



Formartine Churches Together

News Brief No 7

Working Group Meeting (Number 6)

Zoom, Tuesday 8 March 2022, 7:30pm

Greetings from the Formartine Churches Working Group!

The Working Group met on the 8 March 2022, and two things moved our hearts and minds:

1. **First and foremost**, our hearts and minds were moved by the war in Ukraine. Our love and prayers are for a swift end to this war, and for the millions of Ukrainian refugees that are our pouring into the rest of Europe. Lord, help us welcome them as you welcomed us!
2. **The second thing** that weighed on our hearts and minds was the Draft Presbytery Plan, which was presented on Tuesday 1 March 2022, and it's impact on all the churches, and in particular those of us in Area Group 6. There are summary statements on each of the churches' websites, but in short, the Draft Presbytery Plan mentioned this:

Ministry Posts: Going forward, there will be 1 FTE Minister of Word and Sacrament allocated to Area Group 6, which includes the parishes of Methlick, Tarves and Barthol Chapel and Udney & Pitmedden. It should be noted that the process of reducing the current number of FTEMWS, which currently stands at 2, will take place over 5 years. In addition, the Draft Presbytery Plan acknowledges that a team ministry currently exists with an OLM and a locally funded youth worker. The fostering of this team ministry is encouraged in the Draft Presbytery Plan.

Buildings: In terms of buildings, Methlick Church, Tarves Church and Youth Hall and Pitmedden Church are all deemed to be necessary church buildings, but it is suggested that Methlick Stables, Barthol Chapel Church and Udney Green Church are to be sold, let or disposed of within the next 5 years. That said, it was acknowledged that Udney & Pitmedden had already made the difficult decision to sell Udney Green Church.

There is undoubtedly a sense of sadness and loss. Gone are the days of one minister per parish, and some of our cherished church buildings might have to close as well. And before we start a new chapter together, we will make sure to mark with thanksgiving the rich Christian heritage that has been evident in each place.



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That said, the Formartine Churches Working Group has worked hard to develop what it believes to be a positive model of ministry for the future: **A Single-Parish Model**. Technical Groups on Structure and Governance, Ministry and Mission and Finance met over the last number of weeks and the information gathered in these meetings helped to form a proposal that will be going to each Kirk Session for prayerful consideration and approval.

Watch this space! While there are still details to be worked out, it is hoped that the new model will enable ministry to take place together and with a heart for each of our respective communities.

Here are some important dates going forward:

- **March – May 2022** – Kirk Sessions to meet and discuss the Draft Presbytery Plan and the Formartine Churches Working Group's Proposal for a United Parish.
- **3 May 2022** – Gordon Presbytery Meeting - The draft Presbytery Plan will be debated, rejected, amended or approved.
- **May 2022 onwards** - The Formartine Churches Working Group will take decision of the Kirk Sessions and Presbytery, and comments received from our respective communities into consideration into its work on finalising the details of our "Covenant Agreement" and how we will work together.
- **December 2022** – Final Date of a "Covenant Agreement" between our churches to be written and agreed

Conclusion: Communication! Communication! Communication! Again, these updates are not ends in themselves! They are springboards for conversation. Please let us know your thoughts.

Tarves and Barthol Chapel

Rev. Dr. Alison Swindells - aswindells@churchofscotland.org.uk

Udney & Pitmedden

Rev. Anthony Craig - aacraig@btinternet.com

Rev. Sheila Mitchell - SMitchell@churchofscotland.org.uk

Methlick

Rev. Dr. Will Stalder - wstalder@churchofscotland.org.uk

Until we see/speak to one another again, may you know God's love and peace. May God hear our prayers for Ukraine and for our churches and communities!

Rev. Dr. Will Stalder

Minister of Methlick Parish Church

On behalf of the Formartine Area Churches

Friday 11 March 2022