

Netherlee and Stamperland (Church of Scotland)

Kirk Session via Zoom

7.30pm on Monday 19th April 2021

1 CONSTITUTION

Meeting constituted by Rev Scott Blythe with Prayer.

2 SEDERUNT & APOLOGIES

There were 47 Elders present with apologies from 13 Elders as per the Sederunt Sheet.

3 CONFIRMATION OF AGENDA

The draft Agenda was agreed with 1 additional item under AOCB.

4 DISCUSSION TOPIC(S) – *Future worship pattern*

Scott referred to the previous Kirk Session discussion and the resultant second discussion paper. This was a response to previous comments, and an attempt at better proportionality between our two sanctuaries. Scott asked for questions.

Stuart Buchanan asked about rotating Remembrance annually between our two sanctuaries. Scott thought this would be sensible. Niall Illingworth questioned such a rotation as he felt it implied the proposed pattern would be set ad infinitum. Scott restated that the aim is to worship as one united congregation across our two sanctuaries as per the basis of our union. He also made it clear that the proposed pattern would be reviewed after a year. Scott said the question of “going concern viability” in relation to retaining two buildings; as raised by both the Interim Treasurer and the Independent Examiner at our Trustees Meeting last week; is a nettle we need to grasp, but not tonight, nor via Zoom. Scott intimated he would like to form a small working group to look at this issue and prepare questions for the Kirk Session to consider. The intention is not to let this drag on, but Scott felt that as the easing of lock down was going fairly well, perhaps this could be done when we can finally meet together without social distancing (SD). While still have SD measures we will maintain our pattern of dual services – 10am in the Netherlee sanctuary and 11.30am in the Stamperland sanctuary – until we can meet without restriction on numbers, when we will start the new worship pattern if it is approved by the Kirk Session.

Iain Alexander supported the review of our buildings, but learning from his experience with the Netherlee 5yr Planning Group he said there are rarely overnight answers to such issues, and whilst deadlines are necessary it could well take 12/18 months to complete a full review and create a plan.

Marie Wilson stated Covid will impact on the future use of our buildings but this will be hard to project so there will need to be flexibility to respond to trends that emerge.

Diane Levey felt that to help us going forward as one, and in a spirit of unification being careful with wording could help. We are one church with two sanctuaries and two suites of buildings. Norrie Bolton echoed these comments, and supported the proposal which he felt on the whole was fair.

Niall Illingworth asked that alongside the questions for the consideration of the Kirk Session, could the Finance Committee provide financial projections on income and expenditure for say the next 3, 5 and 10 years. Scott thought this would be sensible.

Scott asked if there were any more questions, and there being none asked were we willing to adopt the proposed worship pattern, which would be reviewed one year after it starts? The proposal was passed unanimously with no objections registered.

5 WRITTEN REPORTS

[a] Scott asked the Conveners if they had motions to propose or highlights to mention:

Finance

Stuart Buchanan reiterated our thanks to Ronnie Mair (Interim Treasurer) and Alex Johnston (Independent Examiner) for their diligent work in preparing the Annual Accounts for 2020.

Referring to the February report Stuart highlighted the following:

- The deficit at the end of February is £5,711, £5,967 down on budget and £10,189 down on previous year. As the first two months of 2020 were Covid free therefore a direct comparison is not appropriate. Hopefully with our two sets of buildings beginning to open up from the end of March the financial results if not improving will not deteriorate further.
- Ronnie has now passed his 2021 files together with the Data Developments software to our new Treasurer, Lawrence Renn.

Helen Illingworth asked how to pass receipts to the new Treasurer. Scott said Lawrence has keys and will visit his pigeon hole within the Netherlee building on a Monday, the day when he works for us. Connell Cranston asked can we email him receipts. Scott said yes, and his details will be supplied as and when required from the Church Office.

Fabric

Iain Alexander presented two items for approval:

(1) Manse garden (Scott removed himself temporarily from the meeting)

Seven contractors have been contacted to price the proposed upgrade of the Manse garden as it is not safe for young children and aesthetically is in a sorry state. S&D Home Improvements is the preferred quote, amounting to £9,478 for the rear and £6,319 for the front. Whilst theirs is not the lowest price, the committee feels that S&D's general approach and understanding of the requirements is superior to other quotes. Other examples of S&D's work are known to be of high quality. In addition, other contractors, who are unable to carry out the work until late in the year due to a full order book, have confirmed that S&D's price is at the level they would expect. Approval is therefore sought to accept this quotation

Anne Mann asked if the prices were inclusive of VAT. Iain said yes, commenting that figures quoted in the Fabric report are always inclusive of VAT where appropriate.

Pat McKenzie told us that she has neighbours who have used S&D and they were very happy with the quality of the work.

Niall Illingworth felt it was a lot of money and asked what the driver was behind the upgrade. Iain repeated the garden not safe for young children and aesthetically is in a sorry state. The upgrade will make it safer, more pleasant and enhance the value of the Manse. Iain agreed it was a sizeable sum but that the Fabric committee were comfortable it was a reasonable price for the job. Glenda Cook concurred from her experience that the price seemed reasonable, as did Anne Mann.

John Montgomery asked if the VAT was recoverable, as Allan Mathieson had achieved this previously. Iain responded that unfortunately no, that only applied to the church buildings.

Stuart asked if there were any more questions, and there being none asked were we willing to accept the proposal for the upgrade of the Manse garden. The majority of those present agreed.

(2) Netherlee roof project (Scott re-joined the meeting)

A quotation has been received from NDM, quantity surveyors, to prepare a detailed cost estimate for the roof repair works. The quotation amounts to £2,340. The cost estimate will be required to support grant funding applications for the roofing works. Approval is sought to accept this quotation. Should the main works proceed, NDM would seek a fee of 3.25% of the works contract value for preparing a bill of quantities, administering the tender process, assessing the contractor's payments and providing financial reports.

Stuart Buchanan asked, in simple terms does this have to happen to allow us to progress the project? Iain replied yes it does, both in terms of applying for any funding support and completing the job should we decide to do actually do it.

Niall Illingworth questioned why we are spending this money. First we need the vision of what we want to do, after which we decide what we need, including buildings. Why spend this when might not have the Netherlee building. In response Tony Ireland repeated that this needs to done to get to the quote that will tell us what needs done and how much it will cost. That figure and the level of Grant Aid funding (for which this expense is needed to access) will be key drivers for the Kirk Session in our discussions about our future. Prudence dictates we need to identify the extent and cost of the problem. Iain commented that he understood Niall's view, and admitted we have avoided the problem for too long. Tony has grasped the nettle, and we are benefitting from his expertise in this area. We need clarity on the extent of the problem and the associated costs.

Scott asked if there were any more questions.

Alan Fairlie asked if we engage now when do get the report. Tony hoped by the June Kirk Session.

Scott asked if there were any more questions, and there being none asked were we willing to accept the proposal to engage NDM (Quantity Surveyors). The majority of those present agreed. Niall Illingworth registered his objection. The proposal was carried.

Planning & Communication

Diane Levey has written to all our church organisations about projected dates for events with the idea of creating a church calendar and avoiding clashing dates. The response has been slow to date – too early? – due to Covid? The intention is to extend the invitation for feedback to the whole congregation. So anyone here tonight with things planned – please get in touch – thank you.

Insurance

Our Interim Treasurer, who should really have stopped working for us by now, reports that we are insured, and advises us that the renewal is due in May.

Presbytery

Alistair Gow reported that he had circulated a paper from the Chief Executive of the Church of Scotland.

[b] Scott asked the Trustees if they had any further questions. There were none.

[c] Scott asked the Trustees if they accepted all the reports as presented. The majority of those present agreed.

6 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING(S)

Kirk Session minute of 01/02/2021 was approved, following a minor amendment to point [c] at the bottom of page 1 proposed by Norrie Bolton.

7 ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

Alastair Graham wishes to raise some points on the issue of “going concern viability” that was raised by both the Interim Treasurer and the Independent Examiner at our Trustees Meeting last week, which he feels will to some extent dictate what we do in the future.

- (i) Currently we have healthy reserves, but if we spend them on a new roof at Netherlee they will be significantly reduced.
- (ii) Should we consider the asset that is the former Stamperland Manse, as my understanding is that a sale value of say £400,000 (10% going to CoS) would leave us with £360,000 (with the General Trustees) for us to draw of for spend on property.
- (iii) Realising the asset would result in the loss of £12,000 annual rental income.
- (iv) Happy to volunteer to be in the group being formed to look at this issue.

Alistair Gow confirmed that the point (ii) was correct.

Scott asked Alastair Graham did he want to make this a proposal, or was his intention to place it on the table for further discussion. Alastair was happy with the latter, so no proposal.

Scott reminded us from our Elders’ Conference (March 2020) our vision included serving our people and our community with two sanctuaries and two suites of rooms and halls. Then along came Covid! Scott wants to start a positive discussion, a process of constructive discussion. The working party could meet a few times over say May to August, with the Kirk Session considering the questions raised by them in September. Anyone interested please email Scott or Stuart.

Tony Ireland added a caveat over the concerns expressed by the Interim Treasurer and Independent Examiner. Spending our reserves is not the only option. We will be seeking Grant Aid and fund raising is another alternative.

Alan Fairlie and Marie Wilson both commented that within our model and/or process we need to be aware of changes happening within Presbytery and our National Church.

Scott intimated this year he has the opportunity to be a Commissioner at the General Assembly and will feed information into the mix.

8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING(S)

- Kirk Session at 7:30pm on Monday 7th June via Zoom or in sanctuary near you? (TBC).
- Group and Committee meetings as per schedules issued.

9 CLOSE

The meeting was closed with all present saying the Grace.

APPENDIX DISCUSSION NOTE(S)

ANNEX WRITTEN REPORTS PRESENTED TO THE MEETING

Scott Blythe
Minister

Stuart Buchanan
Session Clerk