



The Church of Scotland Presbytery of Ayr

Registered Scottish Charity No. SC020676

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TO ALL

CONGREGATIONS AND MEMBERS OF PRESBYTERY

Dear Minister / Session Clerk / Member of Presbytery,

The recent General Assembly made some significant decisions about the allocation of ministry posts and future presbytery planning. We have already received calls from congregations anxious to know what this means for them, and what is Presbytery going to do?

To update you briefly:

- General Assembly has suspended all Presbytery Plans from 1st June 2021.
- All Presbyteries must develop a new 'Presbytery Mission Plan' by 31st December 2022.
- General Assembly has agreed a mandatory new allocation of 660 ministry posts nationally.
- We are proposing that the Presbytery of Ayr meets over the summer. At that special meeting we will:
 - o Discuss the basis for the new plan.
 - o Discuss how to allocate ministry to a reduced number of charges.
 - o Agree an indicative timetable.

There are further details in the paper overleaf.

In this time of uncertainty and change, we believe that God still very much has a purpose for us. We pray for the openness, insight and faith to discern what we are all being called to do.

With warmest regards,

Isabell Montgomerie,
Brian Duncan,
David Lewis

Convener of Mission Committee
Vice-convener of Mission Committee
Sub-convener for Presbytery Planning

The Presbytery Mission Plan Act 2021

The General Assembly passed this Act to replace the 2003 Act VII Act anent Appraisal and Adjustment. The title emphasises that the new act is about planning for mission and not just about allocating ministers to charges. Presbyteries are expected to provide a description of their mission, and this must align with a number of criteria listed in the Act.

The first consequence of this Act is that all Presbytery Plans are suspended with effect from 1st June 2021. Transition arrangements allow vacant charges already given permission to call to continue the process but with a deadline of the end of the year to reach the stage of hearing a sole nominee.

Note that Ayr Presbytery suspended its Presbytery Plan in March 2021, and already had no vacant charges with permission to call.

A deadline of 31st December 2022 is set for Presbyteries to have their plans approved. Guidance is given on the content of plans and further guidelines will be provided to Presbyteries by the end of June.

The new plan has mandatory allowances on the number of centrally funded total ministries posts (i.e. Parish Ministers plus Ministries Development Staff) that may be included in each Presbytery Plan. This is generally around a 35-40% reduction on the numbers in current plans. The initial national allocation is 480 Parish Ministers + 120 MDS + 60 vacancies.

Ayr Presbytery has been allocated 24 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) posts.

This is a reduction from both our present 34 FTE posts (32 Parish Ministers + 2 MDS) and the 31 FTE posts (26 Parish Ministers + 5 MDS) envisaged in our 2018 Presbytery Plan.

For clarity - Ministries Development Staff (MDS)

Besides Parish Ministers, there is often a need for other forms of ministry as well, and Ministries Development Staff can be appointed to work alongside the parish minister. These might include parish assistants, young people's and family workers, and other appropriate roles, all of which amounts to a rich variety of skills and talents deployed around the country.

Additional Aspects of the Act

The new Act gives some additional flexibility in how adjustment may be carried out, particularly with regard to team ministry. It provides a new option for small congregations - Local Mission Church - which may be suitable for some rural churches and new church plants. Extra emphasis is placed on providing support in areas of deprivation.

All buildings will be assessed for their potential to contribute to the missional needs of their location and plans for the retention of buildings will need to be agreed with the General Trustees. The General Trustees have a "toolbox" for this exercise and will issue further guidance.

Proposed Presbytery Response

Our proposed initial response is twofold:

1. Presbytery will seek concurrence from the Faith Nurture Forum regarding the split of our 24 posts between Parish Ministry and MDS posts. The proposed split is 19 Parish Ministry posts and 5 MDS posts:
 - 2.5 FTE MDS posts will be allocated to support work in the nationally recognised priority areas of Dalmellington, Patna Waterside, Muirkirk, Ayr: Newton Wallacetown and Ayr: St Quivox.
 - 1 FTE will be retained for the continuation of the Pioneer Farming Ministry.
 - 1 FTE allocated for work on the Barony Campus or for other work in schools.
 - 0.5 FTE unallocated.

The purpose of doing this early is to attempt to secure MDS posts as soon as possible. Ayr Presbytery currently only has 1.5 FTE MDS in post, and the overall limit of 120 MDS posts nationally has almost been reached.

2. Presbytery will meet *in hunc effectum* on Tuesday 10th August specifically to discuss the process of developing the new Presbytery Mission Plan. By that time, it is planned to produce a draft Mission Description in line with the terms of the Act, and to make a preliminary 'default' allocation for the intended deployment of Parish Ministry by the end of the plan period.

If agreed by Presbytery, the default plan will be sent to congregations / parish groupings for their consideration along with a timeline for developing the plan. Two months will be given for local parties to either agree alternative patterns of deployment for their area or accept the default position. Consultation with local parties as to the implementation of the plan will then follow.

Our target will be to submit a final Presbytery Mission Plan to the Faith Nurture Forum by June 2022 ahead of the formation of the Presbytery of South West Scotland (due on or before 30th September 2022). Parts of the plan may be submitted to the Faith Nurture Forum earlier as they become ready, to allow vacancy procedures to commence at the earliest possible opportunity.