



The Church of Scotland

Presbytery of Fife

The comments and feedbacks from the Clerk's note following the discussions on 16 and 18 August 2021 have now been grouped into: General opening remarks, Hope, Concern, Collaborative development and other. The comments from the Clerk's note have not been rephrased or edited.

General Comments

- All documents were sent out to allow transparency.
- Nobody likes change but change we must.
- Given the timescale we need to move forward and not stall progress.
- Important to realise the diversity across Fife with different churches; different population density; different needs and settings.
- Need to recognise that time is short and there is much for congregations to absorb.
- We need a collaborative and flexible approach where specific rather than open questions are asked.
- Different geographical areas have different needs.
- CofS is not a very mission led organisation. It is not evangelical by nature so we run cafes and Saturday clubs?
- Calling remains a Theological Consideration. We are called to a Place.

Hope

- Need to be optimistic and be positive and work together.
- Need to 're-set.' Hope for renewal
- Need more young people which is difficult for all churches.
- Hope we can come closer together as a presbytery.
- With the fall in membership, we need to reach out and engage.
- We need to learn from Covid 19 and new ways to do church and to reach out. Sunday services have changed and the model of being church needs to change
- PMP needs to identify the needs of others.
- The same as, same as, won't work anymore. We need to be different and to reach out to our communities.
- Our Mission is to the whole people of God, engage with families and young people and respond to what is right for the local area.
- If the attraction is not attractive, we need to provide something else. Comfort the faithful and find a new model for working.
- We need to take what we have 'Out' and invite others to come 'In'.
- Both Congregations and Members need to get involved in the process.
- New Presbytery promised less admin and more time for Mission.
- PMP brings with it an overall feeling of opportunity and possibility.

Concern

- Concern about who will determine the allocation of ministries?
- Concern about previous discussions including with Place for Hope being lost or not followed up.
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- Concern about volume of paperwork; jargon; that has hit the Kirk Sessions which is hard to digest and to manage.
- Concern about rural areas.
- Some groupings are well financed but others are not, so we need to care and share.
- There is fear; anguish and distrust over change.
- Concern about those in FT Ministry.
- Buildings are a concern and we need to share resources better.
- Real concern over the welfare of Ministers having to minister across areas and to larger communities. More emphasis is placed on elders who are getting older.
- Welfare of Ministers is paramount.
- Concern how the allocation number was reached.
- How do we manage disagreement; hopes and fears?
- Fear that historic buildings are seen in terms of parking and toilets and not as places of beauty and spirituality. For these things draw people to something beyond themselves.
- How will congregations that close be looked after?
- Concern about hurt and how to deal with this in a caring way.
- Need to care for all and to recognise long and faithful service.
- Some bigger geographic areas have less people. Look at the impact on the local community. Concern over a loss of local engagement and community contact which could be diluted.
- There are fewer people to look after larger areas for all in ministry.
- Impact on the elderly in the church who need fellowship; their pew; fear of being 'abandoned' if their church closes.
- Pastoral concern around congregations closing and the impact upon this engaged in ministry. There is trauma in closure. There is concern across the wider church which is having an impact upon morale.
- Closure needs a bereavement process and good endings. There are similarities to a minister leaving a charge and the impact upon the congregation; minister and people.
- Age of Kirk Sessions is a concern.
- We have allowed ourselves to 'drift' too long.
- Concern that churches with no minister are more vulnerable.
- Ministers are bound to feel under pressure.
- Concern over ability of a slimmed down and over stretched Presbytery to deliver Mission.
- Too much focus upon old working model and FT MWS - today all have a role to play in the wider picture.
- Concern about difference between large urban and small rural areas.

- Concern that where there is a vacancy and where there is no one in charge that solutions will be imposed.
- Can we be 'Truly Missional' and not just financially driven.
- Fear that some Ministers and Members will feel left behind.
- Need to recognise theological differences and people ability to choose.
- Concern about will our church survive? How can we work together with our neighbours and interact for the good of all?
- Feeling that we are all alone yet part of the same process. Communications are vital – spend your last £100 on publicity!
- Everyone especially the Ministers are feeling the stress with the possibility of more to come given the number of vacancies
- Guardianships are feeling abandoned and need to be reviewed asp. Fife has 11 out of 33 Guardianships across Scotland.

Collaborative development

- Need to be friendly and to collaborate with collegiality.
- Allow Ecumenical initiatives to flourish by identifying who we should speak to in the Parish; Dioceses and Presbytery and develop the local.
- Not everyone can afford a Young Person Worker. We need to share resources.
- Local is okay but this is a Presbytery Mission Plan so how can we share resources better and share best practice. We need to be more collaborative and coordinated and make use of scarce resource's by being willing to share.
- PMP should enable cross parish boundaries co-operation and visible ecumenical engagement as a Christian and a Uniting Church.
- Church building can be very intimidating to non-church people. We need to make more use of community buildings.

Other

- Need to allow Kirk Sessions to build the plan around a Vision.
- An Executive Summary would be helpful.
- The Mission Message needs Leadership and we need to learn how to sell the message.
- We need a different manpower model to release resources and to recruit.
- Need to evidence mission.
- Realise the assets of our buildings – The Road Map needs to look at church buildings as a community asset.
- Concern about an over emphasis and reliance on the Dunfermline Special Commission. There needs to be freedom to cross boundaries; challenge previous assumptions from inherited plans. Special Commission predates what is now being asked.
- Any closure of a church needs to be marked and celebrated and new churches need to open. With over 300 vacancies across Scotland it is time to bid farewell in some places and to look for renewal, mission and opportunity.
- We need to be taught how to begin a Local Mission Church for the church to become alive and open for everyone.
- Those who come to Messy Church will/may not come to a 'Traditional' service.
- If the vaccine centre is at the heart of the community – where is the church?

- We need to be talked to and presented ideas on what exactly is a “Local Mission Church.”
- There is a degree of ‘protectionism’ over church buildings. People feel they need to ‘guard’ their building at all cost. People don’t want to lose ‘their’ building.
- The Timeline is a rolling 5-year plan.
- There is a need for more support from 121 and we need help with Elders training including leading worship and as Interim Moderators.
- Big issue will be where there is disagreement and division.
- Some think 31 Dec 22 is too long, other it is too short a deadline.
- Legacy planning was the start point but nothing is set in stone.
- With the time pressure it is difficult to avoid a top-down result.
- More discrete conversations with KS’s are needed.
- How many Ministers are on Unrestricted Tenure?
- Who are on the Mission Strategy Planning Group?
- If the plan is not met – then what?
- What happens to the right to call if allocated number not reached?