers of Duffus, Spynie and Hopeman report that the burden

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<sup>12</sup> Local Mission Church Regulations (Regs II 2021)  
[https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/81836/Local-Mission-Church-Regulations-final-as-at-4.6.21.pdf](https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/81836/Local-Mission-Church-Regulations-final-as-at-4.6.21.pdf)

of heating and maintenance of Duffus Church and Hall is significantly less than for Hopeman Church and Hall.

Within Lossiemouth, there is no need for two Church of Scotland buildings, with very similar facilities, locations and limitations, and with many other gathering spaces available in the town. The congregation of St. James' articulate a call to develop their facilities to offer a more flexible space in and around the existing building, with ideas and capability to take that forward. That would enhance a building that is capable of hosting children's holiday clubs and community hospitality in a large hall and range of rooms, though it needs investment to reach appropriate modern standards of indoor accessibility between sanctuary and hall. There is also a recognition of the need to care for creation in the development of St. James' building, acknowledging the fifth Mark of Mission. The vision and potential to adapt the St. James' building for mission into the future leads to the recommendation to retain it and dispose of the St. Gerardine's High building.

a) Hospitality:

A significant mission in these congregations and communities is hospitality, offered through gathering people together through food and drink, and music. The congregations can continue to meet needs for connection by offering opportunities for people to gather. While primarily undertaken in terms of the third Mark of Mission, responding to human need by loving service, this work will also assist in proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom to those supported, and will nurture believers as people are connected to others and equipped to serve.

The Lossiemouth congregations express a call to connect to people who are elderly or living with dementia, so accessibility is an important factor in considering development of facilities.

The proximity of Duffus Church and Hall to the cemetery and roadside and the presence of a pipe organ are all assets for developing hospitality in terms of reflective space, friendly support and music-related events.

b) Pilgrimage:

The potential for pilgrimage developments, both in terms of history (including commemorating St. Gerardine, Patron Saint of Lossiemouth) and through walking (with the Moray Coast Trail), is very strong. Intentional engagement, and potentially leadership, of a supportive network with people engaged in similar mission activity is proposed, including with the Elgin Area and Upper Speyside Area.

c) Creation care and social justice:

Active commitment with Eco Congregation Scotland (including Fairtrade) in Duffus, Spynie and Hopeman, and shared commitment to Christian Aid across the area engages with the fourth and fifth Marks of Mission: working for social justice and care for creation. Concern for energy and resource use is significant in the recommendation to retain Duffus Church and Hall rather than Hopeman Church and Hall. This fifth Mark of Mission is identified as an area to develop across Moray, and this area could lead a Creation Care network, including the Upper Speyside Area and Keith Area.

d) Children's and youth work:

There are higher than the Moray average proportions of children in this area, though also active mission with young people in Hopeman and Lossie Baptist Churches, the Scottish Episcopal Church in Elgin/Lossiemouth and family mission in the RAF Chaplaincy. The Church of Scotland has a key role in school chaplaincy in the communities, and congregations have experience of Messy Church and holiday clubs to build on. Work in partnerships and teams can help meet the needs and nourish the faith of children and young people.

### 8.3 Lossiemouth Area Buildings

	(a) Retain	(b) Dispose (sell / let / other)	Rationale
Duffus Church and Hall	a		Warm and reasonably-sized sanctuary and hall, modern accessible toilet. Rural part of area. Presence by roadside and cemetery. Recommendation of local Board and Session.
Lossiemouth St. James' Church and Hall	a		Vision, capacity and potential to develop range of spaces into well equipped flexible facility. Work needed on indoor accessibility.
Hopeman Church and Hall		b by August 2027	Large sanctuary difficult to heat to comfortable temperature. Concerns about future maintenance. Community hall and outdoor spaces available. Recommendation of local Board and Session.
Lossiemouth St. Gerardine's High Church and Hall		b by August 2027	Very close to Lossiemouth St. James'. Listed building less adaptable, and less capacity for development work.
Spynie Church and Hall		b by August 2027	Community hall available in the small community.

## 9 Elgin Area

### 9.1 Elgin Area Headlines

Current parishes: Birnie and Pluscarden; Elgin High; Elgin St. Giles' and St. Columba's South

Population: 25760 (urban)

Proposed adjustment:

Union with Team Ministry

Number of posts: 1 FTMWS

1 FTE MDS Parish assistant

1 OLM

Local leadership, appropriately trained and supported

Locally funded posts, including (as at November 2022):

0.5 FTE Community Development Worker  
(with Salvation Army)

0.1 FTE ACORN Development Worker

Buildings categorisations:

	(a) Retain	(b) Dispose (sell / let / other)
Birnie Church		b by August 2027
Birnie Church Hall	a (review at first annual review)	
Elgin St. Columba's Church	a	
Williamson Hall (by St. Columba's)	a	
Elgin St. Giles' Church		b by August 2027
Elgin High Church and Hall		b by August 2027
Pluscarden Church		b by August 2027

Networks:

Children's and youth work; Pilgrimage, tourism and heritage

## 9.2 Elgin Area Mission Narrative

These three parishes, currently in a relatively recent Parish Grouping, serve just over one third of the population of Moray Presbytery, in the expanding urban context of Elgin and the rural areas of Birnie and Pluscarden.

Within the town there are many other Christian denominations and fellowships also serving the communities, so this is an area where ecumenical working can clearly assist in fulfilling the commitment to territorial ministry, building on existing relationships (e.g. Holy Week, Advent trails) and complementing the mission of other fellowships. The Church of Scotland congregations are in conversation with the Scottish Episcopal Church to offer youth and family ministry in partnership. The shared missional workload across multiple denominations is reflected in the number of nationally-funded paid Church of Scotland posts for the population.

The uniting congregations of the Elgin Area already have two part-time posts funded from Discretionary Allowance, and will be willing and able to locally fund these and/or additional posts in the coming years. A 0.5 FTE Community Development Worker post is being shared with The Salvation Army from 1 September 2022. An ecumenical ACORN development worker is being funded for four hours per week (approximately 0.1 FTE).

The Code of Practice (5.3.3) encourages presbyteries to work ecumenically. While this necessarily means that any posts not funded by the Church of Scotland are vulnerable to change beyond the control of the Church of Scotland, this is something that needs to be accepted in order to share in mission with the wider Body of Christ.

The congregations of the Elgin Area have recognised the importance and uniqueness of the situation of the large neighbouring village of Lhanbryde (with no worshipping community within the village) and the task given to the congregation of St. Andrew's Lhanbryde and Urquhart to replant church in the village. The Elgin Area congregations took the initiative to offer 0.5 FTE ministries allocation to Lower Speyside, and Lhanbryde in particular, from the allocations in the draft Mission Plan of April 2022. The buy-in from all the local congregations in the Elgin and Lower Speyside areas to this allocation is encouraging, as are the indications of mission progress and activity in the communities of Elgin and Lhanbryde during 2022,

suggesting both that the congregations are ready to progress with mission priorities immediately and that the Spirit is at work.

The discussion of ministries allocations between Elgin and Lhanbryde areas has built up supportive relationships between neighbours, which will enable assistance to be easily offered across boundaries if and when necessary.

Parish boundaries should be discussed during the first year of implementation of the plan, with the Lossiemouth Area around the new development at Findrassie to the north, and with the Lower Speyside around the developments at Linkwood and Barmuckity to the south and west.

The three existing congregations have been working increasingly closely together since April 2022, with negotiations of a Basis of Union very advanced. There is a lot changing and progressing in the life of the Elgin Area congregations, beyond the main information gathering stage of mission planning, including:

- partnerships with Police Scotland, the Moray Council, community organisations and other churches to tackle anti-social behaviour in Elgin town centre around St. Giles' Church;
- partnership with the Roman Catholic Church to include Birnie Kirk in a pilgrimage route;
- a steady increase in the use of St. Columba's sanctuary for funerals, after a significant dip due to the COVID pandemic. St. Columba's Church is a space suited to and now being well-used again for traditional services, including outreach and service through funerals, weddings and baptisms (for which it also benefits from good accessibility and parking).
- as community and church groups restart post-COVID and new missional activities are begun, the shortage of hall space across Elgin is increasingly clear. With the disposal of Elgin High Church and Hall, its users will need to be hosted. Those users already include church groups for all ages and a theatre company for people with learning challenges who work in partnership with the University of the Highlands and Islands.
- the Sunday School in Elgin St. Giles' and St. Columba's South is outgrowing the New Room in St. Giles' Church building. In order to have Sunday School

and Sunday worship concurrently, supporting the growing number of families engaging with church life, a sanctuary and hall space are needed at the same location – only possible at St. Columba's with the Williamson Hall..

a) Children's and youth work:

Reaching out to children and young people, and their families, was identified as important in all three congregations. Statistics show high proportions of under 16s in and around Elgin, and this area includes eight primary schools and two secondary schools, so there is huge mission potential. There is also much to build on, including (but not limited to) existing relationships with schools (chaplaincy and Easter Code), thriving Messy Church in Birnie and Pluscarden, Sweaty Church and KICKS children's activities at St. Giles', and family engagement by Elgin High.

This area of work, across a range of communities and a large population, will benefit from partnerships with other denominations, para-church organisations such as School Pastors and community groups. Work is already planned in partnership with the Scottish Episcopal Church in Elgin.

The Williamson Hall is very well used, including for the large St. Giles' youth Theatre Group. The hall's location next to St. Columba's Church offers a site well suited to concurrent all-age worship and learning through Sunday worship and Sunday School in adjacent buildings, with safe easy access and parking, enabling all generations to learn and grow together.

Intentional engagement in a supportive network with people engaged in similar mission activity in all the areas of Moray will help new and existing volunteers to be equipped and develop mission to children and young people.

b) New developments

There are very large housing developments ongoing to the north and south of Elgin. To the south that already includes the new Linkwood Primary School and Moray Sports Centre offering new community spaces in which people can gather. On the north side of Elgin, the development just beginning at Findrassie will also include community space outdoors and in a new Primary School. In the longer term the Elgin

South masterplan includes further housing developments and another primary school at Glassgreen.

Statistics for the Elgin area also have the highest proportion of people of “no religion.”

Awareness of the needs of these evolving communities led the congregations of the Elgin area to come together into a Parish Grouping at the end of 2020, which included a Pioneer Ministry post “developing mission and new worshipping communities across Elgin, particularly its new housing areas.” That intention is affirmed and encouraged across all five Marks of Mission, while recognising that such work is best done through small teams rather than individuals.<sup>13</sup> The Elgin Area congregations propose that work now being led by the OLM, the Community Development Worker (a partnership with the Salvation Army) and the Scottish Episcopal Curate, in church buildings and in various settings within the local communities. Where longer-term growth of Elgin is to the east, partnership working between the Elgin Area congregation and St. Andrew’s Lhanbryd and Urquhart should be developed to share mission to those new communities and businesses.

St. Columba’s Church is located in the south of the town centre, near New Elgin, and offers a space for traditional and ceremonial (wedding and funeral) services, and with parking that makes access easier for people across the Elgin area.

c) Overcoming isolation:

All these congregations have a strong sense of call to connect with people in their communities (urban and rural), with a particular concern to overcome isolation. This is primarily articulated in terms of the third Mark of Mission, responding to human need by loving service: directly meeting needs for food and connection in community partnerships, and offering the use of church buildings to host community groups who also meet those needs. This work will also assist in proclaiming the Good News of

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<sup>13</sup> *Pioneering Pieces: An evaluation of the Church of Scotland’s Pioneer Pilot Project*, Church Army’s Research Unit, October 2020;  
*The Day of Small Things: An analysis of fresh expressions of Church in 21 dioceses of the Church of England*, George Lings, Church Army’s Research Unit, November 2016, <https://www.churcharmy.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=204265>;  
*Playfully Serious: How Messy Churches create new space for faith*, Church Army’s Research Unit, January 2019, <https://www.churcharmy.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=225713>

the Kingdom to those supported, and will nurture believers as people are connected to others and equipped to serve.

However, gathering people together does not necessarily need an ecclesiastical building. In the rural communities, use can be made of community halls as well as Birnie Church Hall. Within Elgin, there is a high concentration of church buildings (sanctuaries and halls, across denominations) within the town centre.

d) Pilgrimage and heritage:

The potential for pilgrimage developments, both in terms of heritage connections and through walking, is very strong. The rural area includes the history around Birnie Kirk (a place of worship for more than 1000 years, with part of the existing building dating back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century) and the spiritual centre of Pluscarden Abbey, while the ruins of Elgin Cathedral and the presence of a range of ecclesiastical buildings offer further mission potential around spiritual heritage. Urban and rural areas also connect to short and long walks in the area. Intentional engagement in a supportive network with people engaged in similar mission activity is proposed, including with the Upper Speyside Area (heritage) and Lossiemouth Area (walking routes).

### 9.3 Elgin Area Buildings

	(a) Retain	(b) Dispose (sell / let / other)	Rationale
Birnie Church		b by August 2027	
Birnie Church Hall	a (review at first annual review)		The Review Group is of the view that it is not unreasonable to retain the Birnie Church Hall until the first annual review of the Presbytery Mission Plan and that much local goodwill could be gained from doing so. All parties should be clear that retention beyond this date is dependent upon increased use of the Hall for missional activity.
Elgin St. Columba's Church	a		The Review Group is of the view that where such a strong, reasoned case for the disposal of Elgin High and Elgin St Giles and the retention of Elgin St Columba's South and the Williamson Hall exists and where there is agreement of all local parties and of presbytery it would be wise for the General Trustees to depart from the recommendation they have made to retain Elgin St Giles and the Williamson Hall
Williamson Hall (by St. Columba's)	a		A well equipped and flexible hall suite, with parking.
Elgin St. Giles' Church		b by August 2027	No parking, facilities needing upgraded, access issues. Local parties proposed disposal, hopefully for community and/or civic use.
Elgin High Church and Hall		b by August 2027	Very close to multiple ecclesiastical buildings in Elgin. Community use best

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			served by transferring ownership.
Pluscarden Church		b by August 2027	Community hall available. Sanctuary at the Abbey.

## Appendix A – Criteria (agreed by Moray Presbytery February 2022)

### Process summary (GCOP 6.5):

An essential part of the planning process is to put **mission first**, then consider **people and congregational structures** – ministries requirements and unions, linkages and various team formations – and **finally buildings**. Buildings must be seen to serve the mission of the Church, not the other way round.

### Process outcome - ministries (PMPA 2.1.1):

A Mission Plan shall describe how the Church of Scotland's engagement with Christ's Mission is to be shaped and resourced in the following five years and to that end shall demonstrate how the Presbytery will:-

- i) ensure that the life of the Church of Scotland is shaped around Mission and adequately reflects the outcomes of Local Church Review and ideas for local mission;
- ii) sustain the commitment to a territorial ministry as described in the Third of the Articles Declaratory appended to the Church of Scotland Act 1921 and affirmed in Declaratory Act V 2010 including its commitment to ecumenical working;
- iii) make appropriate use of such ministry posts as may be permitted by the General Assembly so that the number of post holders in each Presbytery conforms to the numbers and timescales set by the General Assembly;
- iv) ensure that new ways of being Church, other than stipendiary Ministers of Word and Sacrament or traditional MDS appointments, are reflected in the Mission Plan;

### PPT comment:

The Mission Plan is to be shaped around the mission of Christ and it should reflect ideas for local mission. During the listening stages of the planning process, representatives of congregations have been sharing what is happening in their communities and the potential they see for mission in the future. The mission of Christ and such ideas are often found in narratives rather than statistics, so the formation of the Mission Plan will take such stories into account as well as quantitative data.

It is noted that the Mission Plan must consider how new ways of being church are encouraged. That may include posts beyond traditional parish ministry, and research suggests a variety of approaches may support growth in new ways of being Church.

Research into church growth, fresh expressions and Messy Church all acknowledge that many new ways of being church are led by non-ordained and unpaid people; that experimenting with small things is important, generally begun by small teams; that small churches grow best; that those experimenting and leading fresh expressions need ongoing support and refreshment; and that there is a positive association between employing youth workers and growth. (FATE, DOST, PS)

Research into the Church of Scotland's pilot Pioneer Ministry posts concluded that peer support from colleagues doing similar pioneering work is crucial, and building of teams would be better. The research also noted that while in theory, parish ministers should be able to pioneer alongside their existing responsibilities, the reflections of these post-holders suggest it is more difficult to juggle existing ministry and pioneering mission in practice. (PP)

There is research that suggests amalgamations of congregations can be a factor in decline, recognising that one leader for one local worshipping community is helpful and that small churches grow best. Research also recognises that such leaders do not all need to be ordained and paid. (FATE, HIRC)

All the above suggests a mixed ecology of inherited church and new ways of being church will require a mixed ecology of ministries, including paid and unpaid, ordained and non-ordained, valuing strong local relationships. New ways of being church and relational youth work can be encouraged by all in leadership, and will need intentional support for small teams rather than solo workers.

#### Process outcome – buildings (PMPA 2.1.2, 2.1.3):

In doing so the Presbytery will categorise each ecclesiastical building as either:-

- (a) to be retained beyond the five years from the date at which the Mission Plan is approved or annually reviewed, or
- (b) to be sold, let or otherwise disposed of by a specified date which is within five years from the date at which the ecclesiastical building is first categorised as (b).

In order to arrive at these categorisations the Presbytery shall use, and reference, resources and advice provided by the General Trustees, including the Land and Buildings Toolkit (or any successor guidance issued by the General Trustees).

#### PPT comment:

The General Trustees have created a Asset Management Buildings Audit process for all ecclesiastical buildings. This process will be undertaken in Moray by trained volunteers selected by the Stewardship, Finance and Property committee, with outcomes reported to presbytery by the General Trustees.

#### **Key Criteria – Mission** (GCOP 5.3.1, PMPA 1.1i )

##### **Presbytery, the Forum and the Trustees must prioritise Mission.**

[Mission shall be construed as meaning those aspects of church life set out in] the “Five Marks of Mission”:

The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service

4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

No area of church life is exempt.

PPT comment:

Advice from Faith Nurture Forum Presbytery Mission Plan Implementation Group is that Presbytery should develop a mission narrative: a) define mission goals in local context; b) identify priorities; c) how to achieve those.

That advice and the experience of the listening stages of the planning process recognise that Christ's mission is often recognised in narrative. Therefore, formation of the Mission Plan will take stories into account as well as quantitative data.

Subordinate Criteria – Communities (GCOP 5.3.2)

Every community of every size in every location within Scotland is part of a Church of Scotland Parish. While population should no longer be the only principle in shaping Presbytery Plans, it still remains the starting point. Our calling as a church is not primarily to resource congregations: it is mission to everyone in the land.

PPT comment:

The urban or rural nature of communities and the distribution of population will be taken into account – more dispersed or remote rural populations will need more resource for a similar number of people.

Natural boundaries and connections between communities will be taken into account, as indicated by local congregations. Boundaries between existing presbyteries will not be a barrier to adjustment.

Subordinate Criteria – Ecumenism (GCOP 5.3.3)

“The Commission readily acknowledges that reaching the people of Scotland is an ecumenical task and one to which the Church of Scotland contributes along with other denominations as partners in the gospel.” If a particular community is well served by another denomination, there may be no need for the Presbytery to duplicate that. Where a community is equally well served by the Church of Scotland and another denomination the Presbytery should explore what local possibilities there might be for recognising each other's ministry so that resources can be used elsewhere. The General Assembly of 2021 instructed the Forum, when developing principles for Presbytery Mission Planning, to include a principle of ecumenical working, bearing in mind the Lund Principle, affirming that churches should act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately. That same deliverance also encouraged the forming of Local Mission Communities and regional Covenant Partnerships as outlined in the report of the Ecumenical Relations Committee.

### Subordinate Criteria – The poor (GCOP 5.3.4)

The General Assembly has repeatedly affirmed that the gospel imperative is priority to the poor. At a time when resources are scarce, it is tempting to take away from the most marginal communities where churches are often very fragile and small. However pressing the reasons may be locally, this must be resisted because it makes a mockery of the gospel and the repeated commitments of the General Assembly. However, as in every part of the Church, this does not mean that existing patterns of ministry should not be evaluated and reviewed and different forms of church life introduced.

### Subordinate Criteria – Whole people of God (GCOP 5.3.4 [sic])

One aim of the Act is to assist the church in making the most effective use of paid ministries. However, this takes place in the context of the ministry of the whole people of God. The Special Commission on the Third Article Declaratory, in 2010, noted that “the living out of the commitment of Article III may well involve an increasing number of communities where the ministry is exercised largely by the eldership and membership of the Church, albeit under the oversight of an ordained minister.” (8.5.6) Therefore a further principle to guide Presbyteries in their deployment of ministries is how they might be used to encourage and enhance the ministry of the whole people of God. This sharing of talents may be across a wider area than a parish – some Presbyteries are developing the idea of Mission Districts, on which more information will be available later.

#### PPT comment:

Church growth research indicates the importance of involvement of lay members, refreshing and rotating roles, and not leaving everything to an ordained minister. Fresh Expressions of Church are very often led by non-ordained and unpaid people, and begun by teams, all of whom need ongoing support. (FATE, DOST, PS)

### Subordinate Criteria – Congregations (GCOP 5.3.5)

The church has “a commitment to maintain worshipping, witnessing and serving Christian congregations throughout Scotland.” One of the ways in which the gospel finds visible expression is in committed congregations under the power of the Holy Spirit. They both express the gospel and commend the gospel. In their Planning, Presbyteries will identify congregations that are outward looking, which engage with their communities and the wider church and consider how they might build on these strengths.

#### PPT comment:

Strong local relationships are important and enable smaller worshipping communities to grow more. (FATE, PP) Social engagement and meeting needs are important aspects of mission. (COVID) Rural communities have many needs and the church has a role in helping meet those needs. (HIRC)

The shape of church life can include different ways of supporting local worshipping communities, including the Recognised Ministries; trained and supported local

worship leaders; and the potential use of technology to share aspects of teaching and worship.

#### Subordinate Criteria – Mixed economy (GCOP 5.3.6)

Whilst affirming the importance of the Parish system and recognising the importance of a sense of 'place' the General Assembly stated that this needs to be expressed in a variety of ways. Martyn Percy, an Anglican scholar, says: "For the Church to find its place in the modern world, it will have to create new spaces for new communities and different opportunities for differentiated niche groups." While in many communities the sense of place is best expressed in something physical and tangible, that is not universally true. The Church will need, for example, to discover how to relate to those whose belonging is primarily through networks or the virtual world.

#### PPT comment:

Research into impact of Fresh Expressions suggests that networks, rather than geographical location, were a significant factor in a significant proportion of Fresh Expressions. A diversity of small things makes a difference, across a diversity of types, contexts, venues, frequencies and days. Many Fresh Expressions are led by non-ordained unpaid people, in teams. (DOST)

A familiar Fresh Expression is Messy Church, which reaches non-churched and de-churched families and can help people grow as disciples, but mostly for families with children below secondary school age. That needs the support of congregations and presbyteries to train and free leaders to prioritise Messy Church and fresh expressions of church. (PS)

Scottish rural church research found growth where the Church was doing something different. Pilgrimage has lots of potential for reaching people, including the "Invisible Church," and possibly for regeneration of communities and buildings. (HIRC)

Scottish Church COVID research recognised the importance of online networking and presence, and acknowledged that online worship needs resource, reflection and planning. (COVID)

All of the above suggests that giving responsibility, resource and support to people (ordained or paid or not) for ministry online and to particular networks may be important.

The research into the Church of Scotland pilot pioneer ministry posts recommends the need for people in such roles to have teams and networks for support, and space to experiment. That research cautions against trying to fit developing communities into governance structures too soon. (PP)

#### Subordinate Criteria – Financial responsibility (GCOP 5.3.7)

Presbytery Mission Planning does not mean ensuring that congregations which make a net contribution to central funds take priority. Nonetheless a degree of financial realism is required and it is appropriate that some consideration is given to congregational financial responsibility. Some congregations are more generous than comparable ones and all congregations are expected to make a financial contribution

appropriate to their means. At present one third of congregations are net contributors and two thirds are net receivers. However, per capita giving can be much higher amongst some of the poorest congregations than it is in some of the wealthiest. It is essential for Presbyteries to consider the complex financial picture and allocate ministerial resources to congregations that take their financial stewardship seriously. The Presbytery, Forum and Trustees should also take account of the effect of a Mission Plan on the aggregate amount of Ministry and Mission Contributions which the Presbytery's congregations remit to the national Church.

PPT comment:

It should be noted that the allocation of the number of posts to Moray is based on weighted population numbers here and across Scotland, not on how many ministry posts our current M&M contributions pay for.

It will be difficult to predict the financial consequences of some decisions. Historic data on the impact of unions and dissolutions on assessable income suggests an average decrease in assessable income of 0.4%. In 2023 there will also be a shift from the current system of Ministries and Mission contributions to the Giving to Grow system approved by the General Assembly 2021 (Appendix 1 of the Report of the Assembly Trustees). The PPT will use the best available information to estimate the future Giving to Grow contributions of congregations in different potential forms of adjustment, to assess the potential effect of proposals on the contributions of each congregation and the aggregate for Moray.

Subordinate Criteria – Buildings (GCOP 5.3.8)

There is a connection between ministry and church buildings, although that connection is neither uniform nor universal. At a national level there is a consensus that the Church of Scotland has too many buildings, numerous buildings that are underutilised, buildings that are too large for present day needs and buildings that are in the wrong place. At a local level however, almost every church building is deemed essential by those who worship there week by week. There is no simple solution to this problem. The starting point however should be mission. Presbyteries will want to consider which buildings are essential and useful for the mission they envisage, and offer to local parties means by which they might look more objectively at the bricks and mortar which they possess. The General Trustees will support Presbyteries in developing their mission plans. Presbyteries are encouraged to make use of the General Trustees Land and Buildings Toolkit, and other assessment tools which will be available.

PPT comment:

The General Trustees have created a Asset Management Buildings Audit process for all ecclesiastical buildings, which will be undertaken in Moray by trained volunteers. Outcomes will be reported to presbytery by the General Trustees and will provide an overall indication of whether a building is a “well equipped space in the right place” or not. High overall scores will suggest both a well-equipped space and a good location. Lower scores will require further investigation. A breakdown of AMBA results and SFP's local expertise will help ascertain whether limitations and issues

can be overcome with appropriate investment in a building, to make it an asset for Christ's mission.

Buildings must be seen to serve the mission of the Church, not the other way round. (GCOP 6.5)

Other criteria – Fewer officebearers (GCOP 6.6):

Congregational groupings should move towards fewer decision-making bodies and fewer buildings, with effective numbers of office bearers. Multi-linkage charges should be strongly discouraged, as congregations in various forms of partnership need to be sharing vision for mission and life, and a requirement for too many office bearers drains the energies of Ministry leadership with the potential for miscommunication, divergence of vision and lengthening decision-making processes.

PPT comment:

This is an encouragement to think differently. It recognises existing struggles with finding officebearer with the appropriate gifts and calling. Church growth research suggests ever-larger amalgamations don't work for growth as communities need identifiable local leadership. (FATE)

Other criteria – Beyond boundaries (GCOP 6.10):

Presbyteries and congregations should be encouraged to think beyond their boundaries, especially in the light of future changes to Presbyteries through the reform process, but also to recognise that these boundaries do not necessarily present a barrier to mission.

Possible adjustments/arrangements (PMPA 7):

- 1) Union
- 2) Linking
- 3) Deferred union or deferred linking
- 4) Local mission church
- 5) Guardianship
- 7) Transportation
- 8) Parish groupings
- 9) Dissolution
- 10) Team ministry
- 11) New forms of church life
- 12) Presbytery mission initiative

PPT comment:

It is noted that the Code of Practice discourages multi-way linkages, as they produce a large governance workload.

The new Local Mission Church option offers recognition of a local worshipping community and identity, but without the governance requirements needing to be fulfilled by that local group of people.

Parish groupings may be a useful step towards teams in unions or linkages, where that bigger adjustment is not yet possible.

Team ministries are not just teams of paid or ordained posts, but can specify wider teams from the whole people of God. Roles and responsibilities may be to particular local communities and to wider roles across the team's area and/or across the Presbytery's area. Roles within ministry teams need well defined to enable continuity, building of local relationships and the ministry of the whole people of God. Church growth research suggests one leader of each community is good, though such leaders will not necessarily be ordained and paid in every community.

This is a five year rolling plan. This first plan may take first steps towards longer term arrangements. This plan will not assume it is defining a permanent shape to church life in Moray, but is shaping a stage in the ongoing evolving life of Christ's church. There may an overall trajectory proposed, with initial adjustments in that direction at this time.

#### Instruments of future planning available (PMPA 9):

- 1) Reviewable charge
- 2) Transference (to another presbytery)

#### **References:**

**COVID:** *"Adapt and be Flexible– the Mission Doesn't Stop": The Scottish Church and the COVID-19 Pandemic*, Brendan Research January 2021  
<https://www.brendanresearch.com/projects/scf-acts-covid19>

**DOST:** *The Day of Small Things: An analysis of fresh expressions of Church in 21 dioceses of the Church of England*, George Lings, Church Army's Research Unit, November 2016 <https://www.churcharmy.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=204265>

**FATE:** *From Anecdote to Evidence: Findings from the Church Growth Research Programme 2011-2013*, Church of England  
<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/church-growth-research-programme/anecdote-evidence>

**GCOP:** Presbytery Mission Planning Act: Guidance & Code of Practice v1.4 (see also <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/presbytery-planning/presbytery-mission-plan-act-guidance-code-of-practice>)

**HIRC:** *Hope in the Rural Church - Reflections on the Scottish Church Census*, ACTS Scottish Churches Rural Group, May 2018 <http://www.acts->

scotland.org/images/downloads/rural\_group/SCRG\_HopeRuralChurch\_Report2018.pdf

**PMPA:** Presbytery Mission Plan Act 2021

**PP:** *Pioneering Pieces: An evaluation of the Church of Scotland's Pioneer Pilot Project*, Church Army's Research Unit, October 2020

**PS:** *Playfully Serious: How Messy Churches create new space for faith*, Church Army's Research Unit, January 2019

<https://www.churcharmy.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=225713>

**PPT:** Moray Presbytery Planning Team

## Appendix B – Glossary

AMBA	Asset Management Buildings Audit
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
FTMWS	Full Time Minister of Word and Sacrament
GA	General Assembly
GTs	General Trustees
OLM	Ordained Local Minister
LMC	Local Mission Church
MDS	Ministry Development Staff
PMP	Presbytery Mission Plan
PMPIG	Presbytery Mission Plan Implementation Group
PPT	Presbytery Planning Team (of Moray Presbytery)
SFP	Stewardship, Finance and Property committee (of Moray Presbytery)

## Appendix C – Population and congregation statistics

This appendix summarises some population and congregational statistics for ease of reference. Fuller statistics and analysis are found in the Brendan Research report “*Moray Presbytery Plan: Synthesis of congregational documents and associated statistics*” February 2022.

<b>Congregation</b>	<b>Pop'n est. 2020</b>	<b>CofS Resp. % (Census 2011)</b>	<b>CofS Resp. (% of 2020 pop'n estimate)</b>	<b>2021 Membership</b>	<b>2021 Number of worshippers (physical attendance)</b>
<b>Buckie Area</b>					
Buckie: North	4,807	80	3,846	273	60
Buckie: South and West	3,499	84	2,939	188	60
Enzie	1,340	81	1,085	45	12
Findochty	1,134	77	873	34	34
Portknockie	1,242	79	981	48	20
Rathven	1,222	79	965	53	35
<b>Total (Buckie Area)</b>	<b>13,244</b>		<b>10,689</b>	<b>641</b>	<b>221</b>
<i>Cullen and Deskford</i>	<i>1,719</i>	<i>82</i>	<i>1410</i>	<i>239</i>	<i>35</i>
<b>Keith Area</b>					
Keith: North, NBR	3,567	90	3,210	404	25
Keith: St Rufus, BG	4,085	88	3,595	787	79
<b>Total (Keith Area)</b>	<b>7,652</b>		<b>6,805</b>	<b>1,191</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>Upper Speyside Area</b>					
Aberlour	2,075	87	1,805	191	69
Knockando, Elchies and Archiestown	805	84	676	198	30
Mortlach and Cabrach	2,138	86	1,839	271	45
Roths	1,414	87	1,230	249	30
<b>Total (Upper Speyside Area)</b>	<b>6,432</b>		<b>5,550</b>	<b>909</b>	<b>174</b>

<b>Congregation</b>	<b>Pop'n est. 2020</b>	<b>CofS Resp. % (Census 2011)</b>	<b>CofS Resp. (% of 2020 pop'n estimate)</b>	<b>2021 Membership</b>	<b>2021 Number of worshippers (physical attendance)</b>
<b>Lower Speyside Area</b>					
Bellie and Speymouth	4,911	86	4,223	305	61
St Andrew's-Lhanbryd and Urquhart	3,447	86	2,964	280	45
<b>Total (Lower Speyside Area)</b>	<b>8,358</b>		<b>7,187</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>Lossiemouth Area</b>					
Duffus, Spynie and Hopeman	3,135	77	2,414	191	35
Lossiemouth: St Geraldine's High	6,734	80	5,387	179	70
Lossiemouth: St James'	1,927	79	1,522	178	Not provided
<b>Total (Lossiemouth Area)</b>	<b>11,796</b>		<b>9,323</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>105+?</b>
<b>Elgin Area</b>					
Birnie and Pluscarden	2,888	84	2,426	170	25
Elgin: High	8,297	86	7,135	203	44
Elgin: St Giles' and St Columba's South	14,575	82	11,852	454	65
<b>Total (Elgin Area)</b>	<b>25,760</b>		<b>21,413</b>	<b>827</b>	<b>134</b>

“CofS Resp.” is the “Church of Scotland Responsible” figure. It is the percentage of people who did not claim to belong to another denomination or faith, i.e. that claimed to belong to the Church of Scotland, those who said they had no religion, and those who chose not to answer the question.

“Pop’n est.” is the 2020 Population estimate taken from Table 1 in *Brendan Research report “Moray Presbytery Plan: Synthesis of congregational documents and associated statistics” February 2022.*

2021 Membership and Number of worshippers (Physical attendance at worship) taken from the statistical return of Moray Presbytery for 2021.

## **Appendix D.**

### **The Mission Plan Review Group – Extracts and Recommendations.**

The Mission Plan Review Group for Moray Presbytery ( Rev John Cowie ; Rev Janet Mathieson ; Stewart Shaw) met with the Principal Clerk ; Rev Angus Mathieson ( for PMPIG) and Brian Waller ( for General Trustees) in Edinburgh on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> March 22023. The Mission Plan Review Group met with representatives of Moray and NE&NI Presbyteries via *Zoom* on 29<sup>th</sup> March (Rev Jenny Adams ; Rev Tony Stephen ; Rev Ian Murray; Rev Andrew Kimmitt). The Mission Plan Review Group visited Elgin and surrounding area from 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> April. The Mission Plan Review Group was impressed by the very considerable amount of thought ; time and effort which had been given to creating a Presbytery Mission Plan for Moray Presbytery. The Review Group also acknowledges the considerable time given to difficult discussions and conversations by ministers and members of local congregations ; representatives of Presbytery ; representatives of Faith Nurture Forum and General Trustees. Inevitably these have been draining and exhausting for all concerned. The Review Group detected a mood of realism amongst local parties and an acknowledgement of the difficult situation being faced by the Church of Scotland nationally with too many buildings for all to be sustainable and too few full-time Ministers of Word and Sacrament. The Review Group also detected a strong desire to work co-operatively with others (at local , presbytery and national levels) and a positive energy and enthusiasm for carrying out the ministry and mission of the church in new ways. There was a strong sense of ‘wanting to get on with it’.

***1. The Review Group was satisfied that the ministry allocation to Elgin and the surrounding area had been carefully thought out; had been re-visited after the question raised by FNF and that the current allocation of two ministry posts is realistic taking into account the placement of an OLM and plans for the creation of additional local post/s. No other concerns were outstanding in relation to ministry allocations within the Moray Presbytery Mission Plan.***

***2. The Review Group is of the view that where such a strong, reasoned case for the disposal of Elgin High and Elgin St Giles and the retention of Elgin St Columba’s South and the Williamson Hall exists and where there is agreement***

***of all local parties and of presbytery it would be wise for the General Trustees to depart from the recommendation they have made to retain Elgin St Giles and the Williamson Hall.***

***3. The Review Group is of the view that it is not unreasonable to retain the Birnie Church Hall until the first annual review of the Presbytery Mission Plan and that much local goodwill could be gained from doing so. All parties should be clear that retention beyond this date is dependent upon increased use of the Hall for missional activity.***

***4. The General Trustees have accepted more time is required to make decisions about buildings in Keith and have offered to provide advice and financial assistance with a feasibility study on the buildings. This has been accepted by Presbytery. Faith Nurture Forum have raised no other concerns. In the meantime all buildings except Keith Kirk Shop have been designated b.***

### ***Conclusion***

***The Review Group detected much agreement between the local parties with whom they met and representatives of Presbytery. It seems to the Review Group that the passage of time has given rise to a greater sense of realism and readiness to move forward into a different way of being the Church of Christ in Moray Presbytery. It would appear that there remains no dispute with Faith Nurture Forum and little dispute with the General Trustees. The Review Group hopes that the General Trustees would be able to concur with local parties and Presbytery on the matter of buildings in the light of this report.***

***The Review Group also hopes that agreement of the Presbytery Mission Plan for Moray Presbytery (now part of NE&NI Presbytery) might now be achieved quickly in order that its implementation might begin.***

***05/05/2023***

## INTRODUCTION

In this Narrative and Plan the word ‘we’ refers to the Presbytery of Orkney until the point of union with other NENI Presbyteries on 1 January 2023, but thereafter to the current charges of Orkney working towards the implementation of our PMP through a process of Adjustment. We are presenting a Mission Narrative and Plan for what is currently simultaneously a Presbytery and a group of congregations planning for union, and therefore for what will be a single charge in the future. We trust that it will be read in that spirit, which explains why the document is quite long to achieve several aims, but also why it describes our community in Orkney-wide terms and not by individual historic parish.

The Church of Scotland in Orkney worships our one God, but expresses worship, prayer and service in ways as diverse as our geography. We bring the love of Christ to our neighbours, knowing that the communities in which we find those neighbours range from our bustling county town to tiny islands with a few dozen residents each. We are led by the one Spirit, but our steps take us on different adventures of learning and faithful following.

We know, however, that we are no longer able to exist as nineteen traditional congregations under one small Presbytery: some of our worshipping congregations can no longer sustain it, while others understand that they are called to share their strength with those who need it... and discover blessing as a result. That is our starting point.

## 1. HOW THE PRESBYTERY HAS PRODUCED ITS VISION FOR MISSION

There are two moments in the life of a Presbytery when it makes sense to do a **Mission Audit** of its communities. One, as encouraged by PMPIG, is *before* a Presbytery Plan is drafted and posts allocated. The other, in the spirit of the Church Without Walls Report of 2001, is *after* the allocation of human resources is made; then the question can be asked ‘What is it possible for us to do using this individual with these gifts and passions?’

In 2019 the Presbytery of Orkney, anticipating the depth of national change that was imminent, used the process of **Local Church Review** (LCR) in a special way. With *every* congregation asked *simultaneously* to undertake an audit of its mission (in the first sense above), and the results shared across the Presbytery, a detailed picture emerged – stating the current life of the Church and looking to its future mission in each place – which provides the analytical basis of this Plan and is submitted as a supporting document. While the Planning process began *de novo* as required in the 2021 Act, the 2019 LCR represents the analytical undergirding that we believe gives an accurate and current account of much of church life.

Subsequent changes (especially the impact and response to Covid) however suggest the need for an update to these LCRs supplemented by updated parish statistical analysis of religious and social trends. When our PMP is approved and in place, we relish the opportunity to audit our potential for mission (in the second sense described above) with a feel for the resource, energy and talent we

know we have available to deploy in each of our communities. Appendix I describes that sense of anticipation; we do not think of Mission Audit as only a one-off exercise to assist the production of our initial PMP.

Indeed, as our work has progressed and our engagement with PMPIG facilitators has unfolded, we and they have increasingly sensed that the next planning exercise (before the first annual review) must be this more granular audit. We anticipate that concurrence with this PMP will be conditional on fresh, detailed mission narratives being prepared by all our existing congregations, and we warmly welcome that challenge and opportunity which we believe comes at the right time. We are considering inviting ministers and interim moderators to do that exercise at the level of the partnership of worshipping communities that will come under the pastoral care of each inducted member of the Team (which is achievable because it coincides with some existing linkages and at least one Interim Moderator's combined responsibilities).

When our Presbytery Development Officer (PDO) assumed office in December 2020, she was instructed to pick up from that existing point of analysis, and to take forward the process of planning and development. She interviewed all ministers, and clergy of our ecumenical partners, to establish the local understanding in each place of ministry, mission and buildings, and reported her findings to Presbytery in late winter 2021.

The Planning Committee, whose membership includes every minister and interim moderator *ex officio* so that every congregation is represented in it, **undertook further analytical work:**

- analysis of the logistical possibilities for ministers to exercise responsibility, within a Team, for different areas
- analysis of the size and service-pattern of all nineteen worshipping communities
- a general account of the differences in current ministries to get a sense of the weighting of tasks beyond those common to all parish ministers (e.g. how many school chaplaincies, how much inter-island travel, work-place chaplaincies held, size of population in the Statistics for Mission figures, existing community outreach, etc)
- a process (begun, and expected to continue through the planning stage and on into the implementation stage) of identifying central tasks that can be carried out without duplication by Ministry Team members, including:
  - tasks that already require to be done, which by centralisation can avoid wasteful duplication of effort
  - mission tasks that could be done when ministerial capacity is released by a much more efficient deployment of resources

At that point, mid-2021, all ministers and interim moderators were asked to **brief their Kirk Sessions and gather their opinions**, and the PDO attended meetings as invited. It was clear that two different initiatives were in view:

- the combining of ministry into a Team ministry, as the only way in which ministry could reach some of our worshipping communities that our geography prevents us from uniting together

- the uniting of Kirk Sessions, to provide for the needs of those worshipping communities unable to sustain their own governance by sharing the tasks of leadership by elders and not just ministers

To explore the possibilities of the second of these, the Presbytery set up an **experimental pilot scheme for a ‘General Kirk Session’** with representatives from as many Sessions as could provide them (all except some of the smallest have participated). Meeting in the months when the official Kirk Sessions did not meet for their ordinary business, the pilot was used to discuss the developing vision for union, to provide joint initiatives (e.g. a single Lent study for the whole of Orkney), and to improve information-sharing. A major task of the pilot was the appointment of a small group from its membership who drafted Appendix I to this Plan. In June 2022 the pilot wound up, establishing in its place four Working Groups on Finance, Governance, Ministry and Mission Development, whose remit is to provide substantial material for the preparation of a more detailed Basis of Adjustment than the current outline circulated to Kirk Sessions to give them a sense of how this PMP can be implemented.

Presbytery has, step by step, given the PDO direction and guidance in her work, gradually becoming more specific in its instructions. In Summer 2021 it instructed that the Plan should be drafted on the assumption that we would utilise Team ministry. In February 2022 it confirmed this would be a single Ministry Team for the whole of Orkney - a decision that was extremely difficult and painful, as has been the Presbytery’s separate decision regarding the internal allocation of resources (which belongs to the implementation of adjustment rather than this PMP). The draft version of this Plan was distributed to Kirk Sessions at Easter 2022 for their consideration at Session meetings in late April. At the May meeting of Presbytery the Presbytery confirmed that its formal consideration of the whole PMP would take place at its ordinary September meeting. Congregations were encouraged to continue to identify areas for further missional thinking and resource planning to be done over the summer, partly to assist in the production of the final version of this paper but mainly to advance progress on the production of a draft Basis of Adjustment mainly through the efforts of the Working Groups described above.

The strongest caveat to emerge from many congregations in the course of these eighteen months of conversations was the danger of losing the existing momentum for mission by dismantling local leadership in favour of central governance. Outreach, stewardship, community engagement, new initiatives, all of these are already vibrant in the lives of some congregations (what PMPIG has referred to elsewhere as ‘vibrant missional congregations’). Presbytery has heard loud warnings not to damage these beacons of work and witness in the effort to spread that vibrancy to places that lack it, and so intends to utilise the new concept of **Local Mission Church** (LMC) to preserve local energy, inspiration and stewardship at its best. In theory LMC leadership teams might be used in any number of our existing congregations up to nineteen; in practice congregations currently struggling to fulfil governance requirements will prefer rather to be led from the united Kirk Session in order to benefit from the strength of others.

One of the key issues of concern raised at General Assembly was how in practice historical trends facing the church across Scotland could be more effectively addressed in the future, and this Plan aims to focus on ensuring such practical steps are taken particularly once the Plan gains overall approval.

## 2. HOW THE PLAN ADDRESSES THE CRITERIA CONTAINED IN THE CODE OF PRACTICE

Taking together the work of the Local Church Review in 2019, the analyses by the PDO in 2021, and the work to date on drafting this text, the Presbytery is confident that each of the markers identified by PMPIG in its guidance has been included in our planning. If there is a single effect of all of these together, indeed of our Plan as a whole, it is to move from the current state of church life in Orkney, which is patchy and far too variable, to a future state in which every worshipping community (a term meaning the existing congregations but also wider elements of each community) is properly resourced, cared-for and led. To put this another way, we expect to move away from a pattern of church life that expends too much energy on maintenance, into a pattern that frees our energy much more for Christ's mission as defined in the Act. These are the criteria in the Guidance:

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### A. PRIORITISE MISSION

For us this was always stark. For years we have struggled to provide the ordinances of religion, and certainly struggled to develop creative missional activity, in some of our communities. In terms of the Third Article Declaratory, we have had to plan drastically to recover a sense of mission to the whole of Orkney. It is more than a *priority* amongst many tasks; mission is the *whole* of our task.

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### B. COMMUNITIES

The guidance talks of mission to *communities* rather than resourcing of existing *congregations*. For us this has required painful decisions, to re-balance the distribution of stipendiary ministry on a calculation based more on the Statistics for Mission and less on the relative strength and liveliness of existing congregations. Those difficult debates focused on several issues, not least transport.

Orkney's geography and public transport connections create unique difficulties, even compared to other Scottish island groups. Ferry journey times to the Outer North Isles vary between one and a half and two and a half hours, with the larger Isles having just two ferries most days (three on some days in the summer months) and some of the smaller isles having a direct ferry service only once or twice per week. These are classed as "open sea" crossings and the aging ferry fleet increasingly struggles to cope with capacity issues on some routes. Sailings during the two-month winter refit timetable are further reduced, particularly on some routes. Attending anything in person in Orkney Mainland from the Outer Isles invariably involves a full day away (often with an overnight stay) and the same is true for travelling the opposite way.

Six outer North Isles are also served by Loganair flights but, with these being just eight-seater planes, they are often booked out well in advance for some of the Isles and are expensive, particularly for journeys starting from Kirkwall. The relative isolation and lower quality of various services to these isles means they have particular social issues to face. The Inner Isles (both North and South of Orkney Mainland) enjoy much more frequent ferry services with shorter crossings in more sheltered waters but are obviously still subject to operational and weather-related changes. Two of the (populated) South Isles have fixed link causeways with Mainland Orkney but they too can be subject to occasional adverse weather closures.

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### C. ECUMENISM

Inter-church work is a major factor in some parts of Orkney and much less so in others. Where ecumenical working is possible, it is reckoned that it is already well-developed; this means that we can rely on partnership-working to assist our ministry in places where ministers have larger populations to serve. On the other hand, where there is a reluctance on the part of other denominations to work with us across theological divides, there is probably not much scope for further development. Much of the most effective work across denominational divides is done at individual, not congregational level; a perfect example is the pilgrim route the St Magnus' Way, whose trustees include three members of the Milestone Church and one from Stromness, while it is chaired by an Episcopalian. And in a place like Orkney, our congregations are internally multi-denominational (a useful label claimed by the Shapinsay congregation in their LCR, but true of most worshipping communities in places like this).

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### D. THE POOR

Poverty in Orkney probably has a different complexion from poverty in, say, an Urban Priority Area. But rural poverty is real, and fuel and other poverty issues bite much more deeply in the Northern Isles than in many parts of mainland Scotland. With below-average incomes, many poorly insulated homes, and no mains gas, Orkney's situation is particularly difficult. The Church is already heavily involved in foodbanks, local charitable trusts, and – of course – in tackling social isolation through pastoral care by ministers, elders and visitors. Opportunities for service are bound to grow in the coming years, and our radical re-structuring should allow us to target time and expertise far more widely, and efficiently, around Orkney.

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### E. WHOLE PEOPLE OF GOD

The ministry of those who are not *paid* to minister has long been a critical element of our mission in an area that simply cannot be reached by stipendiary clergy alone. By combining Kirk Sessions at the same time as creating our Team Ministry, we will unlock even more of a resource of talent, commitment and passion to bring activity, outreach, pastoral care and church life from the places where it currently thrives to the places where it is currently moribund. In Appendix I we recognise the need to work out how best to include and equip ordinary Christians in team ministry; and name training and preparation as a focus of work in the early years of implementing our Plan. We recognise that a new way of working is not simply a restructuring of resources, but also involves preparation for our tasks, especially for those who will find themselves doing new things in new ways. We also understand that ministers will have a critical role in training others to exercise mission; indeed, the central 'team' tasks that ministers will have will often include this element.

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### F. CONGREGATIONS

Our geography forces us to take a distinctive approach here. The guidance, and the spirit of much of the material surrounding the Act, assumes that the most thriving missional congregations are the ones to be retained and developed. Here, there are many congregations that cannot be united or dissolved – whether they are missionally strong or weak – because they are on separate islands and so must be maintained to achieve the purpose of Declaratory Article III (the whole territorial

ministry of the Church). Keeping them does not necessarily mean keeping a Church-owned building for each of them, and there is honest and generous thinking going on in several places. Our vision, of doing much more together as ministers and as the whole leadership and people of the Church, allows all congregations to take part in worship, community projects, prophetic action, etc, even if in the recent past they were too small (as separate entities) to do many of these things. In other words, our adjustment will allow every current congregation, once united, to be that vibrant missional congregation.

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## G. MIXED ECOLOGY

For us, a mixed ecology is already a mixture of in-person and on-line worship. In our new structures it will also mean a mixture of local leadership (Local Mission Church leadership teams) in our stronger worshipping communities and entirely central leadership by the united Kirk Session for those unable to sustain any administrative functions locally. And finally, with a 30-year tradition of radical rationalisation of properties continuing through this planning process, there will be a mixture of retaining traditional church buildings in some places and using other community assets in others.

There is another sense to ‘mixed ecology’ and that is the social and economic ecology of our context. In farming, fishing, and the tourist industry – three principal pillars of the Orkney economy – workers have responsibilities that make the conventional patterns of church life, like public worship taking place only on Sunday mornings, useless for them. It is very difficult for nineteen congregations each to tackle this issue for their parishioners; but one congregation serving the whole of Orkney, through the mixture of events and media mentioned above, can re-connect with substantial parts of society, and offer a new welcome in places where it has been impossible in the recent past.

If ‘chaplancy’ might be said to consist of ministry to the contexts in which people live out their daily discipleship, our parish ministry will on that definition become a kind of community chaplancy, extending the mission of the Church even further than we already do beyond the Church’s physical walls – all the while welcoming the whole community within those walls for all kinds of activity.

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## H. FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Presbytery has already been devising schemes for the practical operation of a Union and Team Ministry. One of these is a method of administering income and expenditure (both capital and revenue) that encourages and rewards local stewardship, takes the local sources of assets into account when deciding local expenditure, and gives local leadership (in LMCs) some agency on behalf of the Kirk Session in its financial operation. This will in part address concerns about achieving financial structures that strike the balance between ‘local church’ and ‘wider church’ control, not just in relation to restricted funds. However, it must be understood that the Kirk Session of the whole charge will ultimately arbitrate conflicting priorities.

We have learned from each congregation what are the current realities and future possibilities for mission, through the Local Church Review process and the listening work of the last year (section 1 above), and we believe that we can transform mission in many places by building on past good practice identified elsewhere. We have ensured that we are taking seriously the markers provided by PMPiG (section 2 above). We have committed ourselves to check our life and work constantly against the spirit of the Five Marks of Mission (section 3 below, and Appendix I). This, then, is our intention...

### 3. HOW THE PRESBYTERY WILL IMPLEMENT THE FIVE MARKS IN MORE DETAIL:

As suggested in Appendix 1 B3, we, along with Local Mission Churches, will take ongoing stock of where we are now, in the light of the Five Marks, and difficult historic trends facing the national church. But we do so also in awareness of the underlying validity of the Gospel and people's needs for it, of positive steps many congregations have taken, and exciting possibilities for fresh inspiring mission. We recognise the enormity of the challenge facing church nationally and the need for radical further action across the Five Marks in ways that are mutually supportive of overall mission, yet also allow differing priorities within the Five Marks locally.

We will serve God's mission in Orkney in ways measurable against our vision of the Five Marks of Mission as follows, and in other ways as the Spirit guides us. We will devote the time and resources necessary to do this effectively across Orkney including any less-well-resourced communities.

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#### TO PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM

**We will ensure that every one of our worshipping communities can hear the Gospel proclaimed on a weekly basis in the most effective and relevant ways practical for each congregation and community. The balance between traditional and new will vary according to local needs, but each will be equipped in new ways from the whole Christian community in Orkney, to proclaim the Gospel by preaching and in other ways that build up church-community connections and allow church presence outside the walls of church buildings, regardless of the current strength of local Christian leadership in that place. In this way we will fulfil - much more successfully than we have been able to do in the past - the aim of Declaratory Article III, whilst discovering 'new ways of being the Church' (especially through Local Mission Churches) that best enhance the fundamentals of traditional Church life here.**

We will achieve this through a pan-Orkney Team Ministry, through the vigorous further exploration and use of technological means of connection and communication (including the further development of social media which is already a vital tool to overcome our scattered Christian communities), and through a teaching ministry that extends beyond formal worship and throughout Orkney.

In this we will learn from and build on the generous production of on-line materials of various kinds provided by both Kirkwall congregations and the Milestone Church since before the Covid pandemic, and on the weekly resource of the 'Orkney Reflections' sermons provided by all our

ministers in the last year to ensure local preaching is available for every congregation no matter how small or remote (relied on in places like Flotta). We will also learn lessons from the wider church about the best digital and other solutions now being explored to reach, and communicate with even more effectively, existing congregational contacts and wider audiences, particularly the under 40s.

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#### TO TEACH, BAPTISE AND NURTURE NEW BELIEVERS

**We will combine all our resources – human, administrative, financial and physical – to provide opportunities for Christian formation that are accessible throughout Orkney regardless of geographical isolation, and operate the principles of parish-wide ministry and not a ministry only to existing members.**

We will achieve this by developing a culture within a united Kirk Session that inspires every leader to strive for the nurturing of Christ's disciples throughout Orkney and not only in their own local community. We will ensure the specialist ministry of chaplaincy to educational institutions at primary and secondary school level and offer a presence in Further and Higher Education institutions including the Orkney campuses of UHI and Heriot Watt Universities. In this, specialist skills will be utilised to help encourage, facilitate and train local chaplaincy leaders.

In this we will build on the traditions of teaching during worship mentioned by several congregations in the LCR, on the spread of Messy Church activities throughout several congregations especially (but not only) in our larger communities, on new possibilities for on-line work with teenagers and young adults, on the commitment in places like Firth to the local Bible Festival, on the existing hard work of school chaplains to primary, junior high and secondary schools, and on the links many congregations have with the HE and FE sectors through staff members who are Church attenders. We will especially seek freshly to equip and encourage our congregational members to have the confidence to share in their own ways, the essence of their own faith experiences

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#### TO RESPOND TO HUMAN NEED BY LOVING SERVICE

**We will make available the facilities of our buildings (many of them already well-resourced community assets), the talents of our members and adherents, and the energy of our leaders, to increase the social capital of the Church within Orkney and to maximise the Church's impact beyond our shores. By building on existing co-operation with Christians of other traditions we will fulfil the aim of Declaratory Article V.**

We will achieve this by retaining and furthering the current activity of our congregations, not least through the implementation of what we learn from the Asset Management Buildings Audit, the maintenance of existing local partnerships with other denominations, the further development of existing local Church links with Churches and communities in Malawi, and the continuing encouragement of individuals to live out their Christian obedience in service of projects and organisations, both local and international. Our mission 'field' will include not only the population

of Orkney but its many visitors, and we will be aware of serving those who welcome those visitors in our tourist industry.

In this we will reap the benefits of so many of our buildings already being seen as resources to meet community needs, and used in dozens – perhaps hundreds – of ways every month: from the lunch club in the former Rousay Manse to the Peedie Pandas group in St Margaret's in the Hope, from the hospitality the congregation in Eday loves to share to the hosting of the greatest civic occasions and thousands of visitors by the congregation in St Magnus' Cathedral.

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TO SEEK TO TRANSFORM UNJUST STRUCTURES OF SOCIETY, TO CHALLENGE VIOLENCE OF EVERY KIND AND PURSUE PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

**We will make our resources available to agencies of transformation within our area and lend our prophetic voice to challenge injustice where it needs to be exposed.**

We will achieve this by engaging diligently with the work of the Faith Impact Forum in relation to national and international events, and by supporting local initiatives like the Orkney Food Bank, Voluntary Action Orkney, Vital Talk Orkney Counselling Service, Orkney Street Pastors, THAW Orkney (the local fuel poverty charity), seeking ways to extend help to those in need across the whole of Orkney, including through island wellbeing coordinators, and others as we find opportunity to co-operate with them.

In this we will challenge all our congregations to be inspired by a place as small as Papa Westray, which – like so many in Orkney – is a Fairtrade congregation. By working together, we can supply the unique social capital the Church can bring on an Orkney-wide scale as well as at the most local level.

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TO STRIVE TO SAFEGUARD THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION AND SUSTAIN AND RENEW THE LIFE OF THE EARTH.

**We will rise to the opportunity our location gives us to be part of the world-leading action on climate change that characterises the Orkney economy.**

We will achieve this by directing sustained attention to the pastoral needs of the work force at the fast-changing facilities in Flotta, and – more than ever before – by devoting human resources to work-place chaplaincy throughout Orkney as it leads Britain in the development of renewable energy.

In this we will increase the Church's commitment to the Eco-congregation concept, represented already in several congregations. As with so many things, past success in one place can become future inspiration in another when we are working as a single team and developing a single corporate expertise.

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## IN SUM...

We are challenged by the wider Church to name ‘what should begin, what will continue and what will stop in order to prioritise the mission of local churches’. For us the items are rather large, and the following are just examples of what is embedded in the last few pages.

**Beginning:** team working in a radically new form, by ministers, elders and others ; new initiatives beyond the internal life of worshipping congregations as described above; the application in future of *existing* talent to *developing* opportunity, with flexibility for re-deployment of ministry around our mission field.

**Continuing:** the proclamation of the Gospel, and the worship of the People of God, in all of Orkney’s natural communities (a place where the concept of the ‘parish’ is still used in civil governance, sport, and everyday parlance); the critical pastoral relationship of the individual professional with a defined population; the characteristic genius of island ministry to engage with community assets and initiatives.

**Stopping:** the very concept of vacant parishes; the administration of nineteen Kirk Sessions; the situation of some worshipping communities going without regular diets of worship; and *all* needless duplication of mission tasks.

We will ensure that the commitments of this statement are retained through the process of union with the other NENI Presbyteries, whilst keeping responsibility for implementation of locally focused tasks by ministers and leaders throughout Orkney.

We will ensure that the life of the Church as characterised in this Statement will continue to be developed through the process of adjustment within Orkney in terms of its PMP, and Presbytery intends that the proposed Union and Team Ministry should facilitate this mission.

#### 4. OUR PROPOSED ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES AND FUTURE ADJUSTMENT

These 19 congregations will ultimately be **united** into one parish but recognising local ministry and mission in what are the currently existing parishes. The process of union will begin with congregations currently vacant, along with congregations currently under a Basis of Reviewable Charge (when each reaches the review point contained in their Basis). Remaining congregations added at the next natural point of vacancy.

The adjustment will include a single **Team Ministry** for the whole of Orkney and will use throughout the county of the concept of **Local Mission Church**.

Each inducted minister will take the lead for pastoral care and co-ordination of the conduct of worship (1) for the parish area in which they live (permanently) and (2) depending on the size (full-time or part-time) of the ministry, for one or more parish area without a resident minister (which may be re-allocated from time to time as the Team develops). Each minister will undertake central tasks for the whole Team, with these allocated to ministers in such a way that the overall workload of every minister is so far as possible similar.

<b>Name of parish/worshipping community</b>	Is this the location of a permanently resident minister?	Church Buildings categorised for retention	Explanatory notes: Category (A) to be retained Category (B) to be closed within the life of the Presbytery Mission Plan, stating a proposed date.
Birsay Harray Sandwick	YES	Milestone Church, Dounby	(A) Retain
East Mainland	YES	East Mainland Church, Holm	(A) Retain
Evie and Rendall	NO	Hackland Church, Rendall  Evie Church	(A) Retain  (B) Already closed
Eday	NO	Eday Church	(A) Retain, with review at the first annual review of the PMP with re-classification as (B) if the worshipping congregation is unable to fulfil ongoing maintenance
Firth	NO	Firth Church, Finstown	(A) Retain

Flotta	NO		(B) Close by Dec 31 <sup>st</sup> 2022
Hoy and Walls	NO	Kirkside, South Walls St Columba's Church	(B) Close by Dec 31 <sup>st</sup> 2022. To retain Kirkside as the place of worship, currently being extended.
Kirkwall East	YES	Kirkwall: East Church, King Street	(A) Retain
Kirkwall St Magnus	YES	[Cathedral] and St Magnus Centre	(A) Retain
North Ronaldsay	NO		No buildings.
Orphir and Stenness	NO	Orphir Church	(A) Retain. To be converted into a flat, worship space, community hub etc using funds from sale of Stenness Manse
Papa Westray	NO	St Ann's Church	(A) Retain
Rousay	NO	Rousay Church Centre	(B) Closed by Dec 31 <sup>st</sup> 2022
Shapinsay	NO	Shapinsay Church	(A) Retain
Sanday	NO	Cross Kirk	(B) (dispose) by 31 Dec 2024, with willingness by the Presbytery to consider before the end of 2023 any costed and scheduled plan presented by the Kirk Session for a small worship room with accommodation type development on the East Kirk site
South Ronaldsay and Burray	YES	St Margaret's Church, SMH	(A) Retain

Stromness	YES	Stromness Church, Victoria Street	(B) (dispose) by 31 Dec 2025, with a review before the end of 2023 for reclassification as (A) (retain) on presentation of costed and scheduled plans for both the refurbishment of the sanctuary and a solution to the disabled access issue
Stromsay (Moncur Memorial)	YES	Moncur Memorial Church	(A) Retain
Westray	YES	Westray Church	(A) Retain

## APPENDIX I. OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE FIVE MARKS OF MISSION, AND HOW WE WILL KEEP THEM AS OUR FOCUS

*This Appendix was written by a working group from our pilot General Kirk Session mentioned earlier in the narrative.*

**Background** The October 2020 General Assembly agreed that for the Church to be fit for purpose in the 21st Century, the Five Marks of Mission must be evidenced at local, regional and national levels, and the Assembly of 2021 endorsed them as central to all Presbytery Planning.

The Five Marks are:

**The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ:**

**To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom**

**To teach, baptise and nurture new believers**

**To respond to human need by loving service**

**To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation**

**To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.**

In one sense it is easy to summarise the five Marks as above. But it is far harder to detail and show how we will meet the requirement actually to implement them as our overriding priorities, and in what ways. For example, the Theological Forum pointed out the Marks do not straightforwardly guide prioritisation locally at any one time, and some may be better placed/called for specific tasks; this requires local practical wisdom, and there may also need to be more local consideration of the place for worship and prayer within priorities.

Presbytery recognises the Five Marks of Mission as being at the heart of this Presbytery Mission Plan and at the forefront of our planning; and will seek to ensure these are implemented as fully as possible. But Presbytery also recognises a great deal of thought and action is necessary at all levels to ensure sufficient action in practice is taken to prioritise the implementation of such mission at all levels. To this end:

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### A: IN THE FIRST YEAR OF THE PLAN:

#### **The Presbytery:**

1. **Recognises there is scope for some flexibility in understanding of and prioritisation within the Marks, and many ways of responding.** At this stage Presbytery recognises the Five Marks must be addressed holistically as a church, but not through every person, every congregation, doing everything, but each working according to their giftings/callings and potential for mission.

2. **Will consider the degree of flexibility in the implementation of the Five Marks** most appropriate to Orkney and individual localities e.g. how to apply the underlying central ‘commitment to maintain worshipping, witnessing and serving Christian congregations throughout Scotland’, and whether individual congregations can focus on particular Marks at particular times or seasons according to local needs and talents.
3. **Will consider how mission will be prioritised in all its decision-making**
4. **Will liaise fully with the NENI presbyteries** about how to ensure maximum implementation at all levels, and the sharing of best practice across the new Presbytery
5. **Will agree some steps to ensure appropriate discussion, training, sharing, funding, finances, and action locally and centrally**
6. **Will prioritise communication about the Marks to ensure they are understood and prioritised** within Kirk Sessions, Local Mission Church leadership and congregations to encourage ongoing positive action. This may include visual summaries highlighted at all levels of Presbytery communications e.g.



Our Five Marks of Mission

7. **Will consider the need to encourage communication in mission in styles and words that younger generations and ordinary people in the community understand.** For example, perhaps saying five ‘aspects’ of mission may be better understood than Five ‘Marks’
8. **May wish to utilise in its primary communication, a version of the Five Marks used by the Anglican Board of Mission in Australia, which may be more easily understood:**

Witness to Christ's saving, forgiving, reconciling love for all people

Build welcoming, transforming communities of faith

Stand in solidarity with the poor and needy

Challenge violence, injustice and oppression, and work for peace and reconciliation

Protect, care for and renew life on our planet

*The Assembly Trustees note the Five Marks of mission will be interpreted and expressed differently across the Church and that church members may also use the above version as an alternative, presumably with the universal overall heading: ‘The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ’.*

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## B. ON AN ONGOING BASIS:

1. **Presbytery will explore how it can work with churches to best meet the Church of Scotland Presbytery Mission Plan Act guidance notes**, not least 6.2/3/5 which say: (2) It will be an essential question to all to consider the question about whether where they are now is where God needs them to be. And if they cannot physically ‘move on’ they might reflect on how they can stay in the same place but reshape their pattern of service. (3) Office bearers should be encouraged to consider how the Five Marks are exhibited in the life and witness of the congregations; look at the mission opportunities for the parishes; look at how Ministries and congregational witness might be shared in the area; and consider how buildings might be shared or adapted. They should be encouraged to open conversations with neighbouring congregations and also to consider opportunities for ecumenical partnerships at an informal as well as formal level. (5) An essential part of the planning process is to put mission first, then consider people and congregational structures – ministries requirements and unions, linkages and various team formations – and finally buildings. Buildings must be seen to serve the mission of the Church, not the other way round.
2. In the past many mission plans have produced fine words without adequately ensuring follow-up implementation, whilst periodic top-down quinquennial assessments by Presbyteries have not necessarily resulted in encouraging the spirit of mission locally to be implemented. Presbytery therefore recognises that **emphasis will be put on encouraging implementation of the Marks on an ongoing basis and active endorsement of it at a local level by church leaders and congregations**. This is likely to involve at least some of the following:
3. **Presbytery, Kirk Session[s] and Local Mission Churches taking stock of where they are now, in the light of the Five Marks**, identifying what are Christ’s mission priorities for them in their area, given local needs and talents, what new ways of being church are possible, what in practice must change or be done, and what could be done ecumenically or by other churches.
4. Some **ongoing review and mutual encouragement** of efforts under the Five Marks of Mission. It is suggested that this will involve encouragement, sharing and questioning in a positive way from the bottom up rather than top-down quinquennial type Presbytery assessments which could dampen spirits and initiative. It is suggested that the Presbytery’s most recent version of the local church review process, involving local assessment and feedback to Presbytery, would be a useful way forward involving all churches. [Presbytery of Orkney Equipping & Encouraging for Christ Finding a Way Forward; Parish Reviews within the Presbytery of Orkney 2018]
5. **Encouragement in sharing of ways to address common mission issues**, including especially issues arising from Covid : a) common problems such as the after-effects of Covid, and the disengagement of many; how to get younger folk involved after the stopping of children’s activities including Sunday school; and b) sharing common positive lessons like becoming more community focussed ; online video presentations watched at different times and ways ; different times of services; utilising new sources of music; utilising music and story to attract the young ; getting out more in the community rather than expecting people to come into church.

6. To help sharing of ideas and resources, it is suggested that **idea-sharing social gatherings** [perhaps annually?] amongst people of different churches including across islands, be encouraged.
7. Within the NENI more generally, **reflecting on different possibilities for the site and shape of church services** to encourage the Five Marks, including different buildings, seating arrangements, ways of delivering worship that may be more inclusive and facilitate involvement.
8. **Considering establishing a form of mission committee within the NENI Presbytery and equivalent within the kirk session[s]** whose remit will be partly to facilitate and encourage implementation of the Five Marks, including sharing and training and annual review of what churches are doing.
9. **Working out how team ministry will work in practice** across the Presbytery to ensure the Five Marks are the focus; this will partly be by including within the operation of teams, not just the ordained but the whole people of God, encouraging people to use their talents. Presbytery will think through how different ordinary members of churches and communities can work together across communities.

*Towards the end of the planning process, our Mission Development Working Group – in some ways the successor to the group that wrote this appendix – re-affirmed the intentions of this reflection as follows:*

The Presbytery will continue to identify what are Christ's mission priorities in each area, given local needs and talents, and the need to consider how best to prioritise under 40s age groups and others with little or lost contact with church. The Presbytery will do this exploring what new [and traditional] ways of being church, communicating and sharing the faith, are practical; what in practice must change or be done, and what could be done ecumenically, by other churches, or by Orkney Kirk Session together. This will include in due course updated Local Church Reviews and statistical analyses in the light of the Covid period of positive and negative changes. It will also draw on lessons about mission processes, procedures and simple steps, from the wider church addressing long term trends. And it will especially do so through sharing with each other across Orkney and with new NENI colleagues, in ways that seek to re-invigorate and support those who have lost energy. Recognising limited volunteers, priority will be given to further encouraging, training and equipping ordinary Christians, and exploring paid mission support workers, drawing on local priorities, resources and grants. Specific SMART targets will be considered to help encourage the continuation of necessary practical steps.

*In their Report to Presbytery, that Group expanded on these principles, and their ideas will be taken forward in the preparation for implementation of the Plan.*

## APPENDIX II. WHEN THIS MISSION PLAN HAS BEEN FULLY IMPLEMENTED, WE WILL LOOK LIKE THIS

*Our PMPIG Facilitators suggested this ‘snapshot of the future’, to provide an external reader with an easy-to-grasp idea of the effect of everything we are planning.*

Orkney will form a single parish within the Presbytery of the North East and Northern Isles, served by a Team of seven (FTE) stipendiary ministers along with OLMs, Readers, retired ministers, elders and volunteers, among us providing the time-commitment to **mission** of at least nine or ten full-time staff with all posts filled. In addition, the new Presbytery of the North East and Northern Isles is likely to appoint a Congregational Support Officer and a Mission Development Officer, and Orkney will benefit from a share of their time and effort to advise, co-ordinate and resource us in the mission that is primarily delivered by the Church here in the county.

The nineteen current parishes will constitute **Local Mission Churches**, the stronger ones with greater elements of autonomy in local mission and the stewardship of resources because they have local leadership teams that grow out of the historic Kirk Sessions, and the others supported by everyone through a united Kirk Session (acting as the LMC’s leadership team in the absence of a local group able to sustain the task). All office-bearers will recognise that their priority is to serve the needs of the whole county and not only of the historic parish in which they live.

Each stipendiary minister will have up to **three elements** to his or her ministry: (1) a settled pastoral and preaching ministry in the LMC area in which their manse is located; (2) a pastoral and preaching responsibility for one or more LMCs elsewhere (with flexibility for re-allocation of that role), developing a robust transport strategy, and utilising the church flats in Longhope and Papa Westray (and planned for Orphir); and (3) central Team roles (as they are assessed to have remaining capacity) to ensure the most effective and efficient use of human resources across Orkney avoiding duplication of effort.

Each **non-stipendiary member of the Team** will be asked either to assist an inducted minister to exercise elements (1) and (2), or to bear responsibility for a central Team task. Other **members of the united Kirk Session** will have responsibility for governance roles as the charity trustees. And **all other elders** will exercise the local mission and stewardship at LMC level without being charity trustees, and the recruitment of new elders for the LMCs will be an ongoing task.

The findings of the **AMBA** exercise will have been implemented **in full**, leaving us with the minimum buildings establishment necessary to exercise our mission as measured against the Five Marks, including buildings owned by the Church (vested in the GTs or locally) and buildings used by the Church but owned by others (e.g. buildings held by community organisations, and of course St Magnus Cathedral owned and maintained by the local authority).

### APPENDIX III. STATISTICAL BACKGROUND

The population statistics relied on in our decision-making have been the Statistics for Mission, available for each parish area through the Church of Scotland website.

The Local Church Review results from 2019 may be viewed in a single document located alongside this document at <https://1drv.ms/u/s!Aq45mNdfZcRFgpN1VP-1ELoo9blVBg?e=YjdYiR>

### APPENDIX IV. UNION OF NORTH EAST AND NORTHERN ISLES PRESBYTERIES

*Versions of the following statement appear in PMP documents across the uniting Presbyteries of the North East and Northern Isles, and constitute a commitment of all of us:*

From 1 January 2023 Orkney Presbytery is uniting with others into The Presbytery of the North East and the Northern Isles. It has been agreed by the constituent Presbyteries that the approved Presbytery Mission Plans of the six existing Presbyteries will be amalgamated unchanged to form the first Mission Plan for the united Presbytery. It is our understanding that the new Presbytery of the NENI will ensure that the commitments of each plan are retained through the first years of the new Presbytery. It is our understanding that as the Orkney Presbytery Mission Plan is carried on into the Presbytery of the North East & Northern Isles – that, at least in the short term, the decisions, and proportional allocations of staffing and so on, should be respected as would be the case for all of the preceding Presbyteries.