

## How many ministers does it take to change a light bulb?

All joking aside, if you had 600 ministers, how would you allocate them across Scotland, which has a population of around 5,463,300?

If you divided them solely on the basis of population, then it would come to roughly 1 minister per 9,105 people. If you considered other factors, such as geography, economic deprivation and the Church of Scotland's commitment to provide the ordinances of religion across the whole of Scotland, then the numbers might vary.

In order to equally distribute 600 ministers across the whole of Scotland, the Church of Scotland has taken in the above considerations and has allocated a certain number of FTE (Full-Time Equivalent) ministers to each Presbytery. Gordon Presbytery of which we are part, has been allocated 16 ministers. That's a drop of 49% from the previous allocation of 31.4 ministers in 2011. Over the last number of months, the Presbytery Planning Review Group of Gordon Presbytery has been painstakingly trying to figure out how best to allocate these numbers. They presented their Draft Presbytery Plan on 2 March 2022, and this plan can now be viewed on the Presbytery website. This is what it will mean for Barthol Chapel and Tarves and our Formartine Area Grouping with Methlick and Udney Pitmedden

- **Ministry Posts:** Going forward, there will be 1 minister allocated to the parishes of Methlick, Tarves and Barthol Chapel and Udney Pitmedden, which, for those who are curious, has a total population of around 6,253.
- **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 Barthol Chapel Church, Udney Green Church and Methlick Stables, are to be sold, let or disposed of within the next 5 years.

**Conclusion:** There will undoubtedly be a sense of sadness and loss. Gone are the days of one minister per parish. That said, as Christians, we believe that God is never gone from us. Christ remains the head of the church, and so there is hope, even though the landscape of church life will be different. There is a Working Group of the Formartine Area Churches working hard on developing

a sustainable model of ministry for the future. Watch this space for more information and a chance to ask questions and or offer your thoughts and feedback on the situation.

Alison I Swindells (9 March 2022)