

## **Presbytery Meeting Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2015 Summary**

The December meeting of Presbytery at Holburn West Parish Church was the last at this venue in the current session. The business included the following:

### **Sacro Mediation Service**

Irene Reid, Team Leader, Safeguarding Communities – Reducing Conflict (Sacro) Mediation Service, spoke about the work of Sacro, a Scottish community justice organisation which works to create safer and more cohesive communities across Scotland. Sacro in Aberdeen is funded by Aberdeen City Council and is free to users. Since 1998 it has dealt with over 2,500 cases in Aberdeen with an 85% success rate.

Sacro mediators are trained and experienced people in dispute resolution aimed at mutual agreement. The service is confidential and solutions to cases are not suggested but have to come from the participants.

Disputes commonly involve, for example, noise, antisocial abusive behaviour or property boundaries. The police, housing departments, advice agencies, solicitors and community workers all recommend Sacro to people.

### **Kenya Deployment**

Presbytery received a report about his Kenya deployment from The Rev Louis Kinsey, Army Reserve Chaplain at the British Army Training Unit Kenya (BATUK) from April – October 2015. BATUK delivers world class training to 12,000 personnel annually in demanding, challenging countryside in basic facilities and very high temperatures.

Louis was the first army padre or chaplain to be deployed at BATUK and the commander was hugely appreciative of the contributions made by Louis which had included services held at the war memorial at the request of various army units to commemorate comrades killed in Afghanistan and Iraq. Communion services and bible study were held with the expatriate community.

400 second hand bibles from Aberdeen and other congregations had been distributed and gratefully accepted by the native population.

Amongst the lessons Louis reckoned he had learned was you can do more than you think you can with God's help.

### **Ministry and Mission Contribution 5% Retention**

A Working Group comprising the Conveners of the Congregational Stewardship, Congregational Support, Ministries, Planning & Deployment and Visitation & Oversight Committees had drafted a discussion paper

exploring how Presbytery might best use the proportion it is permitted to retain from its annual Ministries and Mission contribution in a strategic way to address the opportunities and challenges facing congregations in Aberdeen over the next five years. In 2016 that proportion will be 5% (£83k).

Presbytery has considerable discretion as to how it uses this allowance. The national guidelines suggest reducing a congregation's contribution if they are engaged in an imaginative local mission project requiring considerable expenditure; if they have increased their income through a stewardship or other programme; if they wish to employ an additional member of staff for an initiative Presbytery wants to support; or if they are facing major expenditure on a building repair.

Presbytery:

- Agreed to forward the discussion paper to Kirk Sessions
- Invited Kirk Sessions to discuss the paper and to return their responses to the Presbytery Office by 31 March 2016.
- Requested the Working Group to present a further report with recommendations for consideration by Presbytery at its meeting on 3 May 2016.

### **Partnerships with the Worldwide Church**

The Church, Society and World Mission Committee is keen to know of any partnerships that congregations currently have with congregations in other parts of the world. Conscious of the prominence of the Malawi Project and of the St George's Tillydrone connection with Uganda, it would be helpful for the committee to know of other connections with churches, Christian agencies or individuals working in other parts of the world. The committee believe there is much to learn from the worldwide church, many lessons which congregations in Presbytery are already learning and from which all Presbytery would benefit.

Presbytery encouraged all congregations and Guilds to advise the committee on existing partnerships with the worldwide church through the Presbytery Office by the 31<sup>st</sup> of December so that some of the stories can be showcased in the New Year.

### **Bikeathon**

The Bikeathon project was launched in November 2015 with a target of at least 12,000 sponsored miles, the distance calculated to cycle from Aberdeen to Blantyre. The idea was that individuals could be sponsored for a set number of cycled miles, either outside or on stationary cycles set up in churches. Ministers were asked to take the lead.

The response by the December meeting had been overwhelming. The Malawi Partnership Committee was pleased to report several congregations had already begun their particular efforts with some taking to their bikes and others giving their support by sponsoring them. In November MSP Lewis MacDonald cited the efforts of Presbytery in the

Scottish Parliament. . Also, articles had appeared in local papers and Highlands and Islands papers describing the event.

Presbytery commended the efforts of congregations currently involved in the Bikeathon and invited other congregations to take up this challenge and become involved in whichever way they can by biking or sponsoring.

### **Queen's Cross**

Presbytery:

- Noted the intention to redevelop the Queen's Cross Church building in order to enhance outreach to its parish and ensure that the congregation provides improved facilities for its members and the local community.
- Noted that a funding proposal is in place for the project and that the estimated cost of £1.2M will not be exceeded.
- Approved the Queen's Cross Redevelopment Proposal at a cost of £1.2M

Queen's Cross currently have a number of service users and their needs have been taken into consideration when developing the proposed plan. One of these is the Congregation's own daytime nursery. It has been established that the current facilities will likely fall short of Care Commission requirements in the future, and this will be addressed in the plan by providing the youngsters with a safe, secure, and self-contained unit with upgraded toilet and storage facilities.

The current coffee lounge is to be revamped and will operate as a Social Enterprise Coffee House with a mixture of paid and voluntary staff. It is intended that it will operate from 8am – 4pm and will also include a takeaway menu.

Other areas of the building which have not been accessed for some considerable time will be re-instated to allow easy access by users

### **Annual Inspection of Records**

For many years the patterns of work within Aberdeen Presbytery had been to ask each minister, along with an elder, to visit a congregation to go through the Record Books, making sure they were being kept appropriately.

In June Presbytery agreed that from 2016 each congregation would be asked to bring the Record Books to a central meeting place on an advertised date when a panel will review these Books as per the new Inspection of Records Form.

The December meeting noted that the annual Inspection of Congregational Records would take place on Wednesday 24th February 2016 in the Cowie Room at Mastrick Parish Church and that time slots

would be issued for all congregations to make appointments in due course.

### **Visit of Moderator of the General Assembly**

Presbytery noted that the Moderator of the General Assembly will be making the annual visit to the University of Aberdeen on the weekend of February 5th – 7th and that the Presbytery Service will take place on Friday February 5th at 7.30 pm at Holburn West Church at which Long Service Certificates will be presented.