

Abbotshall Church**Monday 15th May 2017**

Which place and date the Kirk Session met and was duly constituted with a reading and prayer.

- Sederunt** Ena Hudson with I Anderson, M Baxendine, J Browning, G Bruce, I Clark, S Docherty, A Duncan, R Duncan, B Farrell, Jane Gilmour, Jim Gilmour, G Houston, M Hope, J McLeod, M Michael, R Michael, J Napier, W Page, J Paton, M Petrie, M Scriven, E Smith, A Steward, K Wilkie, R Wright.
- Apologies** T Espie, J Farrell, E Fraser, R Henderson, A Moyes, D Murray, J Scott.
- Minutes** The minutes of the meetings held on Monday 8th May 2017 were approved.
- Presbytery Elders** The Session Clerk confirmed that Jenny McLeod wished to continue as the Representative Elder and that Elspeth Smith would also continue as a subsidiary Elder. She thanked them for their service to the congregation.
- KART** The Kirkcaldy Area Reachout Trust was seeking the use of the hall to hold its AGM on Tuesday 13th June. Mike Petrie agreed to make the necessary arrangements. The social convener would organise refreshments.
- Electoral Register** As this was now complete two copies were required to be sent to Presbytery to be attested. One copy would be returned and would be reviewed after six months. This copy would be used during the nomination process.
- The First Vote** The Interim Moderator introduced the first vote on a potential Minister in either a Same Sex Marriage or Civil Partnership by declaring her neutrality. She would not be expressing an opinion but would answer any questions which followed as:-
- Q. What are the two questions that we are to vote on?
A. To remain with the current arrangement or to agree to accept a Minister in a Civil Partnership or a Same Sex Marriage.
- Q. Is there any difference from the edict read on Sunday?
A. No this is as follows:-
- “In recognition of the diversity of views within the Church about the historic and current doctrine and practice of the Church in relation to human sexuality and in the interests of the peace and unity of the Church, departure from the practice of the Church in relation to human sexuality is permitted in certain circumstances.
- The purpose of the Kirk Session meeting just intimated will be for the Kirk Session to decide whether to depart from the

Church's practice in relation to human sexuality in order for applications for the current vacancy to be considered from, amongst others, individuals who are in a civil partnership or same sex marriage.

In terms of the process for a decision to depart contained in the Ministers and Deacons in Civil Partnerships and Same Sex Marriage Act (Act 1 2015), this will be the first meeting of the Kirk Session on this matter and therefore the vote will be of an indicative nature only. If the first vote is in favour of the decision to depart, it will require to be followed up at a subsequent meeting of the Kirk Session by a second vote in favour of the decision to depart in order for that decision to take effect. If the first vote is not in favour of the decision to depart, that decides the matter and no further vote will be held."

Q. Will the result of the vote be published in the Parish Profile?

A. The answer to this was not clear, however, she would seek guidance on this from the Presbytery Advisory Committee.

Q. Will the job description for a new Minister include an orientation statement?

A. No an orientation statement would not be included in the *Life & Work* advertisement but the Parish Profile would clarify the situation.

Q. Can a motion to remain with the current arrangements be made?

A. No there has to be a secret ballot.

Q. Are there any statistics available regarding the number of Ministers in either a Same Sex Marriage or Civil Partnership?

A. The Interim Moderator did not have any figures to hand, but she stated that there were very few, perhaps three or four at present.

One of the younger Elders indicated that society had now come to accept people of different orientation.

The Session Clerk advised that there were very few ministers likely to apply who were in either a Same Sex Marriage or Civil Partnership but that applicant's choices might be influenced by our decision. She also expressed a view that she was concerned that the Session would not be split by this issue and that all would follow the majority decision.

There was a concern that this one condition might discourage people from our Church as potential members as well as Minister. It was also noted that there are many facets to ministry which need to be considered.

The Vote

The Interim Moderator read from Isaiah 48v7 and James 1v5 . She then gave the Session time to reflect in silence before the vote and finished with a prayer.

Elders were individually registered to vote secretly and provided with a ballot paper indicating the two questions as follows:-

FOR departure from the Church's practice in relation to human sexuality in respect of Abbotshall parish Church

AGAINST departure from the Church's practice in relation to human sexuality in respect of Abbotshall parish Church.

The Result

17 Elders voted **FOR** a change

8 Elders voted **AGAINST** a change.

As the vote required a simple majority to be carried the Interim Moderator declared that those FOR a change were in the majority and consequently a second vote would now be required.

Further Questions

Q. Do we have to have a second vote?

A. Yes, as the Act requires there to be a second vote if there is a to be change from the current practice.

Q. Are we therefore departing from the traditional position that the Elders decision is final?

A. The second vote is in accordance with the Act which has been agreed by the General Assembly.

Q. Can the congregation be advised of the ballot results?

A. Yes, the ballot results can be made public.

Q. If there is a sole nominee in either a Same Sex Marriage or a Civil Partnership will the web site be amended to indicate this?

A. Not necessarily.

Q. Surely the congregation should be aware of a nominee in either a Same Sex Marriage or Civil Partnership?

A. This should not be concealed but should be made known to the congregation.

There was then a general discussion regarding the likely response of the congregation to a sole nominee in either a Same Sex Marriage or Civil Partnership. Consideration was also given to seeking the views of members.

Q. Surely this is such an important question that it merits a second vote after a period of reflection?

A. Yes and the congregation will ultimately decide on any nominee.

The support available for a new minister needs to be clarified

Elders

The potential working relationship between the new Minister and the Elders needs to be defined

Elders

Elders to seek Nominating Committee members from the congregation.

Elders

A Parish Profile is to be prepared.

Elders

Minute Clerk

Interim Moderator

DRAFT