



July 2023

Dear friends

Summer is upon us, and I hope that you have managed to enjoy some of the fine weather we have had, at the time of writing it has changed somewhat! The working group looking at the process of union were keen to offer an update now that we have had eight sessions together, with a break in discussions over the summer period.

Initially we had set aside six sessions to discuss the union, but this has had to be extended, and that is okay because as we have always said, what matters is that we are able to fully discuss all matters and be able to progress the union in terms that honour people. People and mission are at the heart of all we do so we want to get this right and allow members of the congregations to feel enabled to take part in whatever is decided. We have made progress and there are further meetings planned for local groups to come together to talk about how they can merge. We also encourage fellowship among the people of the congregations so that folk get to know each other that bit better. The timeline we agreed for the next couple of months is:

July/August – Committees meet together to discuss a way ahead.

August 23rd – Working group meets to put together a report for Kirk Sessions, including a draft Basis of Union document. If approved by Kirk Sessions at their meetings the following week this will be sent for approval by Presbytery.

August 30th – Kirk Sessions meet.

September – Working group meet to discuss next steps including communication to each congregation.

September 30th – Joint conference led by Kirk Sessions

It is hoped that we will have a draft Basis of Union document and mission plan by the time the Kirk Sessions meet in August. This will involve financial projections around the sustainability of the buildings, where Sunday worship will take place, and a revised mission plan document. Once these have been agreed by each Kirk Session a date can be set for congregational votes on the plan. Details of the process thereafter will be given, and the congregations will be kept fully informed at each stage. Please be assured that nothing will be decided without the full participation of the congregations.

Much of what we have needed to discuss is complex, and decisions of the General Assembly may have an influence on what we can and cannot propose. These are being given considerable thought as we plot a course ahead, looking for the best possible outcome to give the united charge a good start. Some really exciting ideas have been floated by group members as they envisage the church of the future, and



I would ask that you are able to always keep in mind the bigger picture. That bigger picture is of a church which will take these parishes into the future with certainty so that the focus can always be on proclamation of the good news for Kirkintilloch and beyond. All of us would dearly love to see full buildings with people being disciplined every day of the week, with the church being at the heart of the community, and that vibrancy reaching far beyond the walls of our buildings. For our church nationally that will require much change in our mindset, and clearly as part of a national church we also need to reflect on what must change in order to bring about that day when what we dream becomes reality. We know for sure that God is doing a new thing in Kirkintilloch, and we are heartened by that.

Many difficult issues have had to be addressed as we have worked our way through this process, others will need to be faced in time. What we would like to see may not be what is possible, and that may cause angst. But brighter days are ahead, of that I am convinced. I have observed that both people and mission are the fundamental factors in the minds and hearts of the congregations you represent with all else being, in a sense, peripheral. That is not to say that buildings or location for worship are not important, of course they are, and we are working hard to see if we can make a case for both sets of buildings, but togetherness is crucial whatever the final outcome. Your love for one another, your desire to see all of God's people cared for, and your missional focus are evident. Wherever, and whenever you meet, these will be your witness.

I pray that you will be able to enjoy some quality time over the summer period whether you are going on holiday or staying at home. Time to reflect is so important for our health and will benefit all of us when we return to the decision making process we must complete. I would encourage you over the summer period to visit the congregation you are not a member of and say hello, see how things work there. Enjoy the fellowship of your sisters and brothers in the other church, maybe even go for coffee during the week with new friends! I know many of you already do these things and this is great.

Have a blessed summer and thank you for your commitment to the gospel and to the church. Thank you to the members of the working group who have given of their time and skills to get us to this point, giving up their Thursday evenings so willingly and sharing their passion for the future. Know that you are loved and that you are precious in God's sight, whatever the weather has in store for us this summer know that you are wrapped in the warmth of God's love and secure in the knowledge that he has plans to prosper you.

Every blessing

Paul Cathcart, Vacant Charge Enabler, Presbytery of Glasgow