



GOOD PLACES TO BE



The Priority Areas Plan 2017-2022

Priority Areas Strategic Plan 2017-2022

When it comes to poverty, we should stop pretending to know better than poor people. – Rutger Bregman

In our report to General Assembly 2017 we reaffirmed our commitment to working in Priority Areas, and to widening the work with our poorer communities; embedding the work of the previous 10 years and enabling new programmes and initiatives to develop. Arising out of that report, this then is our strategic plan for the next 5 years. We lay out below a matrix of existing, new, and reshaped programmes which clearly states which of the strategic outcomes each initiative will work towards. There is an indication of who will lead on each initiative and who our key partners will be; within the Church Councils and externally. We will of course continue to develop new partnerships throughout the life of this plan as we know that we cannot carry out this work alone.

Mapping the work to the 7 Strategic Outcomes:

It was never a short term investment and these strategic areas remain as live and relevant as they were ten years ago. The story of the Church of Scotland in Priority Areas, even in recent years, speaks of resilience and joyfulness and real commitment in difficult times. However, it is also true that many Priority Area congregations are feeling “bowed low” – like the woman in the Gospel story – burdened with the effort of maintaining the Church. Thus we will work strategically to:

- Increase our ability to take our work to the margins
- Increase our ability to tackle the causes of poverty in Scotland
- Increase our ability to widen the reach of our support
- Increase our ability to make our buildings work for us, fit for purpose and be community lights
- Increase our confidence and ability to place worship at the heart of what we do
- Increase our ability to make our structures more straightforward
- Increase our skills and abilities to develop more effective leaders

These outcomes will inform the existing and new programmes that will be developed in the next phase of the work. At an operational level, we will reassess our targets, break them down into milestones and implement a new monitoring and evaluation plan. We must not lose sight that poverty exists in many areas in Scotland that are not currently designated as a Priority Area. We are also committed to reaching out to these areas and widening our programmes so that we can offer more to them. Equally, we are determined to disseminate the learning from our work with the wider Church, so that this vision can be shared further.

We are committed to creating a Church in Priority Areas which:

- **is indivisible from its community, working *with* local people**
- **sees local people as gifted, creative, resilient leaders**
- **reaches out and stands with people in their most difficult situations**
- **uses all ways possible to live the Gospel**
- **seeks to be a family of church communities and encompasses the widest range of theology**
- **is intolerant *of* and becomes prophetic *about* injustice**

Shirley Grieve, Priority Areas Secretary, March 2017

Priority Areas Core Team Work Directed by the Priority Areas Committee:

Programmes	Strategic Outcome (s)	Lead	Key Partners
<p>EXISTING - Chance To Thrive</p> <p>Description: This work is focussed on enabling communities to thrive. The programme offers local churches long-term accompanied mentor support. This assists them to develop their work and partnerships within local communities, and make available their buildings and facilities as resources for community benefit.</p> <p>Outcomes: PA congregations are better supported, increased ability to be a sustainable community, increased ability to take an asset based approach to work with communities.</p> <p>Indicators Year 1: run two network gatherings of Chance to Thrive projects, recruit 3 new mentors, produce a “guide” to CTT that describes the processes and stages in being involved, produce a short briefing for general circulation, feature 3 case studies on PA website</p> <p>Note of work to be included in operational plan as indicated in GA Report 2017: <i>The capacity to offer mentors to journey with congregations will be increased as they consider how to develop their buildings as places of mission and community assets. We will assist more congregations to become ‘enablers’ for other Priority Areas who want to reach out to their communities through the development of their buildings. These enabling congregations will be those who have made this journey already and who can provide encouragement through the sharing of their own experiences. Clear information about the process of being involved in Chance to Thrive will be provided; using case studies to demonstrate the many different ways that congregations going through Chance to Thrive have learned from their successes and challenges.</i></p>	<p>Increase our ability to take our work to the margins</p> <p>Increase our ability to make our buildings work for us, fit for purpose and be community lights</p> <p>Increase our skills and abilities to develop more effective leaders</p>	<p>Fred</p>	<p>General Trustees, CTT Congregations</p>
<p>NEW - Learning/Coaching/Asset Based Development Programme</p> <p>Description: Implement a programme of learning that feeds into all of the strategic outcomes. In particular we will be developing asset based programmes of learning, leadership development and missional practice, team coaching and personal development, and surgeries with key partners.</p> <p>Outcomes: Increased development of skills, ability, confidence and personal growth in order to fully engage in work with communities.</p>	<p>Increase our ability to take our work to the margins</p> <p>Increase our ability to tackle the causes of poverty in Scotland</p> <p>Increase our skills and abilities to develop more effective leaders</p>	<p>Shirley/John</p>	<p>FICS, CofS agencies, External agencies and consultants including Verene Nicolas, 3DM</p>

<p>Indicators Year 1: develop and advertise open programme of learning, run a programme of minimum of 12 workshops/learning events, carry out continuous and summative evaluation, 1 annual learning needs analysis undertaken supported by continuous learning from evaluation and personal contact.</p> <p>Note of work to be included in operational plan as indicated in GA Report 2017: <i>Going forward a programme of learning and support will be offered that will enable effective leaders to develop. Building on our existing coaching programme a range of workshop opportunities will also be provided through regional events and a national conference. Surgery events with other Councils will be developed from the model used at the Big Conversation.</i></p>			
<p>EXISTING: Young Adult Volunteers Programme</p> <p>Description: This programme offers opportunities for Priority Area congregations to host a Young Adult Volunteer on work placement for a 'year of service' and learning. Volunteers provide practical assistance to church/community activities as well as bringing cross cultural enrichment to the communities where they serve.</p> <p>Outcomes: congregations increase ability to develop work with communities, young people grow in confidence and ability</p> <p>Indicators Year 1: 4 congregations report increased capacity to deliver existing or new projects, 4 congregations increase skills in line management, increased capacity of PA core team through input of 4 young adult volunteers at minimum of 2 regional/national PA events</p>	<p>Increase our ability to widen the reach of our support</p> <p>Increase our skills and abilities to develop more effective leaders</p>	Lynn	PCUSA, PA congregations
<p>RESHAPING: Together for a Change – Building International Links</p> <p>Description: Opportunities for Priority Area congregations to make active partnerships with overseas churches. This international dimension leads to exchange visits, sharing of faith and mutual learning.</p> <p>Outcomes: participants increase understanding of anti-poverty work, participants develop leadership skills</p> <p>Indicators Year 1: focus group event held drawing together all participants, aims and outcomes of TFAC redrawn, application process put in place, 3 new participants take up offer of TFAC</p>	<p>Increase our ability to take our work to the margins</p> <p>Increase our skills and abilities to develop more effective leaders</p>	John	World Mission

<p>NEW - Mentoring Programme</p> <p>Description: A developed mentoring programme would have a bank of mentors with a range of skills and specialisms at its heart who could assist in the thinking and development of PA congregations. These mentors could be matched with a congregation for a discrete piece of work or to journey with them for a longer period of time. There would need to be a support package in place also for mentors, e.g. training, network opportunities</p> <p>Outcomes: PA congregations are better supported to develop programmes of work <i>with</i> communities and to be more sustainable</p> <p>Indicators Year 1: 4-6 meetings with key partners to share thinking and hear from experience, draft outline development plan.</p> <p>Note of work to be included in operational plan as indicated in GA Report 2017: <i>The Priority Areas Committee wants to draw on the experience that is within the network to build a bank of mentors who can assist other congregations, teams and communities to develop. This includes attracting mentors from outwith the Priority Areas network, from the wider church, and those who want to volunteer their expertise and time. In this mutually beneficial way, learning and expertise found in Priority Areas can be shared with the wider church.</i></p>	<p>Increase our ability to take our work to the margins</p> <p>Increase our skills and abilities to develop more effective leaders</p> <p>Increase our ability to tackle the causes of poverty in Scotland</p>	<p>Shirley/Fred/John</p>	<p>CTT, PA Congregations, GFI Projects, Scottish Mentoring Network</p>
<p>RESHAPING: Twinning Programme</p> <p>Description: We are looking to make strong links between Priority Area congregations and other congregations across Scotland. This has offers a chance to learn, exchange ideas and explore congregational/community life.</p> <p>Outcomes: PA congregations are better supported to develop programmes of work <i>with</i> communities and to be more sustainable</p> <p>Indicators Year 1: as above – this is closely linked to development of mentoring programme</p>	<p>Increase our ability to widen the reach of our support</p> <p>Increase our skills and abilities to develop more effective leaders</p>	<p>John</p>	<p>Presbyteries, Congregations outwith PAs</p>
<p>RESHAPING: Worship Development</p> <p>Description: We work with priority area congregations to develop a range of creative models and resources for worship. This programme will identify existing models of worship that have been developed by Priority Area congregations and facilitate the sharing of this expertise across the network and the wider Church.</p>	<p>Increase our confidence and ability to place worship at the heart of what we do</p> <p>Increase our skills and abilities to develop more effective leaders</p>	<p>WDO/John</p>	<p>Mission and Discipleship, Path of Renewal, Wild Goose, Pioneer Ministry, Fresh Expressions,</p>

<p>Outcomes: Increased confidence and ability to lead worship, increased ability of congregations to develop alternative models of worship, increased awareness of expertise within the Priority Areas network</p> <p>Indicators Year 1: recruitment of Worship Development Officer (part time – 21hrs), 4 congregations are directly supported to increase ability, 4 congregations are directly supported to share their expertise, 3 resources available via PA website to PA network and wider Church</p> <p>Note of work to be included in operational plan as indicated in GA Report 2017: <i>Priority Area congregations want to develop more worship materials relevant to Priority Areas. In partnership with Mission and Discipleship Council we aim to identify resources and opportunities for joint events to enable congregations to develop our work in this area. Links with Path of Renewal and Pioneer Ministry will also assist in this. A focus group within Priority Areas has been established which includes congregations across a range of interests and theology and this group will ensure we are better informed about the kinds of resources and programmes congregations would like us to develop. This includes gathering together resources that Priority Areas congregations have developed already and sharing the learning which has taken place. All this adds to our existing resources that have been developed through the worship development post. We will work with new and existing partners from outside of the Church to add value to this work; assisting Priority Area congregations to be a worshipping community that is prayerful, spiritual, reflective and explicit about mission.</i></p>	<p>Increase our ability to take our work to the margins</p>		<p>Fischy Music, 3DM, Spill the beans</p>
<p>NEW: Communications Development</p> <p>Description: Develop an effective communications programme that is outward facing; raising the profile of PA work, shares expertise from the network and reaches a wider audience. We will develop a Directory of PA congregations and their work across a number of formats that will allow the learning to be shared widely. At the same time, this programme will develop the skills of PA congregations to communicate more effectively.</p> <p>Outcomes: Increased ability of PA congregations to promote and share their expertise, increased understanding and knowledge among congregations outwith Priority Areas.</p> <p>Indicators: Minimum of 15 congregations supported to develop skills in social media, weekly blog by PAs produced, PA website phase 1 development which will ensure new sections are in place and all information is current, #365PA maintained, development of Directory initiated at Big Conversation 2</p>	<p>Increase our ability to take our work to the margins</p> <p>Increase our ability to tackle the causes of poverty in Scotland</p> <p>Increase our ability to widen the reach of our support</p>	<p>Naomi/John/Shirley</p>	<p>PA congregations, CofS Comms department,</p>

<p>Note of work to be included in operational plan as indicated in GA Report 2017: <i>The current platforms we use including our social media will be reviewed and made fit for purpose. Training opportunities for congregations will be offered to enable them to take part in the production of materials that celebrate and share learning and experience of life in Priority Areas. This up-skilling of congregations will be an additional outcome to the communications work. Not only will we be better able to promote and share the pioneering nature of this work but our congregations will also be equipped with additional ability to widen their influence. We have begun work already in establishing a project using Instagram - #365 PA. This will capture 'a week in the life of' a Priority Area piece of work on a weekly basis, thus creating a portfolio of work across the year. This will be linked to the development of a directory of Priority Area congregations as a new resource.</i></p>			
<p>RESHAPING: Developing Work with Young People</p> <p>Description: Continue to work with GK who can offer intense and transformational youth work practice with young people. Develop a strategy for work with young people which will enable us to widen the reach of our support linked to national strategies such as 2018 Year of Young People.</p> <p>Outcomes: Young people grow in confidence and abilities, Young people increase leadership skills, young people become more active in the life of church and communities</p> <p>Indicators Year 1: outcomes agreement established with GK Experience, 3 partnership meetings with M&D YofYP, 1-2 focus/planning meetings with PA congregations and key partners to begin development of draft strategy</p>	<p>Increase our ability to take our work to the margins</p> <p>Increase our skills and abilities to develop more effective leaders</p>	<p>John/Naomi</p>	<p>GK Experience, M&D, NYA, Youth Scotland, YouthLink Scotland</p>
<p>NEW: Building Strong Relationships with PAs</p> <p>Description: PA congregations are offered a personal contact approach. Each has a named contact from within the PA core team who has a responsibility to build a strong relationship with that PA. The relationship will be characterised by listening, offering and asking.</p> <p>Outcomes: PA congregations are better supported, work with PA congregations is better co-ordinated, PA congregations have an increased understanding of asset based work with communities</p> <p>Indicators Year 1: 4-15 congregations allocated to each core-team member, first contact established with 64 congregations, 64 congregations encouraged to share learning and ask for support, quarterly core-team</p>	<p>Increase our ability to widen the reach of our support</p> <p>Increase our skills and abilities to develop more effective leaders</p> <p>Increase our ability to take our work to the margins</p>	<p>Team Case-load Approach</p>	<p>FICS, GK Experience,</p>

<p>meetings established to focus on this, system for recording established and reviewed.</p>			
<p>RESHAPED: Annual Conference and Network Development</p> <p>Description: Our annual conference provides an opportunity for PA congregations to network, share learning, and give direction to the work of the Priority Areas Committee. We will offer it in a variety of settings and explore formats and length; varying these in response to identified needs. We will offer regional events aimed at strengthening the network.</p> <p>Outcomes: Increased opportunities for PA congregations to lead on the development of the work</p> <p>Indicators Year 1: Run annual conference – 2nd Big Conversation, 35-40 communities participate in national event, 2-3 networking events held</p> <p>Note of work to be included in operational plan as indicated in GA Report 2017: <i>Priority Area congregations told us at the Big Conversation that they wanted to increase networking opportunities and build up the Priority Areas family. Therefore congregations not currently participating in the Priority Areas network will be contacted to find out more about what they would like in terms of provision and support. Opportunities for sharing learning and skills across the network will be provided to better enable work to be taken to the margins.</i></p>	<p>Increase our ability to widen the reach of our support</p> <p>Increase our skills and abilities to develop more effective leaders</p>	<p>Shirley/John</p>	<p>FiCS, GK Experience, Church of Scotland agencies, external agencies</p>
<p>NEW: Presbytery Planning and Building Relationships with Presbyteries</p> <p>Description: Develop proposals and practice that supports the work of Priority Areas in relation to presbytery planning. Develop strong working relationships with the 14 presbyteries that contain PA congregations.</p> <p>Outcomes: Increased ability of MDS posts to reflect asset based community development practice, increased understanding of nature of work in PAs within presbyteries, increased ability of presbyteries to support PA work</p> <p>Indicators Year 1: Initial paper produced from PA short life working group, 1 focus group session in PA Committee, 2 exploratory meetings with PPTG, 3 meetings of PA working group, development of models/proposal</p> <p>Note of work to be included in operational plan as indicated in GA Report 2017: <i>To extend the reach of Priority Area work presbyteries could establish a ‘fund’ for congregations that are outwith the Priority Area designation, to make application in order to carry out anti-poverty work. The Priority Areas Committee has a lot to bring to the shaping of posts for Priority Areas, especially in the allocation of Ministerial Development Staff as part of existing presbytery planning processes. Making use of secondments could also assist in presbytery planning in relation to</i></p>	<p>Increase our ability to widen the reach of our support</p> <p>Increase our ability to make our structures more straightforward</p>	<p>Shirley/John/Fred</p>	<p>14 PA Presbyteries, Pioneer Ministry, Path of Renewal, PPTG</p>

<p><i>Priority Areas. Exploration of the possibility of creating a pilot hub ministry based on an asset based approach will take place this coming year. This will be a Pioneer Asset Based Ministry model and consideration will be given to the deployment of ministers and MDS, alongside volunteers and partner agencies to trial a different approach to presbytery planning in a Priority Area.</i></p> <p><i>Developing guidelines/criteria to enable congregations to commit to work with marginalised communities.</i></p>			
<p>NEW: Developing New Pilot Programmes/Models/Tools</p> <p>Description: Research and Development will take place throughout the life of the plan so that we continue to seek new approaches to the work.</p> <p>Outcomes: PA congregations are better supported to develop programmes of work <i>with</i> communities and to be more sustainable</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <p>Ideas in development: Asset Based Pioneer Ministry, Interim MDS Project</p>	<p>Across 7 themes</p>	<p>Shirley/John</p>	
<p>NEW: Campaigning, Connecting to Civic Society</p> <p>Description: To enable PA congregations to take part in campaigns that affect local people and communities. To enable PA congregations to make links with local, national government initiatives and to raise awareness of funding streams linked to these initiatives. To enable PA congregations to access UK and Scottish funders.</p> <p>Outcomes: PA congregations are better supported to develop programmes of work <i>with</i> communities and to be more sustainable</p> <p>Indicators Year 1: partner in campaign to tackle job centre closures, 2 partnership meetings with Go For It, work with Poverty Alliance to take part and promote Challenge Poverty Week 2017</p> <p>Note of work to be included in operational plan as indicated in GA Report 2017: <i>Jobcentre closures, development of a campaigning strategy ensuring that the voices of local people are heard. We will continue to develop strong working partnerships with a range of UK and Scottish funders including the Go For It fund. This will enable us to increase Priority Area congregations' awareness of and access to sources of support and funding, and to develop pilot programmes for research funding.</i></p>	<p>Increase our ability to take our work to the margins</p> <p>Increase our ability to tackle the causes of poverty in Scotland</p>	<p>Shirley/Team</p>	<p>Church and Society, FiCS, Poverty Truth Commission, external anti-poverty agencies</p>

<p>RESHAPED: Priority Areas Committee Development</p> <p>Description: Enable the PA Committee to develop understanding, share learning and direct the work. Provide opportunities for learning. Create induction materials.</p> <p>Outcomes: PA Committee is better supported to engage in the work</p> <p>Indicators Year 1 : 5 PA Committee meetings supported, Briefing materials on key areas of work produced to form induction pack, monthly catch up meetings established with Convener and PA Secretary</p>	<p>Increase our ability to take our work to the margins</p> <p>Increase our skills and abilities to develop more effective leaders</p>	<p>Shirley/Lynn</p>	<p>PA Congregations,</p>
<p>RESHAPED: Coordination with Wider Church</p> <p>Description: Actively seek opportunities for partnership working with other councils and agencies within the Church. Build on existing partnerships within our programmes.</p> <p>Outcomes: Increased understanding of church structures for PA congregations, increased ability to access information</p> <p>Indicators Year 1: 2 “surgery” events attracting 16 PA congregations, updated guide – “Letting it Happen” produced in partnership with General Trustees, 1 consultation exercise gathering PA needs, 1 literature review undertaken</p> <p><i>Affirm the commitment of Priority Areas Committee to developing strong partnerships with other relevant Councils and instruct the Council to actively seek ways in which to do this.</i></p> <p><i>Instruct the Priority Areas Committee to establish opportunities for Priority Areas congregations to access information through scheduled surgeries with key bodies within the Church, eg, General Trustees; Stewardship and Finance</i></p> <p><i>Instruct the Council to work with the Council of Assembly to examine the possibility of having a ‘year of jubilee’ for congregations and to report to the General Assembly of 2018.</i></p> <p><i>Priority Area congregations tell us that they have many concerns about their buildings. They are concerned about the state of their buildings, and often the location or size of manses. Congregations seek support in dealing with building maintenance and want the issues to be explored nationally to find ways in which congregations could be freed from the worry of buildings. In our future programmes this will feature as a significant focus.</i></p> <p><i>In 2017, the Priority Areas Committee will undertake a consultation exercise with Priority Area congregations, produce a timetabled action plan breaking this area of work down into specific areas and identify which partners within the Church are best placed to work together with us on each area of structural change. We will undertake a literature review to establish what materials or resources are</i></p>	<p>Increase our ability to widen the reach of our support</p> <p>Increase our ability to make our structures more straightforward</p> <p>Increase our ability to make our buildings work for us, fit for purpose and be community lights</p>	<p>Shirley/John</p>	<p>Council of Assembly, Church Councils</p>

<p><i>available presently to simplify or demystify structures, systems and processes. This will enable us to identify gaps in materials and incorporate the production of guideline materials into the plan.</i></p>			
<p>RESHAPED: Developing Social Enterprise Approaches</p> <p>Description: Explore and promote models of social enterprise, including SRGs, that will enable and support communities to tackle poverty</p> <p>Outcomes: Increased understanding and ability to develop social enterprise models</p> <p>Indicators Year 1: Platform event with WeVolution held attracting minimum 15 PA communities, 3 meetings with social enterprise agencies</p>	<p>Increase our ability to take our work to the margins</p> <p>Increase our ability to tackle the causes of poverty in Scotland</p>	<p>Shirley</p>	<p>WeVolution, Social Enterprise Academy, First Port, CEiS</p>
<p>RESHAPED: Priority Areas Biannual Holiday</p> <p>Description: Work with PA communities to hear what they would want from a holiday experience. Fundraise for support to run this. Provide a holiday experience in response to identified need. Holidays to take place in 2018, 2020, 2022</p> <p>Outcomes: Increased emotional well-being of children and families, increased ability of children and families to have positive social relationships, increased confidence of children and families to take part in social activities</p> <p>Indicators Year 1: Identify 2 funding sources to support 2018 holiday, make application for support, needs and content for holiday developed from evaluative work with families</p>	<p>Increase our ability to take our work to the margins</p>		<p>FiCS, GK Experience, Duncan Carmichael Fund, external funders</p>
<p>EXISTING: Building/Space Management</p> <p>Description:</p> <p>Outcomes:</p> <p>Indicators:</p>		<p>Lynn/Naomi</p>	

Priority Areas Partner Agencies:

We have been developing an outcomes agreement with FICS in the first instance, including a meeting of Conveners/Chair of Board in April to explore partnership development, with the idea that this would be a model for our working relationships with our other partners: theGKexperience and WEvolution.

Existing Initiatives	Strategic Themes
Description: Transformation Team support for congregations and communities through; community mapping and engagement, workshops and training, thematic support such as Aging Well, Food Justice initiatives.	Increase our ability to take our work to the margins Increase our skills and abilities to develop more effective leaders Increase our ability to tackle the causes of poverty in Scotland
Outcome: to increase the capacity and resilience of faith groups, including Church of Scotland Priority Area congregations, in their work with communities	
Indicators Year 1: 45 faith groups will be supported to identify areas of greatest local need, then initiate and sustain anti- poverty projects, 300 people will have taken part in local learning events, of which 10% will be actively involved in a local priority area congregation, 20 faith groups will be supported to establish and develop local initiatives that address issues relating to the impact of welfare reform and the reshaping of care for older people. Through Community Development Programmes; help local groups identify and develop projects or small-steps work that builds community capacity and resilience. We will provide intense to moderate community development support in 20 communities.	
Faith in Throughcare support for prisoners	Increase our ability to take our work to the margins Increase our ability to tackle the causes of poverty in Scotland
Grants delivered through FiSCAF	Increase our ability to take our work to the margins Increase our ability to tackle the causes of poverty in Scotland
Poverty Truth Commission	Increase our ability to take our work to the margins Increase our ability to tackle the causes of poverty in Scotland Increase our skills and abilities to develop more effective leaders
WEvolution development of SRGs	Increase our ability to take our work to the margins Increase our skills and abilities to develop more effective leaders Increase our ability to tackle the causes of poverty in Scotland
GK support for young people	Increase our ability to take our work to the margins Increase our skills and abilities to develop more effective leaders Increase our ability to tackle the causes of poverty in Scotland