

Kintore Parish Church of Scotland

SC001406 Registered Scottish Charity

16 June 2018

Dear friends,

Our fourth and final Strategic Planning Conference 2018 was held on the 22nd of May. After a brief summary of the process so far, we broke into groups to brainstorm ideas for experiments that we could embark on as a congregation to take us forward on our Path of Renewal. I then presented a suggestion of how we could structure our leadership groups and committees in order to continue the process of innovation and experimentation. Before giving you the list of experiments that emerged from the meeting, let me give you a brief summary of the proposal that will go before Session in June to embed transformation into our structures themselves.

One of the principles of the Reformation (dating back to the 15th century!) is the idea that the church should always be reforming – it should continually re-examine itself in order to maintain its purity of doctrine and practice in the light of its Christ-given mission. This is not simply a matter of “staying relevant” – it is about remaining true to our mission in the midst of a changing context. As we have considered at length over the past two years, the rapid changes in culture and society surrounding the church makes this imperative all the more urgent and ongoing. If the church’s problem in the recent past has been that we have been too slow to change or even immovable in the face of our changing context, then we should not expect that moving from one monolithic position to a new monolithic way of being will solve the problem. No sooner will we take up this new position than it too will be outdated. Instead the solution must lie in dynamism. We need to lighten up about change, be prepared to be light on our feet, accept that most new ventures won’t last long, even if they are good changes and that many changes will be false starts that will need to be corrected as we go along.

An analogy from the business world may be instructive here: Companies that have proven successful during the rapid technological and societal changes of the past few decades have been the ones who have been quick to adapt their ways of doing business – letting go of old methods, technologies and media and embracing new ones. They have done so easily by holding tight to a clear profit motive but holding very loosely to any “ways of doing business”. Churches don’t have a profit-motive of course, but we do have a very simple and clear mission that we can hold to tightly, which will free us to move easily between different “ways of doing business” (i.e. ways of practicing our faith). Over the course of the two years that we have been part of Path of Renewal and over the four Strategic Planning Conferences, it has become clear that the simple mission before us as a local congregation of Jesus’ church can be stated in three imperatives:

Hospitality: To have worship and fellowship that is inviting and welcoming to all, especially strangers.

Discipleship: To nurture spiritual formation and development amongst all our members.

Mission: To engage meaningfully in the life, justice and wellbeing of our wider community.

The proposal for changes to our leadership structure is that, instead of changing our committee structure now once and for all, we rather initiate a system that will review the committee structure and personnel at regular intervals (say, every three years) and that will grant permission for experimentation to emerge at any time in accordance with our three guiding principles of mission. The role of the Kirk Session would be (in addition to its statutory role as board of Trustees) to give permission and encouragement to committees and experiments, to provide ongoing monitoring and support to leaders of activities and to exercise stewardship through regular evaluation and renewal of activities.

Before the end of our series of strategic planning conferences, 35 members committed themselves to participate in a variety of committees and experiments. I am extremely grateful to all those who took part in this process with energy and enthusiasm and also with wisdom and grace. I am excited about the possibilities that will emerge as the experiments, listed below, begin to take shape in the coming months.