

**Presbytery Meeting Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2016  
Summary**

The October Presbytery meeting was in the familiar setting of Queen's Cross Parish Church and amongst the business was the following:

**NHS Grampian Chaplaincy**

Presbytery was addressed by Rev Mark Rodgers, Lead Chaplain/Head of Services, NHS Grampian. He started 17 years ago, largely at Woodend but is now mainly at Foresterhill. Since 2007 he has been employed directly by the NHS. During the 17 years, the only constant has been change.

Hospital chaplains provide spiritual, emotional and pastoral care in all the hospitals in NHS Grampian. They are available for patients, relatives, carers, visitors and staff and for people with or without specified religious beliefs. As well as the chaplains there are 26 volunteer visitors.

Though mostly on hospital sites they are also responsible for care at 5 GP practices in Aberdeen where chaplains and visitors provide a listening service.

The chaplains are currently involved in helping to produce a mass casualty plan should a major incident occur.

The Hospital Chapels at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, Aberdeen Maternity Hospital and Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital are open day and night for the use of patients, relatives and staff as places of quiet for prayer and meditation.

**Aberdeen City Council Education Representative**

The Rev Eddie McKenna reported on his time as representative on the Aberdeen City Council Education and Children's Services Committee and referred to the "Guide to Good Practice for Church of Scotland Representatives on Local Authority Education Committees" which he had attempted to follow.

Since 1872 the Church of Scotland had been granted a statutory role as part of the education authority of the day and Eddie had seen it as a privilege to serve but after 4 years had decided to step down for a number of reasons including becoming Interim Moderator at Cove and that another should have the chance to be involved in what he had found a fascinating experience. As one of three church representatives from different denominations who had been given excellent training by the Council, he gained an insight into national and local government and the three, being independent, were valued by the councillors.

During his time on the Committee Eddie was involved in helping to resolve closures of schools and teacher recruitment and staffing issues with 17 schools in Aberdeen currently having an acting head. He appreciated the relationships built up with councillors and officials and recommended being a representative on the Education Committee as a fantastic opportunity for someone else to take on.

**Baby Ashes Tragedy Service**

The Rev Hugh Wallace, Convener of the Presbytery Church, Society and World Mission Committee reported that Aberdeen Churches Together (ACT) are to hold a service at 3 pm on Sunday 6th November at the Kirk of St Nicholas Uniting for those affected by past practices at Aberdeen Crematorium. Discovery was made that prior to 2013 and possibly going back to 1996 a practice of cremating the bodies of children under two years of age with an adult had been taking place. Parents of children under two were advised that there would be no ashes from the process.

ACT believes that there needs to be a way forward for everyone involved, and the purpose of the service is to offer space, time and a place where painful emotions can be laid down and the beginnings of a process of healing can begin. They believe that the great compassion of God can reach to the depths of every heart, soul and mind and bring peace and consolation.

Presbytery commended to the prayers of all congregations the families and others affected by the

Baby Ashes scandal.

### **Congregation Constitutions**

The Presbytery Business and Finance Committee requested all members of Presbytery to draw attention to the General Assembly 2016 deliverance of the Legal Questions Committee regarding congregational constitutions which reads as follows: *Instruct that from 1 January 2017 the only form of constitution which congregations may adopt and which may be granted by the Delegation of the General Assembly shall be the Unitary Constitution and urge those congregations constituted in terms of the Model Deed and other forms of constitution to adopt the Unitary Constitution.*

If a congregation had not yet moved to the Unitary Constitution, further information may be sourced at the following address -

[http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/22600/Unitary-Constitution-Guidelines.pdf](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/22600/Unitary-Constitution-Guidelines.pdf).

A congregational meeting to approve moving to the Unitary Constitution must be called for that purpose only.

### **City Centre**

The Presbytery Planning and Deployment Committee (PDC) wished to move forward with plans for the City Centre and to this end it proposed that a Review Group led by two members of PDC be set up with, if possible, a representative from each of the following Presbytery Committees:- Congregational Stewardship, Congregational Support, Church Society and World Mission, Ministries and Property.

The remit for the Group would be to update factual changes to Ian McIver's report of March 2014 (available on the Presbytery website under the heading Resources), to propose a justifiable geographical definition for the City Centre, to define the mission to the City Centre given its uniqueness, and to consider how the Church of Scotland can best minister and fulfil its mission to such a geographical area.

Presbytery approved the proposal to set up a City Centre Review Group with the Group to report to Presbytery in October 2017.

### **Queen Street Parish Church**

Presbytery noted that the Planning and Deployment Committee had agreed that there should be no change to the status of Queen Street Church and that, in accordance with the Presbytery Plan, the congregation could proceed to call a minister on the basis of an Unrestricted Call.

The Rev Duncan Eddie was appointed as Interim Moderator with immediate powers to deal with any matters affecting the prospective vacancy and with powers to act in every respect from the date of the retirement of the Rev Dr Graham Deans on April 30<sup>th</sup> 2017.

### **Syrian Refugees**

An additional 37 refugees were due to arrive in Aberdeen from Syria (23 children and 14 adults). Some had arrived by the time of the Presbytery meeting and received a warm welcome including from Syrians already in Aberdeen to whom a child had been born a few weeks previously. There was continuing support offered through Mastrick, Woodside, and City of God churches and the Citadel (drop-in).

There were three events being organised:

Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> October - "Getting to know you" event to give information on Syrian culture, history and the present conflict. Running from 10am – 3pm at the Citadel.

Welcome to the Refugees and Awards Ceremony was being organized to celebrate the many volunteers who have and still are contributing to making the first wave of refugees adjust to their

new home in Aberdeen. This event was hoped to take place soon after the arrival of the new refugees.

Safeguarding and Volunteer Training for those wishing to play a continued role in the integration of the Syrians into the city. A date was still to be confirmed.

Presbytery commended the ongoing support of volunteers from congregations in helping the welcome and integration of Syrians into Aberdeen.

The Presbytery Business and Finance Committee again intimated that for those wishing to make a donation to support the Syrian Refugees arriving in Aberdeen, to consider accessing the NESCU (the North East Scotland Credit Union) donations account of which the Presbytery of Aberdeen has set up. Cheques should be made payable to North East Scotland Credit Union Ltd. and sent to their Head Office, 24 Victoria Road, Aberdeen, AB11 9DR. Donations can also be made by bank transfer or on-line transfer quoting the following:- Sort Code: 60-83-01, Account No: 20139906, Our Ref: 10020/1. Please remember to include the name of the person/congregation making the payment for on-line transfers.

### **Church of Scotland Funeral Celebrants**

Having completed a period of training organised by Anne Smith, Congregational Learning Facilitator and been recommended by the Presbytery Congregational Support Committee Presbytery recognised as Church of Scotland Funeral Celebrants, Susan McDonald and Yvonne Haig. Both were currently expecting primarily to serve within their own local context.

The committee sought to make clear to all congregations that should a Funeral Celebrant be asked to lead a funeral service in place of their minister/locum taking that service, then they should be offered, as reiterated at the last General Assembly, a pulpit supply fee for doing so.

### **Meeting for Congregational Property Conveners and Session Clerks**

The Presbytery Property Committee had become aware that proper practice and procedure for approaching sizeable fabric works was not always carried out by Kirk Sessions and Congregational Property Committees. This was not intended as a criticism but was a situation which may have arisen through lack of understanding. The committee also wished to brief congregational representatives on what was required at the annual inspection of property records as this involves some updating as well as confirming the current practice for keeping records.

Presbytery encouraged Congregational Property Conveners and Session Clerks to attend one of the meetings for Congregational Property Conveners and Session Clerks at either High Hilton Church Hall on Tuesday 15th November or Cults Church on Wednesday 16th November at 7.00 pm.

### **“On the Road” Roadshow**

Presbyters were reminded of the Council of Assembly “On the Road” Roadshow event entitled “Listening, Sharing, Planning”. Leaders from the Church of Scotland are running a series of day and evening events across the country. The purpose of the roadshow is to listen to ideas and to share thinking about the future direction of the ministry and mission of the Church of Scotland. Day events will run from 11.00am-3.00pm and evening events from 6.30pm - 9.30pm on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> October at Queen’s Cross Church. Registration is accessed at the following web address -<http://churchofscotland.eventbrite.com>. Alternatively, those without internet access may register through the Presbytery Office on 01224 698119.

### **Presbytery also:**

- Noted that the application for Transition Ministry at Cove had not been accepted by the Ministries Council.

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- Agreed to apply to OSCR for a change of use to the Melville Carden Place Fund in order to change its purpose from 'church extension' to 'supporting the development of new congregations and Ministries'.
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- Noted that powers were used, following consultation with the Property Committee, to grant St Stephen's Church permission to undertake urgent repairs to the hall roof at a cost of approximately £47,000 including VAT.
- Warmly congratulated the Rev Jim Weir on the attainment of the semi Jubilee of his Ordination on 30<sup>th</sup> October 1991.
- Welcomed the success of the Living Well Cafes currently operating in Newhills and Oldmachar congregations and the prospect of two new cafes in the near future in other parts of the city.
- Noted that Aberdeen City Council is now allowing congregations to have only one black refuse bin as congregations are to be classed as domestic and not commercial properties and invited the Convener of the Business and Finance Committee to write to Aberdeen City Council to express the concern of Presbytery about this new policy.