

Netherlee and Stamperland Church

Kirk Session at Stamperland

7.30pm on Monday 18th October 2021

1 CONSTITUTION

Meeting constituted by Rev Scott Blythe with Prayer.

2 SEDERUNT & APOLOGIES

There were 51 Elders present with apologies from 15 Elders as per the Sederunt Sheet.

3 CONFIRMATION OF AGENDA

The draft Agenda was agreed with 6 additional items under AOCB.

4 DISCUSSION TOPIC(S) – *roof (N) & feasibility (S) projects – also see Appendix A*

Scott began the meeting by setting the scene for where we are. There are concerns over our purpose and trajectory, with potential building costs in excess of £1.4m, and a congregation struggling to attract people to new roles; e.g. Session Clerk, Treasurer, Fabric Convenor, Elders, and volunteers to help in general. We are forecasting a deficit of approximately £10-15k, and coupled with the uncertainty caused by the Mission Plan process, one can understand why it is not easy for us to make difficult decisions. We need to clarify a number of important points –

(1) We need to commit to working as one parish over our “new” geography and in acceptance of this consider our overall purpose.

- Scott acknowledged that the next Presbytery Plan is in front of us, but right now, what is it we want to do? Two options to consider –
 - **Option 1 – rearrange everything into a new parish structure**
 - **Option 2 – carry on with the existing structures**
- Scott asked Session to form small groups for discussion and then provide feedback –
 - Hard to get the members on our journey as many restrict access from Elders.
 - Congregation struggling to attract new members.
 - Choosing a new name would give us a new identity and a fresh start.
 - Maintaining two buildings is not financially sustainable.
 - Presbytery Plan will not stop us becoming “one” – like idea of a new name.
- **Scott intimated he wished to go for Option 1, and asked Session “who is with me?”**
The majority of those present indicated their agreement in choosing Option 1.

(2) Now let us take a moment and about what our church is for?

- Scott thinks we exist to provide a place for traditional worship, for community and care of members, and to provide service and care for our community. Two options to consider –
 - **Option 1 – carry on trying to replicate former tasks and missions**
 - **Option 2 – focus on a clear selection of missionary commitments**
 - This could be for a period of time, say 3 years, and could include –
 - Continuing with ministry to dementia.
 - Starting a lunch service for the lonely and isolated.
 - Keeping up with Christian Aid and Tear Fund.
 - Seeking ways to work with families in our area.
 - Committing ourselves to work in poor areas e.g. LHM & Cranhill.

- Scott asked Session to form small groups for discussion and then provide feedback –
 - Mixed views on dropping some current of our current commitments –
 - Some say no need to – we just need to publicise them better to both the communities within the congregation so they are better aware of them.
 - Others say we are spread too thin, and will need to find leadership and volunteers for new projects such as lunch service for the lonely and isolated.
 - Would the implementation of the Presbytery Plan undermine or disrupt our work.
 - Always better to do a few things well rather than many badly.
 - If we are good at raising and giving money that is OK.
 - Could we find out what our community would want from our church?
- **Scott thought the final point above was a good idea, and we could use the information gathered at an Elder's Conference to help plan what we might do.**

(3) We now must turn our attention to the subject of our buildings.

- The roof project at Netherlee as previously reported is projected to be very close to £1m. The re-configuration of the Stamperland sanctuary is thought to be in the region of £300-400k. So it is beyond doubt that the issues surrounding our buildings and the potential solutions are going to cost large amounts of money. Up to the Union we had yearly rental income of between £30-40k, and then came Covid-19. Whilst things are improving, we budgeted £22k for this year but currently are predicting a deficit of £5-6k against this figure. Unless we can create additional income via further hall use or by other means, we have to accept that this is a cost that is unsustainable.
 - **Option 1 – We only invest in one building going forward, whilst doing the best to make money out of the other building**
 - **Option 2 – We move to just one building to save costs**
- Scott asked Session to form small groups for discussion and then provide feedback –
 - Do we know which building has the greatest potential to generate income?
 - Complex question – many variables – simple answer – we do not know.
 - Could another agency be found (?) to take over responsibility for one of our buildings that would allow us (for rent) access to a space for worship (and other activities)?
 - Church café and/or community facilities developed to generate income tend to work well in deprived areas where there is often little competition. We are located in an affluent area surrounded by many options for hall rental and getting a cup of coffee and cake. Additionally would it be run by volunteers or paid staff.
 - Closing one of our buildings will result in collateral damage to our membership.
 - We need to stop procrastinating and make a decision on this subject as it is taking up too much time at too many meetings.
 - Lots of plans for various works in this building – will it get done?
- **Scott agreed that a decision is needed and soon. He proposed a small working group (only 5/6 folk) to review the issue and present their decision to Session in December with a view to sharing it with the congregation in January 2022.**

Before seeking volunteers for this task, Scott asked Tony Ireland for an update on the Netherlee roof project –

We are at a crossroads and are contemplating important decisions.

I will begin with a brief summary of the Netherlee roof story to explain the background. 2009 – Quinquennial report mentions the water ingress in the South Aisle and above the Pulpit – no action taken. 2014 – Northern Steeplejacks check the whole roof and recommendations addressed by McMaster except for masonry work which includes the two crosses. 2016 – Structural engineers report on the South Aisle buttress movement and water ingress. 2019 – Architect makes identical comments and recommendations which include the statement “a new roof will be required”.

If we take a look around the local area many of the properties are at the same “age and stage” and a new roof is the solution. As Trustees we have a higher responsibility than a normal home owner to maintain our property for those who will come after us. This repair has been ignored for a long time.

We have been pursuing Grant Aid from 11 sources. 2 failed right at the start of the process. 4 have proved successful totalling £50,000. The application to Historic Environment Scotland for £200,000 has been declined. While the official refusal letter is still to come we suspect the reason will be our substantial reserves. There are 4 outstanding applications - £5,000-10,000 / £20,000 / £5,000 / £60,000.

With regard to Glasgow Presbytery; Scott Blythe, Stuart Buchanan and myself have met with the Building Officer and Property Convener and they believe the repairs are essential and that Presbytery will approve them.

The next steps, for which I am seeking approval from Session, will be firstly to ask Loader Monteith (Conservation Architects) to provide a full specification of the work to allow the tender process to begin. Secondly I am asking the Finance Committee to begin the process of raising the required finance.

Presbytery Property next meets on 26/10/21 with the full Presbytery meeting on 09/11/21.

It is important that I point out the consequence of not agreeing in principle to this –

- We will have to return the Grant Aid funds already received, and withdraw from the outstanding 4 applications.
- This is likely to cause us reputational damage – as Trustees for not fixing the problem and within the small world of the Grant Aid community.

I would also like to put on record my personal view –

- This is an enhanced duty we as Trustees have in this situation, and as such we should proceed with this work so that we leave a legacy not a liability.
- It is similar to the electrical work in our Stamperland building when there was no argument over essential work. I accept that the costs (roof v electrical) are not comparable, but the context of essential work is the same.
- We have the resources and conservation obligation to fix this, otherwise the fabric of this building will only deteriorate and the cost of repairing it will only increase.
- Finally, we should test the ability of the Stamperland buildings over say the next 2 years to see if we can improve the use as a community hub to generate income.

Scott thanked Tony for his efforts and asked Session for any comments or questions –

- We need more information on the costs of reconfiguring Stamperland (2).
 - Scott replied we have asked for the feasibility study to be done, but are waiting for a Designed to Succeed member of staff to have availability. As stated earlier they have already suggested a ball park figure of £300-400k to do the work in the sanctuary. Any work on improving wider access would be additional.
- The deadline seems very close with Presbytery, could we say maybe rather than yes/no – how quickly could we get further information on the feasibility project on Stamperland?
- If we sell the surplus manse where does the money go?
 - Scott commented that it would be held by the General Trustees in Edinburgh on our behalf. Currently such monies can only be drawn done for spending on property.
- This work is essential and has to be done.
- It is disappointing that we are not doing this work in tandem with the feasibility study.

Scott began to question whether we could decide on the roof this evening when a significant proportion of the Session intimated by acclamation that they were ready to do so.

Scott reminded Session of Tony's proposal, and then asked those in favour to stand (30 counted), followed by those against to stand (18 counted), and finally for any abstentions to stand (1 counted). As more voted yes than no, Scott indicated the proposal was approved.

Scott asked Session for any comments or questions –

- Does this include the sale of the surplus manse to underwrite costs?
 - Scott replied yes it does, and this was approved at the previous Session.
- With £1m in our funds surely there is no rush to sell the manse?
 - John Montgomery (Finance Convener) commented that only £570k of our funds is "unrestricted" and thus potentially available.
- Will the sale of the surplus manse be delayed by Covid regulations?
 - The lease has a 2 month notice period, but currently government Covid regulations have extended that to 6 months. The Finance Committee will factor this into their planning.

Bringing this part of the Session to a close Scott asked for volunteers for the small group mentioned earlier to review our buildings. John Montgomery, Norrie Bolton, Tony Ireland, Helen Illingworth, John Currer and Evelyn Graham volunteered.

Steven Owens asked if there was a mechanism to record dissent against the decision taken this evening. Scott replied yes, and Marie Owens, Alastair Graham, Niall Illingworth and Karen Cramb asked for their names to be added to Steven's.

5 WRITTEN REPORTS

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

- John Montgomery (Finance Convener) intimated that the deficit at August 2021 was £14,009.

Scott asked the Trustees if they had any questions. There were none.

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 06.09.2021 was approved.

7 ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

1 – **Cones** – Hopefully the Minibus will return during November, and in the meantime for those using cars to transport others to church, can the Duty Team please start placing traffic cones to ensure suitable parking is available – thank you.

2 – **Coffee** – first few weeks after Sunday worship working well and enjoyed by many – thanks to Barbara Cochrane for organising – please all consider volunteering to help with the rota to share the workload, and encourage others too, this is open to everyone – no experience necessary.

3 – **Communion** – numerous positive comments about how this went in September, especially re Scott serving folks less able in the pews. Seeking permission to repeat at Stamperland in December. The majority of those present agreed. Further review in 2022 if Covid rules change.

4 – **Hybrid Zoom** – update on question previously asked but not reported back on –

(a) Majority stated preference to return to face to face Session meetings – which we have done so far this session, perhaps all the important when discussing “difficult” issues?

(b) Significant number did suggest use of Zoom in depths of winter – so maybe in February?

(c) True hybrid would be face to face meeting for some coupled with some taking part remotely on a screen, like they did in the House of Commons. Neil Planner currently exploring.

5 – **Booster jags** – Helen Illingworth reports some members being asked to travel quite a distance to get their booster Covid jags and thus being put off attending. If you are interested in offering such folk lifts please contact Helen directly.

6 – **Tear Fund** – I forgot to collect this at the last meeting – please remember to collect at all group and committee meetings. In response to those who have become cashless thru’ Covid like Bruce Young, or keeps forgetting like me, then you could do what I did and set up a Direct Debit of £2 per month to the church labelled Tear Fund.

8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING(S)

- Kirk Session at 7:30pm on Monday 7th February 2022 at Netherlee.
- Group and Committee meetings as per schedules issued.

9 CLOSE

The meeting was closed with all present saying the Grace.

Appendix A – Some Thoughts for Discussion

Scott Blythe
Minister

Stuart Buchanan
Session Clerk

Session Meeting

Some Thoughts for Discussion

Where we are

- Concern over our purpose and trajectory
- Building Costs in principle in excess of £ 1.4 Million
- A congregation struggling to attract people to new roles and volunteering (e.g. Session Clerk, Treasurer, Fabric Convenor, elders, volunteer help)
- Deficits of approx. £ 10 - 15 K
- Frustration with 'time to make decisions'
- Uncertainty of Mission Plan Process

Results of all of This

- Uncertain trajectory and demarcation of roles and willingness to help in what is seen 'as other building'
- People struggling to do what they can as they cannot develop anything new as unsure of what help will be there

What we need to Clarify

- We need to commit ourselves to the task of being 'one parish for a new geography'
- We cannot continue to seek to divide mission and purpose across two former congregations. We need to accept that we are now one church and begin to function as one community
- Options: (1) We rearrange everything (districts, magazine distribution, etc.) into new parish structure and commit ourselves to working together regardless of building or task (2) We carry on as we are currently doing – utilising existing former structures

What we need to Clarify

- We need to recognise that as a church we exist to provide a place for worship, for community and care of members, and provide service and care for the community surrounding us.
- Options: (1) We can carry on trying to replicate former tasks and missions. (2) We can decide to focus on clear missionary commitments for periods of time (3 years) - e.g. Continue ministry to Dementia, Start lunch service to lonely and isolated, keep up with Christian Aid/Tearfund, Seek ways to work with families in area, possibly commit ourselves to working in very poor areas (Lodging House Mission, Starchild, Cranhill/UPA Commitment etc.)

What we need to Clarify

- Issues surrounding buildings and costs – buildings are going to continue to cost large amounts of money.
- Unless we can create some income generation via ‘further hall use’ or ‘other means of income’ I think we have to accept that this is a cost that is unsustainable.
- Options: (1) To agree that we will invest in only one building going forward, whilst doing best to make money out of second building
(2) We move to one building to save costs