



Formartine Churches Together

News Brief No 5

Working Group Meeting (Number 4)

Zoom, Tuesday 18 January 2022, 7:30pm

Summary: As I'm writing this Newsbrief, I'm happy to say that it looks like there is a light at the end of the tunnel with our current wave of the Coronavirus (Omicron Variant). While cases are high in our respective areas and we still need to be vigilant with Covid-19, some of the restrictions we've had to follow since our last Newsbrief are being lifted and, with it, comes a renewed sense of hope and relief! Similarly, while there are a number of difficult conversations that need to be had over the coming weeks and months as we explore what a 'Single Parish Model' might look like for our respective churches and communities, we are confident that there is a Light that will guide us along the way! Jesus says, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). This confidence and hope was definitely evident at our last Formartine Churches Working Group Meeting on the 18 January 2022.

While the establishment of our vision and values is still a work in progress, you can see the hope evident in one of our draft vision statements: "Our vision is to be a growing, worshiping community of God's people, loving God, sharing our faith, serving where we live and learning as we go."

There were three main topics of conversation at the Formartine Churches Working Group Meeting:

1. Discussion of Vision and Values

As intimated above, the establishment of our vision and values (purposes) is still a work in progress, but we are getting really close to adopting a common vision and purpose, which we will then present to the churches and communities. It's a vision of hope. It is mindful of each of our respective churches and communities, and at its heart, has the things that matter most: worship, discipleship, community, service, justice and creation.

2. Discussion of Key Principles and Proposals for a Single Parish Model

As was mentioned in the last Newsbrief (14 December 2021), we are working on the details of what a '**Single Parish Model**' might look like for our respective churches. Over the coming weeks and for our next meeting on the 8 February 2022, we will be working out what our key principles and proposals will be. We will present these principles and proposals to each Kirk Session for discussion and approval (in principal). We will also do

our best to communicate these principles and proposals to the wider church and community (see point three on communication below and watch this space). It should be said at the outset that our hope and prayer and plan is that no single church or community will be lost under the Single Parish Model. The development of the model and the provision of ministry will be carried out with each worshipping community and village in our heart and mind.

In short the document will include the following elements:

- **Vision and Purpose**
- **Situation** of the current Presbytery Plan and the churches included in our grouping
- **Background** to why we're having these discussions, namely the reduction of centrally funded ministry posts across the whole of the Church of Scotland
- **Assessment** which describes the current role of the Working Group
- **Recommendation** which intimates that we believe the 'Single Parish Model' is the most positive, equitable and constructive model for the Formartine Churches
- **Structure** which will detail the ins and outs of what it will mean for 4 congregations uniting to become one Church of Scotland Charge for: membership, eldership, Oscar regulations, ministry, pastoral care, buildings and finance, etc.
- **Ministry** will suggest how the united congregation and communities will be served by the ministers (and Ministry Team) in our given area
- **Finance** will explore how and what finances will be transferred and held on behalf on the new united congregation and what finances might be restricted for particular churches or areas.
- **Fabric** will take the recommendations made by the new Presbytery Plan (to be presented to Presbytery in March 2022) to establish which buildings are best suited for mission and ministry for our respective areas and which buildings will continue to be used, sold or let, in line with the new Presbytery Plan.
- **Technology** will be a key tool for worship, mission and discipleship going forward, and a team of people will be looking at how best to utilise technology in our churches.

3. Communication

Communication! Communication! Communication! These Newsbriefs are not ends in themselves! They are springboards for conversation. We hope that you will raise any questions, ideas or comments you have with your minister or Interim Moderator. These will definitely be fed back to the Working Group. We also hope to provide opportunities for wider communication and consultation in the coming months. These might happen locally, but there also might be wider opportunity for Q&A. Watch this space!

Until we see/speak to one another again, may the Light of Life be our comfort and guide!

Rev. Dr. Will Stalder
Minister of Methlick Parish Church

Rev. Dr. Alison Swindells
Minister of Tarves and Barthol Chapel

Ministers of the Formartine Area Churches
Thursday 20 January 2022