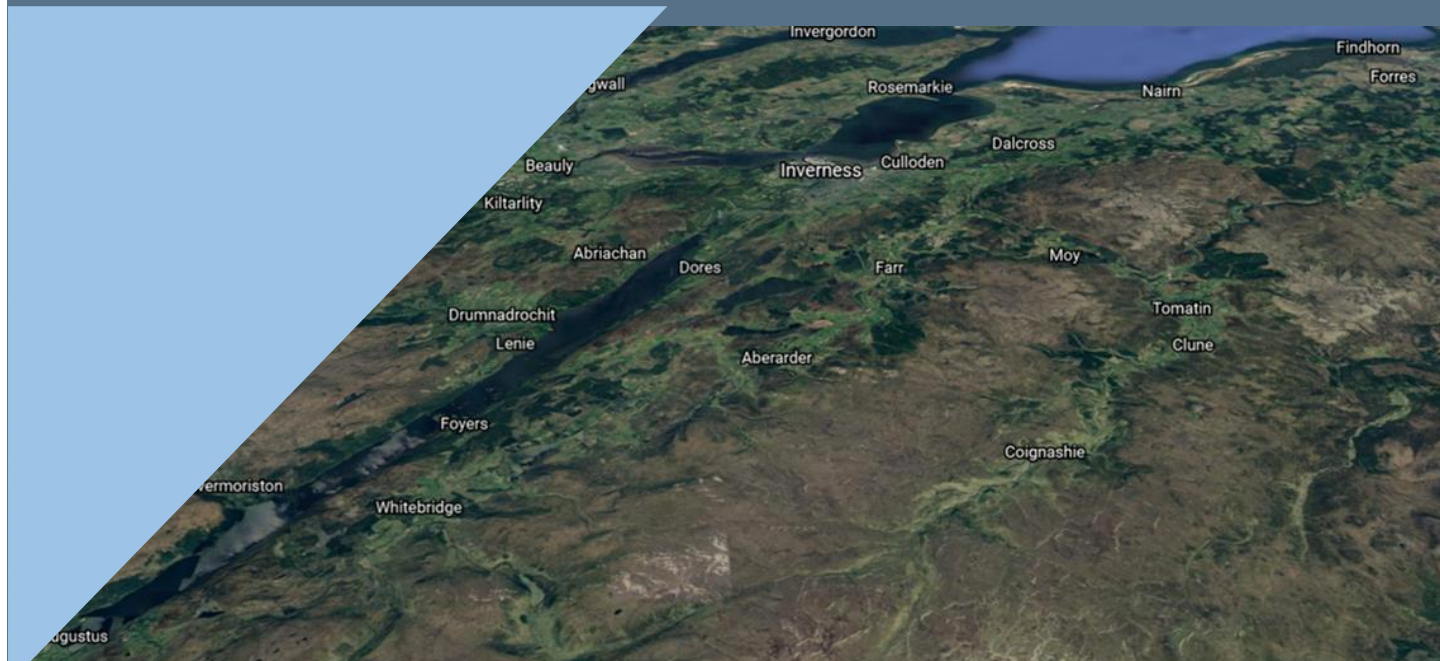




Mission Planning Committee

A NEW ERA OF MISSION

October 2021



**An evaluation of the Mission Planning Conference and launch of
the Mission Planning Process for Inverness Presbytery**

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Introduction

On Saturday 18th September 2021, Presbyters and Kirk Session delegates gathered in conference over Zoom, an exciting opportunity to learn more about and participate in the future shaping of Inverness Presbytery, for Mission. The conference content has been pulled together here, which includes a summary of feedback during breakout sessions on the day. Presbytery has since adopted a set of Values & Principles which will underpin the work of Mission Planning in the months and years ahead, and approved the Process for a new Presbytery Plan to be developed, all of which can be found on the following pages. This report will hopefully serve as a valuable resource to Presbyters, Kirk Sessions, and Congregations, to communicate and understand where we are now, to envision prayerfully and enthusiastically, and embrace the exciting future that God is already leading us into.

Our various past experiences of Presbytery Planning may not sit easily with descriptions such as 'exciting opportunity'. Depending on our perspective, we may approach the topic with a feeling of our situation being more vulnerable than another, and therefore see our role as standing up for our particular patch. So, it's important to state at the outset: This will be different!! True, the backdrop is a significant reduction in resources. However, we now have a framework (like it or not) set out for us by the General Assembly, the 'Presbytery Mission Plan Act 2021', which has at its heart two significant positives.

1. **The priority is Mission** - For plans to be approved, they must demonstrate how they meet the Mission-focussed criteria in the Act. Simply tallying the numbers to the allocation will not cut it, and the option for kicking the can of tough decisions down the road has been removed. This is positive because it means...
2. **It will affect Everyone** - Given all that must be taken into consideration during Presbytery Planning from now on, there will be no spectators, no winners and losers. The Act seeks to level the playing field and bring all our focus towards being on the same team, serving the Mission of Jesus Christ within the bounds of our presbytery.

The conference was not about defending or justifying our own position or promoting all the 'great' things happening already across presbytery. It wasn't about making the case for why our building, minister, charge, or congregation should stay as it is. It was rather, about coming together to view the current bounds of Inverness Presbytery as a single area which we are to serve collectively. To creatively imagine how we might do this with our new allocation of posts and resources, using the tools at our disposal.

On behalf of the Mission Planning Committee, and indeed the whole Presbytery, sincere thanks goes to all those who attended and made such a valuable contribution on the day, and especially to those who have helped gather all the feedback for us to be able to present in one place. Let us continue to pray that God will unite us and lead us towards the shape of things to come, and may we keep in step with the Spirit as we go.



Mike Robertson
Convenor - Mission Planning Committee

Beginning, and staying with God

The following theological reflection was originally written for Edinburgh Presbytery by Rev David Denniston, prefaced a similar Presbytery Planning paper, albeit over a decade ago. Yet, it is most striking just how relevant and timely it is for us now, as we begin planning for a new season.

The Planning Process: Biblical, Theological and Spiritual Reflection

by Rev David Denniston

Amongst the biblical images that might help us in our current situation are those that indicate the 'fragility' of the people of God. We could turn to the Old Testament accounts of Israel's exile, or of the slow painful decline of God's people recounted in 1 and 2 Kings (a picture of God's judgement) or Jeremiah's faithful preaching in the face of indifference or hostility.

But perhaps it is Jesus' teaching about the **mustard seed** which may inspire helpful and hopeful theological reflection on our present crisis.

For centuries the Church in the West has been used to being powerful, respected and influential in society. However, this is a picture of church with no New Testament parallel, but it is the reality with which most present Scottish churchgoers grew up. Within the church the experience of decline is so recent and its progress so rapid that we are still struggling to come to terms with the new reality with which we are operating. For the Church of Scotland, decline is an experience that has lasted barely over 50 years. That means that the picture of a strong and dominant Church of Scotland, active in missions abroad, confident in action at home, committed to 'Church Extension', engaged in widespread telling out of the Good News (eg – 'Tell Scotland') and listened to by the nation is still part of the actual memory of the majority of our present membership.

No wonder then that it is so difficult to grasp, accept and come to terms with the story of decline that has dominated the last half-century and which now threatens to entirely marginalise the Kirk. There is the inevitable fear that to recognise the present situation and accept it would be to embrace despair or admit defeat.

However, if we recognise and accept the true situation in which we find ourselves, we will know that the Church's existence is a **fragile** thing. This **fragility** is new in our own nation and history. But it is not a new experience for God's people in history and certainly not in Scripture. The greater part of the Old Testament narrative deals with the fragility of the people of God for one reason or another and in one context or another. The church in the New Testament may be (in the main, and unlike ours) a growing church, but it was still a very fragile community, facing virtual annihilation on the one hand through persecution, and possible implosion on the other due to internal tensions, divisions and disagreements.

It is in this context (of fragility) rather than as some kind of triumphalistic motto for Christendom that we should read Jesus' words about the 'gates of hell' not prevailing against the church. And dense and difficult although the language and message of Revelation might be, the picture of the ultimate victory of God as described in that book is offered to a church under persecution and with a precarious existence through the vision and writings of one who was himself exiled for his faith – alone and restricted.

We need to find the courage to open our eyes to the possibly unpleasant and unwelcome – certainly unlooked for – truth that we are living out, holding onto and sharing our faith in a period of ongoing decline. But while we should acknowledge and accept that reality, there is not therefore a need to despair¹ nor a case for resignation.

We are still called to pray, hope, wait and to keep worshipping, witnessing and working.

So to the **Mustard Seed**: a small thing indeed; an apparently insignificant thing; a fragile thing. And yet it is destined to become 'the greatest of all shrubs' and in its shade 'the birds of the air can make nests'²

Declining numbers, fewer full-time ministers, smaller congregations, financial constraints, reducing national influence are not reasons for abandoning our mission, embracing despair, or submitting to hopelessness.

The Mustard Seed is both a powerful and a hopeful image. That which is small and insignificant will yet give birth to something greater and bigger. The parable is a parable of the church and a parable of mission.

However, our fragility must not be denied, but accepted and understood.

And it is worth recalling what Tim Dearborn said:

*'it is not the Church of God that has a mission in the world;
It is the God of mission who has a Church in the world!'*³

¹ See for example Isaiah's picture of a bruised reed that God will not break, or a flickering lamp which he will not extinguish.

² Mark 4:30-32

³ Beyond Duty: a passion for Christ, a heart for mission" MARC, 1998

Perhaps the Gospel image of the lamp on the lampstand provides another picture that is, in some ways, similar to that of the Mustard Seed. For a lamp (in Jesus' time an oil fuelled flame) would be protected and sheltered under a basket, but it is unseen. On the lampstand the light shines out, but it is then vulnerable and could easily be extinguished by the breeze. But light exists to be seen and to illuminate, not to be hidden and protected.

Mission involves risk. The proposals we come up with must be well considered, shaped by agreed principles and recognised parameters, and with as strong an evidence-base as we can provide. However, the implementation of the proposals will also inevitably involve a degree of experiment and risk. Mission is always like that. Experiment and risk imply the possibility of failure.

The Parable of the Sower (which has – like many of the parables – layers of meaning) provides a striking metaphor for risk taking in mission. The sower's primary concern is the broadcasting of the seed. If the 'success' of his enterprise were measured in terms of the percentage of seed that had ultimately borne grain, then there is a fairly poor return. But if instead the measure is the quality of the final crop, then the apparent failure is put into perspective and the risk may be considered justified and the 'failure' outweighed by the success.

While we may see our current situation of church decline in terms of fragility, it is important that we appreciate that no matter the apparent 'strength' of the church, fragility is an inevitable and unavoidable aspect of genuine Christian mission. And this is perhaps most clearly seen in the **Cross** when seen as representing the apparent failure of God's mission. But of course, in God's plan it was not ultimately failure at all!



When we finally present a Presbytery Plan shaped by the agreed principle of mission, we must do so with the humility of those who can offer no guarantee of 'success', but also with the **passion** of those who believe that inspired risks are worth taking and that such risk is inherent in any mission experiment, and with the **hope** that the God of resurrection will yet bring new life to the Church.

November 2010 (shared with permission)

The journey ahead

By Rev Mike Robertson

Are you a nervous traveller? I think I am to a degree, even though I love traveling. I'm never sure if it's a physical reaction to ridiculously early starts, being responsible for a family or group... "Have we remembered the passports. Did we lock the door? Did we leave the cooker on? Or leave one of the children behind?" Etc. Or is it just a natural and healthy anxiety connected to the uncertainty of the journey and what it will be like when we get there? Whatever the cause, when I go on any reasonably big trip, there's a feeling of nervous excitement in the pit of my stomach.

So, I wonder how you feel about the topic of Presbytery Planning? Does the thought of it raise your anxiety? If so, why might that be? Fear of the impact for your congregation or ministry? Or is it just the anxiety of change and the unknown in general? It's OK, and perfectly normal to be apprehensive about all of this, as long as we don't let it take control of our response to the challenges ahead. The way I deal with travel anxiety these days is to acknowledge it for what it is and choose not to be driven or held back by it.

The journey of Presbytery Planning ahead of us, especially for a landscape with significantly less resources, is bound to cause a level of travel anxiety in us. However, it is not new. We've long known that radical change was coming. The 14 Full Time Equivalent post allocation that is now confirmed for our Presbytery, was projected on the horizon at least 2 years ago. We've acknowledged at previous conferences and meetings that change is absolutely needed, but struggled, across the entire Church of Scotland, to take the big leaps.

What is different now than at any time we've looked at this before, is that a lot of the parameters have been much more narrowly defined for us. Whatever we may think of them, the General Assembly of 2021 has taken some bold and necessary decisions to guide Presbytery 'Mission' Planning in the immediate future. These decisions are made against a bleak outlook for resources across the whole church if change doesn't happen, and soon!! Vacancies are on hold, and all but emergency property works are paused. The seatbelt sign is on, the throttle has been pulled back... like it or not, we are on our way. And when a plane accelerates down the runway... the only safest way off is arrival at the destination. There's no going back, only onward.



For what we now know and comprise of Inverness Presbytery, we must come up with an approved plan by December 2022, which is demonstrably designed for MISSION. Not just making the numbers work, or keeping congregations going and buildings open, but shaped for communicating and embodying the gospel to the area to which we (Presbytery) are called, albeit with 8.3 less FTE posts than at present, and likely to decrease more in subsequent years.

This is going to be a painful and searching process, demanding much from us all. There won't be winners and losers, not a single charge, congregation, or minister will be unaffected by the new plan we have to come up with. We simply don't have the resources to keep doing things the way we are now. So, unprecedented change is coming whether we like it or not. However, this unprecedented change will also bring unprecedented, and exciting opportunities.

The role of the Mission Planning Committee is primarily about stewarding the journey that we are already committed to as a presbytery. We cannot promise you there will always be a minister, building, congregation or charge where it has 'aye been' for you. We cannot promise things will stay the same, in fact we can probably promise only that they won't.

The proposals we bring to presbytery in due course, will be the result of following a set of values and principles which have been adopted, and a process which has been agreed, by Presbytery. They will be based on parameters of the Mission Planning Act and emerging from the real-time picture of all the charges in the presbytery, which needs to be realistic for everyone's sake (Property, finance, mission (LCR), ministry etc.). The enormous amount of consultation work carried out by previous planning committees is not lost or wasted, but we don't have the luxury or time to redo it. That's why, although no decisions were made at it, the input of everyone who attended the conference, all the ideas and insight, is so important. Equally, the Mission Planning Committee is not holed up in a bunker and inaccessible. We welcome ideas and proposed solutions throughout the process.

At the conference, we showed a video of a cleverly put together, scripture-based resource called The Father's Love Letter. Whilst used as an evangelistic resource, I didn't show it because I felt those attending were in need of that. However, I said there is never a bad time to be reminded of who God is, and consequently who we are. And there are certainly good times for such a reminder, with maybe this being one of them. The Father's Love Letter can be found in a variety of formats at www.fathersloveletter.com.

I passionately believe, that remaining rooted and grounded in our identity as children of God, will enable us not just to get through the changes we must face, but actually come to see and experience them as a blessing from God. As long as we are certain of Who we are, we can flourish wherever we are and whatever our circumstances. As the classic hymn affirms:

"Because He lives, I can face tomorrow,
Because He lives, all fear is gone.
Because I know, He holds the future,
This child can face uncertain days, because He lives"

The New Era: Mission Planning 2021-22

By Rev Fiona Smith, Business Convenor

The General Assembly 2021 passed a new Mission Planning Act in respect of Presbytery Planning, which can be found [here](#).

All Presbyteries have been instructed to develop and obtain approval of their Presbytery Mission Plan by 31 December 2022.

The following is a resume of the key elements of the Act and the Code Practice which the Presbytery is obligated to follow as it develops a new plan.

The driver for this new Presbytery Planning process is the effective mission of the local church as measured against the 'Five Marks of Mission'.

The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

This is the primary criteria which the Presbytery must use to develop the new Mission Plan. If it cannot be reasonably demonstrated that a proposed Presbytery Mission Plan (PMP) furthers the effective mission of the local church, then it does not satisfy the basic requirement of the Act.

A Mission Plan shall describe how the Church of Scotland's engagement with Christ's Mission is to be shaped and resourced in the following five years and to that end shall demonstrate how the Presbytery will: -

- i) ensure that the life of the Church of Scotland is shaped around Mission and adequately reflects the outcomes of Local Church Review and ideas for local mission.
- ii) sustain the commitment to a territorial ministry as described in the Third of the Articles Declaratory appended to the Church of Scotland Act 1921 and affirmed in Declaratory Act V 2010 including its commitment to ecumenical working.
- iii) make appropriate use of such ministry posts as may be permitted by the General Assembly so that the number of post holders in each Presbytery conforms to the numbers and timescales set by the General Assembly.
- iv) ensure that new ways of being Church, other than stipendiary Ministers of Word and Sacrament or traditional MDS appointments, are reflected in the Mission Plan.

The Act:

The Act provides the Presbytery, the Faith Nurture Forum, and the Trustees with the means to:

- prepare a Mission Plan (2.1-2.2)
- approve a Mission Plan so that it becomes an Approved Mission Plan (2.2.6)
- evaluate and develop a Mission Plan (2.4)
- implement a Mission Plan (4-10)

A Mission Plan may be reviewed on limited grounds by a Mission Plan Review Panel (3; Schedule).

In requiring Presbyteries to plan mission within their bounds, the Church of Scotland seeks to: -

- underscore the Church's priority as participating in Christ's mission.
- set down a definition of that mission.
- provide a framework for a Presbytery to express that priority in forming a rolling five-year Mission Plan.
- enable a group of Presbyteries anticipating union to work together on a Mission Plan.
- ensure that a Presbytery makes best use of the ministry posts allocated to it by the General Assembly.
- insist that a Presbytery take decisions about the future of Church buildings.
- provide a range of ways in which a Presbytery may structure and resource Church life.
- engage the Faith Nurture Forum and the General Trustees in assisting Presbytery in their planning

Prioritising Mission – The Code of Practice

Mission is the Church's priority, and no area of Church life is exempt. A Code of Practice has been published and it must be applied to the Mission Planning process. The following sets out the additional factors that Presbytery must consider when it develops the new Plan.

Communities:

Every community of every size in every location within Scotland is part of a Church of Scotland Parish. While population should no longer be the only principle in shaping Presbytery Plans, it still remains the starting point. Our calling as a church is not primarily to resource congregations: it is mission to everyone in the land.

Ecumenism:

"The Commission readily acknowledges that reaching the people of Scotland is an ecumenical task and one to which the Church of Scotland contributes along with other denominations as partners in the gospel."

If a particular community is well served by another denomination, there may be no need for the Presbytery to duplicate that. Where a community is equally well served by the Church of Scotland and another denomination the Presbytery should explore what local possibilities there might be for recognising each other's ministry so that resources can be used elsewhere.

The General Assembly of 2021 instructed the Forum, when developing principles for Presbytery Mission Planning, to include a principle of ecumenical working, bearing in mind the Lund Principle, affirming that churches should act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately. That same deliverance also encouraged the forming of Local Mission Communities and regional Covenant Partnerships as outlined in the report of the Ecumenical Relations Committee.

The poor:

The General Assembly has repeatedly affirmed that the gospel imperative is priority to the poor. At a time when resources are scarce, it is tempting to take away from the most marginal communities where churches are often very fragile and small. However, pressing the reasons may be locally, this must be resisted because it makes a mockery of the gospel and the repeated commitments of the General Assembly. However, as in every part of the Church, this does not mean that existing patterns of ministry should not be evaluated and reviewed, and different forms of church life introduced.

Whole people of God:

One aim of the Act is to assist the church in making the most effective use of paid ministries. However, this takes place in the context of the ministry of the whole people of God. The Special Commission on the Third Article Declaratory, in 2010, noted that "the living out of the commitment of Article III may well involve an increasing number of communities where the ministry is exercised largely by the eldership and membership of the Church, albeit under the oversight of an ordained minister." (8.5.6)

Therefore, a further principle to guide Presbyteries in their deployment of ministries is how they might be used to encourage and enhance the ministry of the whole people of God. This sharing of talents may be across a wider area than a parish – some Presbyteries are developing the idea of Mission Districts, on which more information will be available later.

Congregations:

The church has “a commitment to maintain worshipping, witnessing and serving Christian congregations throughout Scotland.” One of the ways in which the gospel finds visible expression is in committed congregations under the power of the Holy Spirit. They both express the gospel and commend the gospel. In their Planning, Presbyteries will identify congregations that are outward looking, which engage with their communities and the wider church and consider how they might build on these strengths.

Mixed economy:

Whilst affirming the importance of the Parish system and recognising the importance of a sense of ‘place’ the General Assembly stated that this needs to be expressed in a variety of ways. Martyn Percy, an Anglican scholar, says: **“For the Church to find its place in the modern world, it will have to create new spaces for new communities and different opportunities for differentiated niche groups.”**

While in many communities the sense of place is best expressed in something physical and tangible, that is not universally true. The Church will need, for example, to discover how to relate to those whose belonging is primarily through networks or the virtual world.

Financial responsibility:

Presbytery Mission Planning does not mean ensuring that congregations which make a net contribution to central funds take priority. Nonetheless a degree of financial realism is required, and it is appropriate that some consideration is given to congregational financial responsibility. Some congregations are more generous than comparable ones and all congregations are expected to make a financial contribution appropriate to their means.

At present one third of congregations are net contributors and two thirds are net receivers. However, per capita giving can be much higher amongst some of the poorest congregations than it is in some of the wealthiest. It is essential for Presbyteries to consider the complex financial picture and allocate ministerial resources to congregations that take their financial stewardship seriously. The Presbytery, Forum and Trustees should also take account of the effect of a Mission Plan on the aggregate amount of Ministry and Mission Contributions which the Presbytery’s congregations’ remit to the national Church.

Buildings:

There is a connection between ministry and church buildings, although that connection is neither uniform nor universal. At a national level there is a consensus that the Church of Scotland has too many buildings, numerous buildings that are underutilised, buildings that are too large for present day needs and buildings that are in the wrong place. At a local level however, almost every church building is deemed essential by those who worship there week by week. There is no simple solution to this problem.

The starting point however should be mission. Presbyteries will want to consider which buildings are essential and useful for the mission they envisage and offer to local parties means by which they might look more objectively at the bricks and mortar which they possess. The General Trustees will support Presbyteries in developing their mission plans. Presbyteries are encouraged to make use of the General Trustees Land and Buildings Toolkit, and other assessment tools which will be available.



Feedback from Conference Breakout Sessions

Collated by David Thompson, Mission Planning Committee Clerk

There are centuries of story and testimony to be told of Christian witness across the area of Inverness Presbytery, not least of which, those of recent years right up to the present. The contributions of those attending our Mission Planning conference, are the beginnings of the next chapter of the story. The eight breakout groups provided much food for thought and many ideas when considering the three conference themes of *“Imagination Exercise”*, *“That’ll be an Ecumenical Matter”* and *“Realising the Vision”* which have been pulled together below for further consideration.

To help stimulate thinking and discussion in breakout groups, the conference pack contained various maps of the Inverness Presbytery area with all its internal parish boundaries removed, along with a brief description of some of the Tools for Mission Planning provided by the Presbytery Mission Plan Act. These can be found in the next section

An “Imagination Exercise”

Before the first breakout session, some introductory thoughts were shared on how such facilities as secondary schools, supermarkets and GP Surgeries are provided to the area’s whole population in relatively small number compared with the higher number of churches with whom a much smaller proportion of the population currently engage.

Groups were then asked to ‘imagine’ that they had been sent by the Church of Scotland, to establish a Missional church presence in the area defined as Inverness Presbytery. There was no previous church presence of any kind, and the maximum paid human resource was the actual allocation of 14FTE posts.

- General acceptance that change is necessary and that 14 FTE’s may be about right. It will be important to look at what God is already doing in the area and building on that whilst casting a critical eye on what is not working.
- Our mission needs to be where the people are and we must embrace the way society now actually is.
- There was general favour for **Nine** territorial congregations based round the seven Secondary Schools (IRA, Charleston, Inverness High, Millburn, Culloden, Nairn and Glenurquhart plus two rural charges, Inverness South East, (Cawdor/Croy to Whitebridge) and inverness North west (Beaully/Kiltarlity to Cannich) although there was also a suggestion that the nine could be distributed between, perhaps, four territorial mission areas. These territorial areas would be supplemented by **Five** specialist/sectoral congregations such as UHI, Mission Development, Business/Retail, Youth/Family, Rural, Online etc.
- Different team structures should be considered for different areas and specialities with flexibility being essential. A Team Ministry model could be considered for some with larger accessible gathered congregations and local mission churches and other initiatives considered. Think of the NHS with many GP Surgeries now having a variety of skills available directly and specialists available who cover a wider area. New technology should play a large part in this and will allow even “individuals” to join in communal worship from anywhere at all.
- Recognized that the church is like a can of Heinz beans – lots of varieties so one size does not fit all.
- Good transportation to and from church is an important issue and manageable with a bit of imagination. A mix of public, personal and church transport, possibly including a fleet of minibuses to take folk to worship centres, service church groups and provide mobile ministry, will be necessary.
- Less and better church buildings with places other than traditional churches being places of worship and mission.
- It is important to consider ministries beyond full time Word and Sacrament such as Deacons, MDS, OLM, Lay worship Leaders and the eldership and others to be our preachers, teachers and leaders. Ministers should not end up just as managers but keep their calling to pastor, preach and disciple.
- Good communications with God’s people will be essential with a mixture of face to face and an embracing of new technology.
- Economies of scale may allow a central admin unit to assist individual ministries.

“That’ll be an Ecumenical Matter”

Unlike this immortal line from the TV show Father Ted, used as a means to avoid difficult conversations, the discussion topic of this breakout session was to build on the previous “Imagination Exercise” by taking account of current and potential future partnership with local churches other than within our own denomination.

- We must seek regular contact, worship and local engagement with other churches and work on what unites us. We have a common enemy who tries to divide us.
- There are many existing good examples of such working together and these reflect well on us in the local community but they are patchy and not consistent. Personal relationships are very important in developing such working. Examples of current joint working are the joint Community Worker in Culloden; Lunches provided jointly by several churches in Glenurquhart; Inverness churches group leaflet; Inverness online services with 14 churches; “Thy Kingdom Come” and the leaders prayer meeting every fortnight in Inverness. Perhaps a short stock-take of what is currently happening would be helpful.
- The wider community doesn’t recognise the differences, which we think are so important, between our Christian denominations. There are at least 8 different denominations in the area.
- There is quite a lot of travelling to churches, of all denominations, some distance away across the area.
- In rural areas there is often only one church so no one to partner with but the congregation may well be an ecumenical one.
- What about creating a new denomination of the Highlands?

“Realising the Vision”

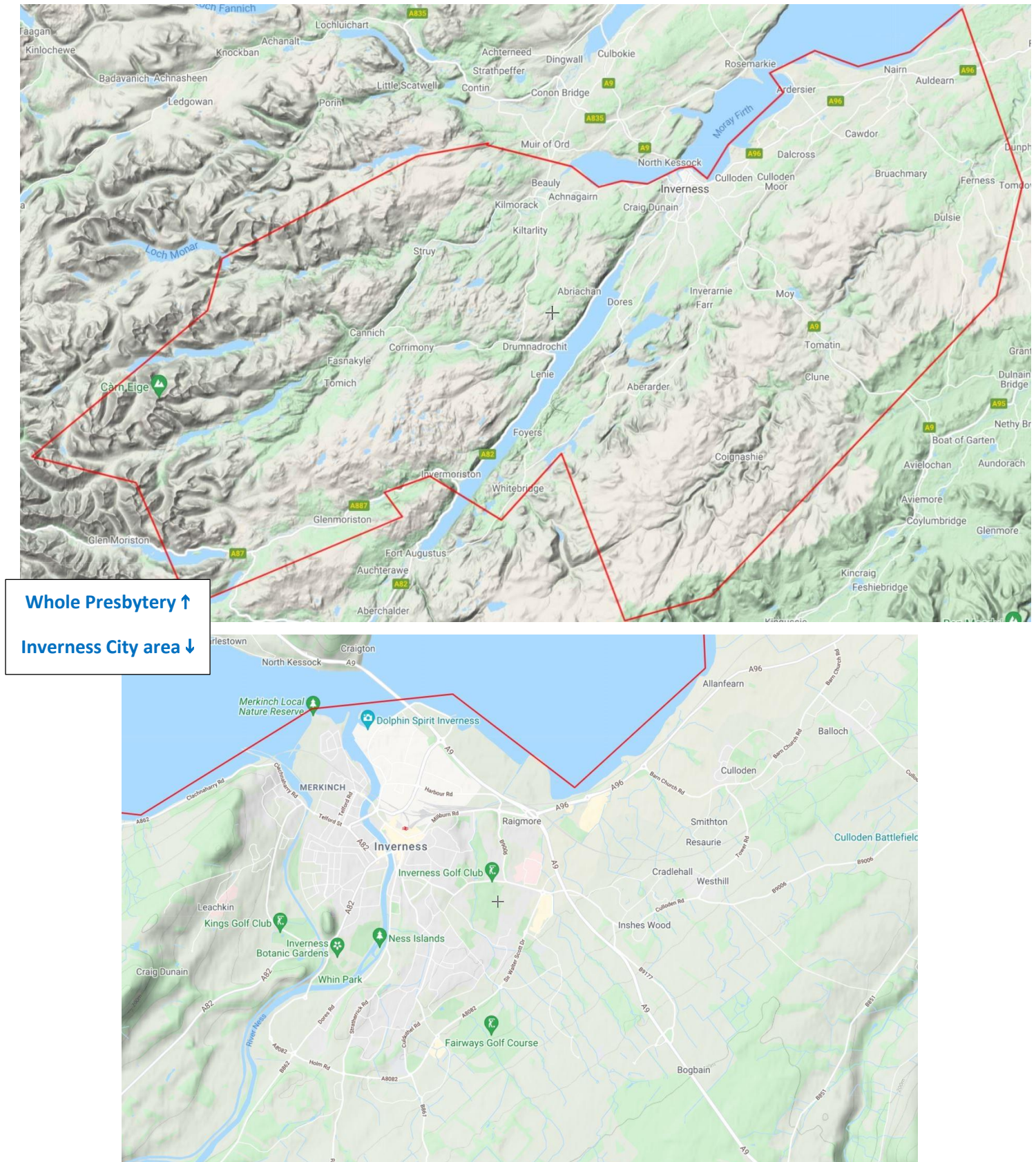
In this final breakout session, delegates compared what had been imagined earlier, with the current configuration of our presbytery, to ask: How can we get there? Although there are many technical challenges in terms of buildings, processes governed by church law and so on, the only major obstacle to radical change might actually be ourselves.

- Put prayer at the top of our agenda and gather as congregations to pray regularly for mission and the undoubted challenges these changes will bring.
- Make sure that all of God’s people, including our young people are engaged with the process of change. Acknowledge that God is already at work in ways we have yet to fully appreciate and keep an open mind to His prompting on the way forward.
- Agree the broad goals quickly on future structure and staffing to facilitate mission and then work on the detail.
- Be aware that many will not embrace such change and some will do so reluctantly or tiredly, so pastoral oversight will be important. Some will leave but if our mission plan is God’s will then many more will join.
- Mixed economy is the way forward for mission planning – parish ministers plus specialists chaplains rooted in a congregation but who serve a niche area eg schools/industrial/prison/retail sectors and provide support/training/info for the benefit of all in the Presbytery
- Training should be tailored to our current needs and be available at different levels and over shorter periods.
- The load on full time Ministers of Word and Sacrament has been getting ever greater so this should be seen as an opportunity to lighten that burden by giving them a truly leadership role and by making better use of others, including more use of part-time posts.
- Quickly identify and dispose of as many surplus buildings as we can to create the resources to implement our mission plan. Consider new buildings taking into account community, location, parking, access to public transport, ease of upgrade for new technology etc. Look at the possibility of retail units for worship and mission with ease of access and parking and also to town centre retail units as central resources which will have a high public footfall.
- Think of our buildings as a community resource and about the things which will bring people to spend time in them, making them somewhere that people will want to use.
- If we need new wineskins, let’s not default to trying to keep as much as we can, but rather to getting rid of as much as we can, so we can create as much as we can with the resources that come from that.
- New names for whatever we do crucial. In using tools like union, local mission church etc, we’re not merging names or keeping one name but not another. If every church begins with new identities it helps with ‘no winners and losers.’

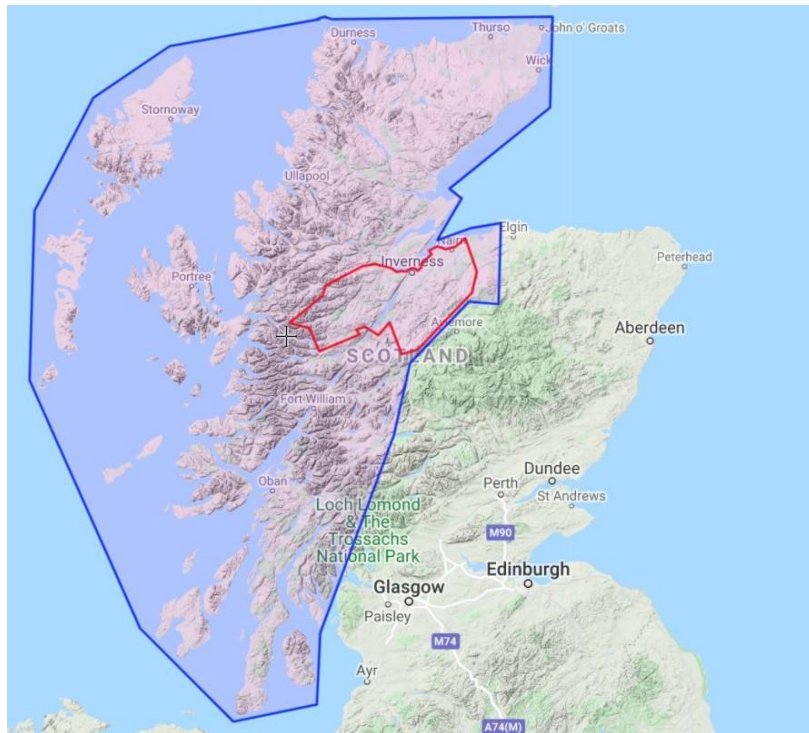
- Conduct quick research on the population in each of the areas we consider for congregations.
- Ensure that clear and accurate communication and leadership is provided to our congregations at every stage of the process to take folk with us. Take control of the media agenda and get our message out quickly so that we are always on the front foot and ensure we minimise misinterpretation of our aims. Face up to public negativity in a positive way by explaining the positives in what we are doing.

Imagination Exercise: Maps

Inverness Presbytery (without parish demarcations)



Map of the approximate scale of a future Presbytery of the Highlands & Islands



Imagination Exercise: Tools for Mission Planning

The Presbytery Mission Plan Act sets down the framework for the development of Presbytery Mission Plans which must be: designed and implemented for Mission (defined by the '5 marks of Mission'), shaped by a wider set of principles (e.g. Ecumenism, Mixed economy etc.), and, implemented by an appropriate mix of the following tools:

Adjustment & other arrangements (Section 7 of the [Act](#))

UNION - Two or more congregations may be united to form one congregation under the Unitary Constitution (all assets and leadership merged into one entity).

LINKING - Multiple linkages are strongly discouraged in the Act and guidance. However, they are not ruled out if there are pressing and overwhelming local circumstances.

DEFERRED UNION OR LINKING - When it is not possible to unite or link a vacant congregation with another congregation under the minister of the other congregation, Presbytery may decide to defer it to take place as after that minister's interest has terminated.

LOCAL MISSION CHURCH ([Regs II 2021](#)) - Nurturing a new form of Christian community, accountable to and supported by another charge: as a new venture, or, following a union or dissolution effected in terms of the Act

GUARDIANSHIP - A charge may continue without the right to call a minister under the Guardianship of the Presbytery. Interim Moderators will ensure appropriate arrangements to enable the ongoing ministry and Mission of the congregation(s). (A Guardianship shall count as 0.25 FTE in the allocation).

NEW CHARGE DEVELOPMENT - No new charges under Act XIII 2000 may be specified in a Mission Plan.

TRANSPORTATION - Moving a congregation from one place of worship to another (inc. change of parish)

PARISH GROUPINGS - Two or more charges given responsibility for a single area. A basis for which will define how worship, personnel, education resources, mission initiatives, congregational organisations, ecumenical partnerships etc will be shared.

DISSOLUTION - A charge may be dissolved by the Presbytery. In most such cases, all assets will be transferred to the national church.

TEAM MINISTRY - A Team Ministry may be created in one of two ways:
with an inducted parish minister (who shall be the moderator of the Kirk Session) and which may include a deacon, MDS appointments, the appointment of an Ordained Local Minister or such other appointment as may be deemed appropriate in Mission Plan discussions, or

(II) as above, but within the charge a Team Ministry consisting of two or more Team Ministry Charges, to each of which a parish minister shall be inducted (one of which will provide the Moderator of the Kirk Session). The Team Ministry Charges shall share the same congregation and Kirk Session and the same Church life.

NEW FORMS OF CHURCH LIFE (In consultation with the Forum) - This may include the provision of online Church for worship and Mission by identifying congregations, partnerships or agencies which will be given lead responsibility. This may include the allocation of a Mission Plan post or posts.

PRESBYTERY MISSION INITIATIVE (excerpt from PMI [Act V 2015](#))

2.3 - ...new forms of witnessing, serving and worshipping Christian communities may be established by means of PMIs ... as a network or other non-location specific form provided that its main purpose is to witness, serve and worship within the bounds of the Presbytery.

2.4 - A PMI may include partnership with or alongside a congregation or community from another Christian denomination.

Instruments For Future Planning (Section 9 of the [Act](#))

REVIEWABLE CHARGE - Its next minister shall be inducted on condition that the Presbytery may terminate the tenure of the minister at any time (giving 6 months notice) and for any reason. Such ministers may demit and be translated in the normal way. A basis of Reviewable Charge must receive written acceptance by a minister prior to induction.

TRANSFERENCE - A parish and charge may be transferred from the bounds and jurisdiction of one Presbytery to another with the agreement of both Presbyteries. Transference is a necessary preliminary to union or linking of congregations not currently in the bounds of one Presbytery.

Values and Principles

At its September meeting, Presbytery 'adopted' the following values and 'agreed' the following principles to underpin the work of the Mission Planning Committee.

The *values* of planning are to define the attitudes and standards that produce a Plan that will directly affect the church officers and members, and indirectly affect the citizens of Inverness in general. The *principles* of planning refer to the operating beliefs that regulate policy decisions and implementation. These principles may be unfamiliar to some, yet they are supported by general current thinking about contemporary ministry and mission, and have been adopted by other Presbyteries. The *process* defines how the committee will undertake its work, based on these values and principles, to produce a Presbytery Mission Plan.

Values

Faithfulness

Above everything else, the Plan aims to be faithful to the vision that God has for the city of Inverness and its surrounding environs, and not to any single personal vision.

Realism

As part of this, the Plan makes decisions on the basis of fact, and not as we would like the world to be.

Ambition

The Plan does not settle for the way things are, however, but shares with God his ambition to see our churches and area transformed.

Fairness

Realism, tempered with God's vision, mean that the Plan will attempt to be impartial and objective in its recommendations

Transparency

The work of the Mission Planning Committee, and the creation and execution of the Plan, will be carried out in a spirit of full transparency, honesty, and openness, with clear communication to Presbytery as a priority.

Flexibility

Scottish society is changing at speed, and any Plan we create must be flexible enough to respond quickly to new developments.

Principles

We Exist for Others, Not Ourselves

William Temple once said that the Church is the only institution that exists primarily for the benefit of those who are not its members. That means that all strategic decisions have to be made on the basis of missional, and not merely congregational, considerations. Jesus Christ came not to be served but to serve, and the Church is not above its Master.

Ministry and Mission Shared by Presbytery and Congregations

Ours is a Presbyterian - and not Congregational – Church, and therefore good working within the Presbytery is crucial. Ministry is not only the work of particular congregations but of the whole Presbytery, and the Plan will recognise this by acknowledging Presbytery's role in identifying areas of strategic importance, and directing personnel and finance to these areas.

Working with Other Churches

The Church of Scotland is part of the Universal Church, of which the other denominations and churches of the Inverness area are also part. As such, we share our ministry and mission with them, and, where possible, we should seek to express this through shared ministry and mission.

Policies Determined by Fact, Not Anecdote

Following our core values of realism and fairness, the Plan will, wherever possible, be directed by evidence rather than personal impression or bias. This involves close consideration of census and social attitude data, contemporary missional thinking, and the practices of other churches. This is particularly important in relation to the use of buildings.

Breaking the Identification of Ministry with Parish Ministers

Parish ministry will always be the bedrock of the Church of Scotland. Yet a shortage of ministers, economic constraints, and the need to mobilise the whole Church to maintain and grow the Church mean that ministry can no longer be identified solely with parish ministry. As such, some parishes and worshipping communities within the Presbytery will no longer be led by full-time ministers of Word and Sacrament.

Parish Churches as One Means among Others

Related to this, and to our core values of ambition and flexibility, is the culture shift needed to see parishes as one means of undertaking ministry and mission among others. We live in a period of great numerical decline yet of great missional opportunity, and new forms of church community will be necessary to grasp this opportunity.

Recognising Healthy Churches that Grow in Prayer, Discipleship, and Mission

When making policy decisions regarding the future of particular congregations and distribution of resources, cognisance will be taken not only of financial giving or number of members but of *health*, understood as growth in prayer, discipleship, and mission. In addition, congregations that excel in these areas should be closely studied, and their experience and giftings used for the benefit of the wider Presbytery.

Integration of All Presbytery Business with the Mission Plan

The work of Presbytery can at times feel less coordinated than it might be. If we are to reform our ministry and mission in a time of genuine challenge, the process of planning must integrate with all the other work of Presbytery.

Mission Planning Process

The Mission Planning Committee has been established to undertake this task on behalf of Presbytery. Yet, the task remains the Presbytery's, and as such, it is vital that Presbytery has agreed and supports the process that its' committee will follow, together with Values, Principles, Acts and Facts in the development of the Presbytery's Mission Plan.

Just as the values and principles will guide our approach to the task before us, the Presbytery Mission Plan Act, its accompanying guidance, and the factual information being gathered by other committees will facilitate the development of a draft Mission Plan based on the criteria and resources instructed by the General Assembly. Given that the entire process must be complete by **31st December 2022**, time is of the essence. The committee therefore, aim to bring a draft Mission Plan to a special meeting of Presbytery in **January 2022**. It should be noted that throughout the process, the committee is required to keep in close contact with the Faith Nurture Forum & General Trustees. Any Plan, even in draft, must be reviewed by these bodies before being brought to Presbytery.

Process

The Big picture and progress to-date

Ministries Allocation for Inverness – 14 FTE (down from 22.3). West Moray – 2.5 FTE

Timescale - Mission Plan to be fully approved by 31 December 2022.

Presbytery Reform - Engage with surrounding Presbyteries when developing Presbytery Mission Plan (PMP). Possibility that from January 2023 Ministries allocation will be aggregated across the whole Highlands & Islands area as the proposed new Presbytery.

Mission Planning Committee (MPC) - In conjunction with the Business Committee, it is the remit of the MPC to execute and implement the new Mission Plan.

June 2021 Presbytery decision – Property, Finance, Congregational Mission, and Ministry committees were instructed to collate factual information for the Mission Planning Process. MPC will review the guidance and the information gathered and provided by the other committees to prepare for how the Presbytery will create their new Mission Plan.

Consultation & Partnership (section 6 Code of Practice) - Consensus and shared vision are best starting points for Mission Planning process. A great deal of time and energy was spent consulting and meeting with individual Kirk Sessions during the previous planning process. We do not have the time or the capacity to undertake such an exercise again. Further the Mission Plan Act stipulates that the Presbytery has the final say – congregational agreement is not ultimately required. Through the previous planning process, we have gained a great deal of information about individual charges. Furthermore, the June instruction for the Presbytery committees to collate factual information upon each charge will provide a sound basis from which to begin the Mission Planning process.

Presbytery Planning Conference (September 2021) – A key communication and consultation opportunity, looking at where we are as well as imagining what might be. Along with the Act, Guidance and Factual information gathered by other committees, the conference feedback will be invaluable for the process ahead.

Agreed Mission Planning Process and Next Steps moving forward

1. Evaluate the outcomes of the conference. Utilising those, along with the priorities set in the Act and Guidance, as well as the factual information..., the committee will evaluate each charge against these criteria.
2. Consult with charges as it deems necessary. All Kirk Sessions can make representations to and/or share ideas with the MPC
3. Arrange a time and place to meet individually with all Parish Ministers, the MDS worker, OLMs and IMs to hear from them.
4. Work with the Property committee to agree the classification for all ecclesiastical buildings in the Presbytery. The essential criterion for this process is that all buildings must serve the mission of the Presbytery and not the other way round.
5. At all times through this process, liaise and consult with the Faith Nurture Forum, the General Trustees (through the Property Committee) and apply the updated Guidance as it is produced from time to time.
6. Prepare a draft Mission Plan which sets out the mission priorities and rationale for each charge to present to Presbytery for an initial deliberation and debate.

(Proposed additional Presbytery meeting in January 2022, dependent on Faith Nurture schedule)

7. Taking on board the views of the Presbytery, MPC will work with charges, other Presbytery committees, the Faith Nurture Forum & General Trustees and present the Mission Plan for Presbytery's decision as soon as possible thereafter.

Playing our part

The General Assembly has acted decisively, and we too must now act on what **MUST** be done. The Mission Planning Committee has been given the remit of taking the lead on this work in conjunction with the Business Committee. However, it remains a task that involves the whole of presbytery, including everyone in every congregation. We all have a part to play. It's not enough that we have a conference, read some information, then wait to see what the committee comes up with and respond according to whether we like it or not. As the Planning Process indicates, there will be specific tasks for specific people and groups at various points. However, there are two things that everyone can do to help develop our Presbytery Mission Plan:

1. **PRAY** – It may seem obvious, but there cannot be too much prayer for the journey we are now on. This is something that **EVERYONE** can do, either individually, in groups, as congregations etc. It's also no cliché to say that 'unless the Lord builds the house' no plan we come up with would be worth the email it is attached to. So, please pray at every opportunity for...
 - Fresh vision, wisdom and energy for the members of the Mission Planning Committee
 - A tangible sense of Holy Spirit leading and guiding towards God's Mission Plan for our Presbytery
 - The courage and strength for each one of us to be able to let go of what needs to be laid down, and take hold of what needs to be taken up for us to be an effective and fruitful part of the body of Christ in this place. Whether that be buildings, ways of thinking, patterns of church or whatever.
 - God's Kingdom to Come in power, through the challenges of transition and into a new era of being church where He has placed us.
2. **COMMUNICATE** – At its September meeting, Presbytery 'instructed' Kirk Sessions to maintain a focus of consideration on all things to do with Mission Planning, and also 'encouraged' congregations to make it a focus for two Sundays over the next few months (one before, and one after Christmas). Over and above those more formal opportunities, we'd encourage church leaders and members to keep the conversation going about all this. Talk about our hopes, dreams, excitement, fears, challenges – everything! As we do, we'll encourage each other, ideas will no doubt emerge, and confidence will grow that God is in this.

Since the conference, we've already received some additional ideas and thinking behind them, and the committee welcomes and encourages more of this. By the time we come to presenting a final plan to Presbytery for approval, we hope there will already be a strong sense of shared ownership and enthusiasm about the way ahead.

Key Contacts

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