

Abbotshall Church

Monday 8th May 2017

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

Advisory Committee	The Interim Moderator welcomed the Presbytery Advisory Committee consisting of the Rev. Tony Fowler the Minister of Templehall Church, Mrs. Mary Cook the retired Session Clerk of St Margaret's Glenrothes and Graham Harrower from Bennoch Church.
Sederunt	Ena Hudson with I Anderson, M Baxendine, J Browning, G Bruce, A Duncan, B Farrell, Jane Gilmour, Jim Gilmour, R Henderson, G Houston, M Hope, J McLeod, M Michael, R Michael, A Moyes, J Napier, W Page, J Paton, M Petrie, M Scriven, E Smith, A Steward, G Webster, R Wright.
Apologies	S Docherty, R Duncan, J Farrell, D Murray, J Scott, K Wilkie.
Minutes	The minutes of the meetings held on Wednesday 26 th April 2017 were approved.
Introduction by the Interim Moderator	The Interim Moderator introduced the Presbytery Advisory Committee and then asked the Rev. Fowler to speak to the meeting.
Introductory comments from Rev. Fowler	<p>The Rev. Fowler apologised for the cancelled meeting on 8th April. He explained that the Advisory Committee has a supporting role during a vacancy and is available to meet at any time on request for consultation. Mary Cook had recent experience of the vacancy process as a Session Clerk.</p> <p>The committee's role is to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guide the Elders' deliberations on the type of minister best suited to Abbotshall• Help the Elders' identify the key aspects of the new ministry• Clarify the support available for a new minister• To establish how the Elders will work with a new minister. <p>All of this should be in the Parish Profile.</p> <p>The Kirk Session is responsible for :-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparing the Electoral Register• Deciding if the congregation wish to depart from its historic and current practice regarding Ministers in Civil Partnership or a Same Sex Marriage• Excluding disqualified people from serving on the Nominating Committee• Arranging a ballot if the more than thirteen people

volunteer for the Nominating Committee

- Ensuring that there is no interference with the Nominating Committee once its work has started
- Ensuring that there are no leakages of information from the Nominating Committee
- Ensuring that there are no approaches made to the Nominating Committee
- Its final role is to accept a nominee and to publish the name.

Initial Questions

The following questions were then considered.

Q. How soon can a Nominating Committee be appointed?

A. As soon as a decision is reached regarding Ministers in Civil Partnership or a Same Sex Marriage and the Parish Profile is prepared.

Q. Please clarify the possible number of people on a Nominating Committee?

A. The maximum is thirteen and most congregations consider a minimum of seven to be practical drawing people from all the key aspects of the Church. There must be an odd number.

Q. What constitutes a good and a bad Parish Profile?

A. The Parish profile should be realistic, honest and also include weaknesses. It is critical that the Parish Profile attracts suitable candidates.

Q. How long should the Parish Profile be

A. Morag Michael reviewed the contents of the last Abbotshall Parish Profile. It was agreed that this was comprehensive, however, colour should be used and pictures added. The document's contents should be carefully selected, concise, relevant and attractive. A good model is a house sales brochure. The document can be delegated to a small working party, usually requires several iterations and ultimately has to be approved by the Kirk Session.

Q. Is there a list of ministers who are interested in vacancies?

A. An email with a link to vacant charges is sent out to all ministers and is regularly updated. The vacancy should also be advertised on the congregation's web site.

Q. Can a congregation approach potential candidates?

A. Yes "head hunting" is permissible and some congregations send out their Parish Profile to recommended ministers.

Q. Is it not difficult to get recommendations?

A. Yes but other ministers may make recommendations and

there are currently a lot of new ministers completing training. Newly trained ministers are in strong demand and they have to be in the final stages of their training.

Q. Currently there seems to be about forty six vacancies in Scotland and three abroad.

A. There are many more than that, however, some of these may be charges awaiting readjustment. Currently there are a lot of ministers nearing retirement and so the number of vacancies is likely to rise to about two hundred in the next few years.

Q. Is there a time limit before a Nominating Committee is subjected to a review?

A. After about two years a Nominating Committee will be changed if it is the cause of a lack of progress. The Presbytery meeting in December approved the current plan that Abbotshall should continue to have a minister but acknowledged that this may be difficult due to the shortage of suitable candidates. It should be noted that sometimes it is better to decline a sole nominee rather than calling an unsuitable minister. This can be a better decision and should be kept in mind.

Q. Is Abbotshall already on the vacancy list?

A. Not yet until we start formally seeking applicants but there will already be verbal communications and the “word” will “be getting about”.

Electoral Register

No adherents had requested to be added to the register which was now complete and so could be finalised the following week.

Buildings Inspection

The Interim Moderator had been provided with comprehensive lists detailing the status of all the Church, Manse and Halls fabric and she thanked Mike Petrie for his diligence in this. An inspection was scheduled for the next evening Tuesday 9th May. She advised that a suitable manse, a church and hall buildings in good order were important as this does have an impact on potential new ministers.

Concerns for a New Minister

The Rev. Fowler clearly advised the Session that thought should be given to stewardship and finance as a new minister had to cope with getting to know the congregation, the parish, the Church, the people and a new job in a new town. Problems with finance and fabric would place too heavy a burden in the incumbent. All pulpit supply and expenses during the vacancy should be paid with courtesy and tact.

Mary Cook’s Experience

She had recent experience of the vacancy process. There had been some very strong people who might have unbalanced the Nominating Committee but this was resolved. There had been a good Interim Moderator who had attended all the meetings to

encourage team work. They had studied the Church of Scotland Year Book to find prospective candidates. Differences within the committee had been resolved with help from the Presbytery. There had been difficulties due to the need for both a traditional and a family service, however, these differences had been set aside. Progress reports only had been made to the Kirk Session which had received no information about the internal workings of the Nominating Committee.. The change of minister had reinvigorated the congregation.

**Further
Questions**

Questions for the Advisory Committee continued.

Q. Is the Nominating Committee allowed to report back to the Session?

A. Yes but it should be as secretive and private as possible and not questioned for details. It should be given total freedom to do its work.

Q. Are congregations allowed to call a minister if finance and fabric are not in good order?

A. Yes this can be a barrier but six months into a new ministry these should not be a problem.

Q. Have the finances of Abbotshall been taken into account when we were allowed to call a minister?

A. Yes, this will all have been taken into account.

Q. How can we go about selecting a diverse Nominating Committee?

A. This is a task for the Session which should use its knowledge of the congregation to identify and approach people to create a Nominating Committee with a balance of gifts and talents. Elders should consider their members in advance and approach them individually.

Q. Can we canvass people for the Nominating Committee in advance?

A. Yes it is best to approach people in advance.

Q. Should we formulate a list of potential candidates?

A. It is more appropriate to leave the final decision to the members of the congregation. Also it allows people to consider matters before they are nominated and allows them to make a time considered decision.

Q. Can Elders mention being nominated to members during communion visits?

A. Yes, provided such conversations are kept private between the Elder and the member.

Q. What practical steps are taken if there are more than thirteen nominees?

A. Be careful and rely on the congregation to choose by secret

ballot.

Q. Should we make a nominee seeking announcement?

A. Yes, it seems appropriate that the Elders should seek out people from the congregation. There will be a specific service at which nominees can be brought forward.

Q. It has been difficult to get volunteers for the Congregational Board and so how will nominees be forthcoming?

A. The Elders must search the congregation.

Q. What happens on the day that the Nominating Committee is formed?

A. Each nominee should have a proposer and seconder and if there are more than thirteen nominees there is a vote.

Q. Should nominees be aware in advance of their prospective nomination?

A. Yes, but it is also possible to nominate people on the day and to nominate people who are not at the service provided that they have agreed in advance to be nominated and have a good reason for their absence.

Q. As communion attracts the largest congregation is this a good service for the formation of the Nominating Committee?

A. Yes, but edicts have to be read and this process is unlikely to be completed in time for the June communion service. Subsequently the process was reviewed and it was agreed that the election would be after the Communion service on 4th June.

Q. Should Elders be seeking the members' views on potential ministers in either a Same Sex Marriage or Civil Partnership?

A. Only if the Session decides to depart from the traditional position at its first meeting to consider the subject.

Diary dates

Saturday 13th May morning The congregation's Electoral Roll will be on public view in the halls at the time of the coffee morning

Sunday 14th May morning The congregation's Electoral Roll will be on public view in the Church following the morning service.

Monday 15th May 6.00pm Session meeting to finalise the Electoral Roll. First vote on the potential employment of a minister in Civil Partnership or Same Sex Marriage.

Wednesdays 31st May 2 pm Friendship Circle in the Kennedy hall

Sunday 4th June Sunday 9.00am and 11.00am Celebration of the Lord's Supper

Monday 5th June 7.30pm Second vote on the potential employment of a minister in Civil Partnership or Same Sex Marriage
Sunday 11th June 12 noon Election of the Nominating Committee after the church service
Wednesdays 28th June 2.pm Friendship Circle in the Kennedy hall.

Dates of next meetings Monday 15th May 6.00pm to finalise the Electoral Roll. First vote on the potential employment of a minister in a Civil Partnership or Same Sex Marriage.

Closing Prayer The Rev. Fowler closed the meeting with prayer.

Action Items	The Session Clark agreed to arrange for a substitute Minister to take worship on Sunday 28 th May.	Morag
	The type of minister best suited to Abbotshall needs to be deliberated	Elders
	The key aspects of the new ministry need to be identified	Elders
	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