



Dear friends

It is appropriate that I write to you at this time of Pentecost, when we think of the birth of the church. As we look at the passage in Acts it is easy for us to get caught up in the excitement of that day when the Holy Spirit came down on the assembled throng, and to be amazed at the power of God who tore down even the barriers of language that day. For a short time each year we remind ourselves of that day and the significance of it more than 2000 years later, and far away from Jerusalem. That same power comes to the town of Kirkintilloch and is evident in so many ways through the witness of the church here. It is important that we remind ourselves anew that the same Holy Spirit works in and through us to renew and refresh the world with God's love.

The steering group have been looking at how the church continues that mission and has been meeting regularly, wrestling with the issues presented by the Presbytery Mission Plan (PMP). It is not easy to come to a mind on what the church will look like in the days to come, and there will not be a solution that suits everyone, but I am glad to report that progress has been made and the steering group will soon be ready to present a proposal to the Kirk Sessions and then to the congregations for approval. This has come about after many hours of discussion, much of which has been challenging. The group feel a deep sense of responsibility to everyone who is a member of either congregation and it goes without saying that each person on the steering group has their own affection for the church they have known. In order to have an objective discussion about how best the church can serve the gospel and the town members of the group have had to set aside their own feelings and this is not easy. At the heart of every discussion has been the mission of the church by the people of the church.

Soon the Kirk Sessions will be asked to deliberate the details of the proposal which will be put to them. I would ask that you pray for each elder as they do so, and that you are able, like them, to see the bigger picture of what is possible in the future rather than just the undoubted pain of this moment. At the last meeting of the group I told this story, a real life story. I live in East Kilbride and as I look out of my front window, I look on to a grassy area where children are encouraged to play. As well as grass we have trees and bushes, and for many years we have had magpies living in the trees. A couple of years ago some foxes appeared and were chased away by the magpies who did not want to share their space. But gradually the foxes got a bit braver and in time they made their home in the bushes having rebuffed the challenge of the magpies. They now coexist in this space, but what I have noticed is that the magpies now visit our back garden, something they did not do before the foxes arrived. This is fruitful (literally because they eat our blueberries!) for them but would not have happened had the foxes not moved in. The world of the magpies has



increased because the world changed around them and meant they had to do things differently. This may seem a silly story but as I reflect on where we as a national church are at the moment it resonates with me. Everything we knew and valued has changed and that is unsettling, yet if we venture out into that unknown perhaps, we will see rewards we could not have known existed.

In the days to come you will be asked to reflect and vote on a plan that will see church changed in the town, and it may challenge you as you too wrestle with the issues in front of you. As you do so, remember that this is God's plan for his church and where there are barriers, he will break them down. Change is not easy, and when that change means we feel we are losing something precious to us it can feel almost impossible, but on the day of Pentecost when things changed forever something was born, something we know as the church. As the church grew it spread out from east to west and we benefit from that movement of the Spirit today. The church did not stay static, it was dynamic and as the Holy Spirit directed the faithful, God's power was displayed in country after country. We long for a church that can do this in our time, so we pray for revival. When revival comes God will want people to be his instruments, so it is important that we are able to ground ourselves in readiness for his time.

I pray that in the days to come you feel the touch of the flames of Pentecost as Jesus sends the promised Holy Spirit to fill us with his power. Be immersed in what God is doing and embrace the challenges before us so that you may be equipped for what God has planned for you in Kirkintilloch. See beyond the immediate and into the possible. Nobody could have known what God had planned for the church after that day of Pentecost, they simply responded to what he was doing. I pray you can see what God is doing in Kirkintilloch, in Glasgow, and beyond. And as you do, may you be filled anew with the power of the Holy Spirit who causes you to go beyond all you have ever known and into his future in the faith that what lies ahead gives life in all its fullness.

I wish you every blessing.

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