

I. LOCAL CHURCH REVIEW ACT (ACT I 2011)

Edinburgh, 21 May 2011, Session 1

The General Assembly, with the consent of a majority of Presbyteries, hereby enact and ordain as follows:

1. The Presbytery shall conduct a review of every congregation in the Presbytery, normally once every five years. This is without prejudice to the right and responsibility of the Presbytery to make other superintendence visits as it deems necessary.
2. The object of the review by members of the Presbytery is to give encouragement and counsel to the congregation; to facilitate the congregation in setting out their priorities and plans for at least the next five years; and where anything unsatisfactory is found in the state of the congregation or not in accord with church law and order they shall give advice or take supportive or remedial action.
3. The review may be conducted as two separate exercises (and if appropriate by different representatives of the Presbytery), for the purposes of sections 4 and 5 below.
4. The Presbytery shall satisfy itself on the following matters and any other matters relating to the implementation of the law of the Church and the deliverances of the General Assembly: (To aid the Visiting Team initial information on these areas should be provided by the congregation as part of the advance information sent to the Visiting Team before the visits begin)
 - (a) the administration of the Sacrament of Baptism to infants in accordance with Act V, 2000;
 - (b) whether office-bearers are representative of the congregation's life, for example in terms of age and gender;
 - (c) whether the congregation's current form of constitution serves its future mission;
 - (d) whether the employment status of members of staff, the formal relationships among them and the prioritisation of work amongst them serves the congregation's mission effectively;
 - (e) compliance by the Kirk Session with the church law and civil law relating to Safeguarding;
 - (f) compliance with those provisions of Act XII 2007 regarding the provision and maintenance of manses;
 - (g) implementation of the findings of the most recent property surveys;
5. The Presbytery shall undertake a review of the work of the congregation and an exploration of the future direction of the mission of the congregation using guidance materials provided by the Mission and Discipleship Council. The purpose of the review is to establish:
 - (a) The congregation's own analysis of its purpose and vision for the future: this should include all aspects of the church's work as defined by that congregation, including worship, service, fellowship, discipleship, evangelism, social outreach, congregational life, Christian education, finance, fabric, and ministries support in relation to the local, national and international mission of the Church.
 - (b) The nature of the working relationships amongst office-bearers, and between the office-bearers and the minister.
 - (c) The values that shape and direct the life of the congregation.
 - (d) How the life and work of the congregation has developed since the last review.
 - (e) What challenges have been encountered, and how these have been or can be dealt with.
 - (f) How the congregation plans to implement its vision for the future.
 - (g) What resources the congregation needs for its development, change and growth, and the source of such resources.

6. The process of review shall involve the production of an action plan for the congregation expressing a vision of the local church for its mission over at least the next five years, taking account of the resources available and the current Presbytery Plan.
7. The review shall include a visit by a team appointed by the Presbytery to the local church, where they will meet with members of the ministry team, elders and other representative members of the congregation.
8. The structure of the review by the Presbytery representatives shall reflect the needs of the local church. It may include more than one visit, different meetings with different groups, follow-up meetings, separate meetings with the minister, separate meetings with office bearers and such other meetings as it considers necessary. The leader of the Visiting Team or his or her duly appointed deputy shall take the chair at all aforementioned meetings.
9. In all cases the Visiting Team (or teams) shall submit a full report (or reports) to the Superintendence Committee of the Presbytery and to the minister and Kirk Session. The Visiting Team shall make every effort to agree the terms of its report with the Kirk Session, and shall indicate in the submitted report any outstanding areas of disagreement. The report shall narrate the current circumstances of the congregation, the intentions and plans of the minister and Kirk Session, the action plan referred to in section 6 and make recommendations for action and support by the Presbytery, and a time-table for subsequent superintendence and congregational action.
10. The Superintendence Committee shall, after due and careful consideration of the report of the Visiting Team, submit a final Report to the Presbytery with its findings and a note of any comments received from the minister or Kirk Session. The minister or Kirk Session or any other party having an interest shall have the right to be heard by the Superintendence Committee and/or the Presbytery when the report is being dealt with by either body.
11. Once approved by the Presbytery, the Superintendence Committee shall forward a copy of the report to other relevant Committees of the Presbytery mentioned as part of the report's recommendations for action and support.
12. In the event of the Presbytery finding itself unable to express satisfaction with the state of any congregation, it shall instruct the Superintendence Committee to make further inquiry and to endeavour to remedy what is deemed to be unsatisfactory. If, after this further enquiry, the Presbytery finds that it is still unable to express satisfaction, it shall proceed under Act I, 1988.
13. In the case of a Single Congregation Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) and Churches in Covenanted Partnership, which are recognised by the National Sponsoring Body for Local Ecumenical Partnerships (NSBLEP), an Ecumenical review in the form approved by the NSBLEP on 14 March 2008 shall be deemed to fulfil the requirements of this Act for the Church of Scotland. For the avoidance of doubt this is without prejudice to the general right and responsibility of the Presbytery to exercise superintendence in other ways, and it is without prejudice to the requirement of the regulations of any other denomination which is a partner in the same LEP.
14. The Presbytery shall have the ability to develop the process to fit its own needs, provided only that the requirements set out in this Act are fulfilled.

Consequential Amendments

14. The following Acts and Regulations are hereby repealed or amended:
 - (1) Act II 1984 is hereby repealed.

- (2) Act III 2000 s.39 is hereby amended by the deletion of the words “Act II 1984 anent Presbytery Visits (as amended)” and the substitution of the words “Act XXX 2011 anent Local Church Review”.
- (3) Act VI 2002 s.2 is hereby amended by the deletion of the words “Act II 1984 anent (as amended)” and the substitution of the words “Act XXX 2011”
- (4) Act VI 2004 is hereby amended by the deletion of section 20.
- (5) Regulation 2, 2004 is hereby amended by the deletion of the words “Presbytery visits” and the substitution of the words “Local Church Reviews”.

APPENDIX to Act 1, 2011

LOCAL CHURCH REVIEW GUIDELINES

The specific aims of Local Church Review and the requirements to be met are laid out in the Act anent Local Church Review. Beyond that, Presbyteries may develop their own systems within the stated requirements. The following guidelines are designed to help Presbyteries develop a system of Local Church Review appropriate to their needs. It is important to note that these guidelines are not exhaustive and are not intended to restrict Presbyteries to a particular way of fulfilling their obligations in terms of the Act.

Advance preparation

The Leader of the Presbytery Visiting Team should contact the minister of the congregation in advance to outline the process and to suggest dates for the visit or series of visits. The Kirk Session should appoint a group of key office bearers to:

- (1) Provide information in advance of the Presbytery Visit (see Appendix 3). [This information should become part of a database of basic statistical and contextual information on the congregation, and on the parish that the local church seeks to serve. Presbytery should keep a record of this to assist with future reviews.] and
- (2) To meet with the Presbytery Visiting Team prior to the Presbytery Visit to the whole congregation.

Pre-Meeting with key office bearers

The Presbytery Visiting Team should meet with the group of key office-bearers to explain the new process in detail, and to confirm the date(s) of the visit(s). The meeting with key office-bearers should review at least the areas set out in section 5a) to g) of the Act anent Local Church Review. This visit should encourage the key office-bearers to:

- a) Express the life of the congregation as they see it, sharing what has gone well in the past ten years, what has been difficult, where they see the congregation’s strengths and weaknesses and how they discern God to have been at work in their midst.
- b) Look forward for at least the next five years to identify the changes that are likely to take place in the congregation and parish as well as the opportunities and challenges that might present themselves within the same time frame.
- c) Review the database of basic statistical and contextual information on the congregation, and on the parish that the local church seeks to serve.
- d) Discuss how the congregation understands its role within the Presbytery Plan.
- e) Express what resources might help the congregation to better worship, witness, nurture and serve.
- f) Satisfy itself on the matters listed in Section 4(a) to (g) of the Act anent Local Church Review. [This may also be done as a separate exercise under the terms of Section 3 of the Overture]

The Presbytery Visit

Having reflected on the meeting with key office-bearers the Presbytery Visiting Team will meet with the other office-bearers and members of the congregation. Already having a picture of the work and future desires of the congregation the Presbytery Visiting Team will review the

congregation's work and explore the future direction of the mission of the congregation in a way that is appropriate to the congregation by facilitating a wide ranging discussion on the life of the congregation and parish and the mission of the congregation locally, nationally and globally.

Plan of Action

The process should result in a Plan of Action for the congregation. The plan should bring together the vision of the congregation for its mission over the next 5 years, taking account of its present position, its capacity and finances.

This should highlight the following as a minimum:

- A plan of action for the forward mission and ministry of the Church with goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-limited (SMART goals)
- Resources available locally including human resources, buildings and finance
- New resources required and who shall provide them

The Final Report

The report should set recommendations, give advice, and where appropriate it should set a timetable for action, preferably, a timetable agreed with the Kirk Session. The Plan of Action outlined above should be included in the report. The report should outline the achievements of the congregation, any difficulties faced, and what Presbytery or the congregation itself can do to contribute to the welfare and development of the congregation.

The following questions are given as a helpful guide for the Presbytery Visiting Team to consider as they write their report. These are to be seen as neither exhaustive nor prescriptive:

Where things are going well:

- How can the Presbytery affirm and nurture this further?
- How can the Presbytery encourage the sharing of this vitality with others?

Where the congregation is facing up to specific challenges (internally or externally):

- What changes are needed in attitudes, relationships, strategy or structure?
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- What specific resources are needed to meet this challenge eg developing worship, discipleship, practical skills in finance/fabric, deepening spirituality?
- What are the potential partnerships with other agencies, other churches?
- What support is needed to resolve internal conflict/dysfunction?

Where the congregation can no longer sustain this model of church life or engage in effective mission:

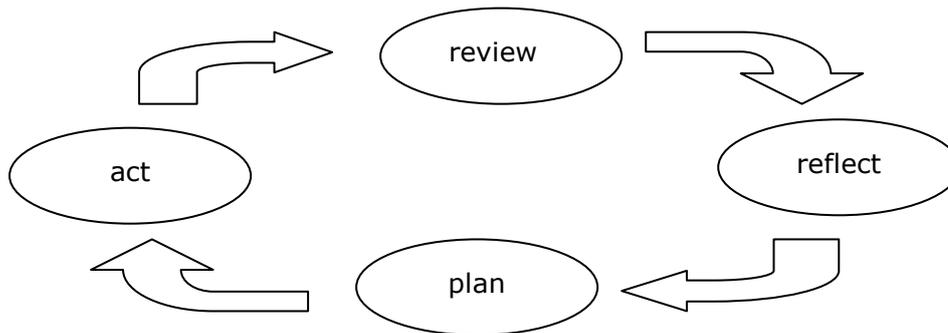
- What other form of Christian presence would they consider?
- What other partnerships would they consider?
- What resourcing is needed to equip the congregation for a new future?
- What is the pastoral process of closure and/or dissolution?

Where the congregation is no longer in synch with the community:

- What long-term process is needed to help them reconnect?
- How will this process be facilitated and by whom?

Review as a Continuous Process

The process of review should be a continuous process and not just seen as that which is done by the Presbytery Visiting Team. The provision of good data provides the basis for good reflection, and is not an alternative to the reflection; the reflection provides the basis for a plan of action, and the plan of action leads to action. The cycle then repeats, the actions that are undertaken should be reviewed and reflected upon with a view to further improvement. This continuous cycle may be represented as follows:



LOCAL CHURCH REVIEW INFORMATION REQUIRED IN ADVANCE

Factual Information

Please provide information and comment on the following areas of congregational life:

1. Membership: statistics for the past ten years including estimated age profile;
2. Worship: average weekly attendance (numbers, age profile, gender), style, musical range, use of audio visual equipment, innovations;
3. Pastoral Care: number of baptisms, weddings, funerals per year, specific demands of the situation, ways of sharing responsibilities;
4. Christian Nurture: numbers involved in Christian nurture: children, young people, young adults, adults; resources used;
5. Mission: specific mission initiatives – local or international, school involvement or other chaplaincies, evangelism training and strategies, communication;
6. Leadership: staffing, numbers of office-bearers including age and gender profile, training, structure, constitution;
7. Buildings: usage, state of repair, suitability, projects;
8. Finance: accounts, budget, allocations, shortfalls, Christian giving plans, special projects, statistics for givings over ten years;
9. Support for Minister or Ministry Team: administrative support, travelling expenses, study leave, additional staff needs;
10. Wider Church: relationship with Presbytery, Councils of the Church and ecumenical relationships;
11. Community: relationship with community groups or agencies;
12. Presbytery Plan: what are the interim steps and 10 year conclusions for your congregation in the Presbytery Plan? How do you see these working out?

Legal Information

Please provide information on the following legal requirements that a congregation must fulfil:

1. The administration of the Sacrament of Baptism to infants in accordance with Act V, 2000;
2. Whether office-bearers are representative of the congregation's life, for example in terms of age and gender;
3. Whether the congregation's current form of constitution serves its future mission;
4. Whether the employment status of members of staff, the formal relationships among them and the prioritization of work amongst them serves the congregation's mission effectively;
5. Compliance by the Kirk Session with the church law and civil law relating to Safeguarding;
6. Compliance with those provisions of Act XII 2007 regarding the provision and maintenance of manses;
7. Implementation of the findings of the most recent property surveys.