



Dear Friends

I wish you a Happy Easter, and hope that you managed to enjoy the blessings of the season. We continue in the Easter season for a while yet, enjoying the presence of the risen Jesus in our lives and all that means for us as individuals and as a Church.

As you are no doubt aware, the congregations are discussing a union at the moment via a group of representatives from each church, and this group has met twice now. There is great enthusiasm for joining together and this is to be commended, but there is some formal detail required as part of the process and this can be quite tricky to negotiate as it invokes deep emotions, especially around buildings. I will try to explain a bit about this in the hope that it may offer some clarity and some comfort.

The formal part is that we need to complete a document called 'Basis of Union'. This is the legal document each congregation must agree to and has several parts. The three parts which cause most discussion are;

- Name
- Minister
- Place of worship/Buildings

Each 'charge' as we know them needs to have a name which describes the geographical place it sits within. The format for this is PLACE:NAME, so for example at the moment the names of the current charges begin Kirkintilloch, and then there is the individual name so that you appear as Kirkintilloch St Mary's/Kirkintilloch St David's Memorial Park. The new name will need to be prefixed in the same way.

Because one current congregation has a sitting minister, SDMP would vote on whether the current minister is elected to serve the new united charge. The group of representatives have discussed this and feel this is not contentious.

The document also requires us to identify one of the buildings as the place of worship. Church of Scotland rules mean that we need to designate a place where the main diet of Sunday worship will take place, and in the case of a union, what will happen to the other building. Therefore, one of the buildings needs to appear on the document as the place where Sunday worship will take place. The other building appears as to be 'let, sold, or otherwise disposed of.' In the case of SMPC and SDMP the group want to make a case for keeping both buildings, but to do this we need to designate one as the Place of Worship and the other as the Outreach Centre. **I would like to be absolutely clear here that these designations do not in any way imply that one building is more special or more important than the other.** Your representative group has deemed both buildings essential for mission and worship, and they are working toward



making a case for both buildings to be retained. There is no guarantee this would be accepted by Presbytery or the National Church, but we are working hard to build the missional case for this.

It is important to note that this is a process and decisions will not be taken without consultation. Once the small group has reached a conclusion they will report to each Kirk Session, and if they agree the Basis of Union, it will be circulated to all members for comment. Once agreement has been reached a vote will take place so that all members can decide whether or not they will accept the Basis of Union. If both agree, and if Presbytery and the Faith Nurture Forum agree, a date will be set for a service of union to take place. This will only be after agreements have been reached and opportunities given for people to express their views.

There is still a way to go on this process and we will take as much time as it requires. We have four more sessions agreed with the group of representatives, but we can arrange more if need be. In the meantime, can I encourage you to speak to your reps and ask them to convey to the group anything you are unsure of, or anything you would like us to discuss. **It is really important that all feel they have had an opportunity to be heard and this is your chance to feed in anything you feel is important.**

Your reps are working hard on your behalf and are wrestling with some difficult questions. We have heard it expressed on more than one occasion at our meetings that there is a desire to reach out to the whole area, that mission is at the heart of everything done in your parishes. Alongside the formal document we will be producing another which will outline why we feel both buildings are crucial to that missional focus. This will provide the basis for the mission plan going forward, and again, this will be circulated and agreed before it is presented so that all can feel included in what is going out on your behalf.

I hope this update has been helpful to you and has given you a flavour of the discussions we have been having. We will continue discussions until a way forward which suits both congregations has been reached. In the meantime, I wish you every blessing as you continue to honour God in all that you do.

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Vacant Charge Enabler

Presbytery of Glasgow