

Church of Scotland
Presbytery of Caithness
Pulteneytown and Thrumster Parish Church

Five-Year Plan
2014-2019

*“Put GOD in charge of your work,
then what you’ve planned will take place”*

Proverbs 16:3¹

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Purpose

This plan sets out the aims and plans of the congregation of Pulteneytown and Thrumster Parish Church (P&T) for the period September 2014 to September 2019. It was approved by the Kirk Session at its meeting on 5th October 2014.

The plan is to be used to guide decisions of the Kirk Session and Congregational Board on priorities and the allocation of resources. It does not represent a comprehensive account of all the congregation does or will do; it provides a framework within which office-bearers and all members of the congregation can exercise their ministry for the advancement of God's Kingdom in this corner of His world.

Implementation

The plan will be implemented by the Kirk Session and Congregational Board, as appropriate. They will prioritise and assign actions and, at their regular meetings, review progress. After actions have been completed their effectiveness in forwarding the mission of the church will be discussed.

Review

The plan will be reviewed annually in September. The Kirk Session will examine progress and consider whether any changes should be made in the light of experience and circumstances.

Mission Statement

The aim of the congregation is to help people of all ages be disciples of Jesus and be part of a loving Christian community.

We seek to do this through being faithful to the teaching of God's Word. The Bible is very important to us. Our prayer is that the Word of God, Jesus, as revealed in the Scripture, will be the centre of our life and activities.

Status of the Charge

In the Presbytery Ten Year Plan approved by Presbytery in January 2013, P&T retained full status: in the event of vacancy, the congregation may make an unrestricted call for a full-time minister of word and sacrament.

The charge is currently in vacancy with a locum minister providing two days pastoral care a week and conducting most of the Sunday services.

As a member of the East Coast Churches' Grouping within the Presbytery (along with Wick St Fergus and Latheron Parish) P&T may bid for 0.3FTE contract effort, either alone or with the others in the Grouping.

Pulteneytown Church, Thrumster Church and the Manse are listed as 'Category A' in the Presbytery Plan (defined in Church of Scotland terminology as 'buildings likely to remain in use beyond the lifetime of the Ten Year Plan').

Vacancy

Our priority is to appoint a new minister. We will approach this task with prayerful care. Given that our previous ministry was unexpectedly short, we are having a period of reflection and planning before we advertise the vacancy. Key actions are:

1. Drawing up this Plan.
2. Decision on future manse provision.
3. Reviewing and revising Communicants' and Adherents' Rolls.
4. Election of Nominating Committee.
5. Preparation of Parish Profile in accordance with this Plan.

Worship

"There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan

that can succeed against the LORD." Proverbs 21.30

Sunday worship is the centrepiece of the congregation's life, but we hope that an attitude of worship will pervade all we do.

We expect our services to be conducted through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Preaching will have a bias towards the expository though we are open to other scripturally-based approaches.

Services are held at 11.30 (Pulteneytown), 15.00 (Thrumster) and 18.30 (Pulteneytown). We intend to continue with this pattern. In the period of the Plan we recognise that we will need to consider whether to continue with three services every Sunday.

During the vacancy we intend that current patterns of worship will be maintained. We would like to take this opportunity to involve more people in the services, inviting them to read, lead prayer, and give their testimonies. We have members who are able and willing to lead services and we will encourage them to continue doing so. We also appreciate the ministry of lay preachers from out-with the congregation who lead our services from time to time.

With a new minister we would like to try a more contemporary style of worship, in the evenings particularly, which might appeal more to people in the teens to 40 age group, while hopefully not putting off the older members. We would like to encourage musicians to form a praise band which would supplement organ-accompanied worship. We recognise that such changes need to be made carefully, with sensitivity for those who may not feel comfortable. Change must be properly explained and managed.

We would also be interested in exploring other ways of presenting worship to those who are not able, or choose not, to attend Sunday services: for example, web-cam broadcast; recording of services.

Bible Study / Prayer Meeting

We have a Prayer Meeting, held on Wednesday evenings, which is much appreciated by those who regularly take part. However, those who do attend are a small proportion of the congregation. We agree that prayer should be central to what we do together, and that in many growing churches the prayer meeting is regarded as the 'powerhouse' of the church. At this time, we do not know what to do to increase the importance of the meeting in our fellowship, but we wish to explore what we could do differently, including considering whether the traditional Bible study/prayer meeting is the best approach. Perhaps people would respond to a format which allows them to express their prayers in other ways: for example, through 'prayer stations'; creative writing; drawing; 'Post-It' notes on a prayer-wall.

Organisations

Guild: We will continue to encourage the Guild in all they do. We will ask them if they would like to participate in an annual Guild Service.

Sunday Club: We would like to find out more about how to do 'Messy Church'. We recognise that doing this properly will require training, resources and a dedicated team of leaders. But we believe this is an effective way of involving children and their parents in the church.

Youth: We will continue to encourage the youth group and be attentive to their needs for resources and guidance.

Others: We value the contribution made to the life of the church by the 'Golden Years' group, 'Knit n' Natter' and the Wednesday Coffee Bar.

The elders will appoint individual elders to liaise with each of these organisations, including making at least two visits annually to their meetings.

Pastoral Care

"We plan the way we want to live,

but only GOD makes us able to live it." Proverbs 16:9

An immediate priority is to revise the Communicants' and Adherents' Rolls. The elders' districts will be reviewed and revised and a programme of visits to all members and adherents carried out. This will be followed by supper evenings for the people in each district (possibly with two districts meeting together), either in the church premises or the manse or the elder's home.

We will explore three new initiatives:

1. A telephone help-line service for lonely people who need to chat. This could be set up in the church premises and be available two or three times a week at advertised times. A team of people would be trained in how to respond to calls. We will learn first from other churches which have successfully done this.
2. DVD ministry to shut-ins. This would require equipment and competent operators.
3. Use of emails and/or text messages to communicate with congregation members during the week, to help them to feel more a part of the church.

External outreach

“We humans keep brainstorming options and plans

but GOD’s purpose prevails.” Proverbs 19:21

We believe we must play our part in carrying out Christ’s Great Commission. Most importantly, people outside the church should be able to see Christ in us as we go about our lives in the community.

We aim to take the following initiatives:

1. Look for opportunities for community celebration (as for the Harbour Fest).
2. Use the PPP facilities for events which will attract people who are unlikely to come into the church building.
3. Make the Coffee Bar available for weekly soup and sandwich lunches, open to all.
4. Undertake training in evangelism, to help us in our personal witness and to enable us to form an outreach team. We will invite Steve Aisthorpe (Mission and Discipleship Council) to run a training day for us.
5. Follow-up visits to, and events for, the parents of children who come to the Holiday Club.
6. Devise activities to reach particular groups – e.g. young parents. Consider organising a Holiday Club reunion. Hold a service (possibly annually) for parents who have lost young children.
7. Draw up a job specification for a Youth Worker and apply to Presbytery for the 0.3 FTE for this purpose.
8. Learn to use social media for promoting the church and its activities.
9. Consider running Alpha and (if the Youth Group are supportive) Youth Alpha.

We will seek to do all these activities in collaboration with other churches, if they are agreeable (see below). We will also aim to respond positively to any outreach initiatives they propose.

Collaboration

“Form your purpose by asking for counsel,

then carry it out using all the help you can get.” Proverbs 20:18

We believe that the most effective outreach to the community will be through collaborative efforts by all the Christian fellowships. We aim to:

1. Inform other churches in the area of any outreach initiatives we are taking, and invite their support.
2. Continue to work with the other churches in the East Coast Grouping.

Stewardship

We will conduct a Stewardship Campaign, using the Church of Scotland resources, in early 2015. This will be led by our locum minister who has run such a campaign elsewhere. Our aim is to increase committed giving and the number of people using Gift Aid.

Property

“Careful planning puts you ahead in the long run;

hurry and scurry puts you further behind.” Proverbs 21.5

The top priority issue is to decide on future manse provision. Actions to be taken are:

1. Establish the legal ownership of the current manse.
2. Consult Church of Scotland General Trustees and Legal Department on ownership of current manse and possible new manse, and funding of new manse.
3. Establish market value of current manse and cost of suitable repairs and upgrades.
4. Decide whether to build a new manse or buy an existing house.
5. Identify building plot (if relevant).
6. Draw up plans for new manse (if relevant).
7. Final decision.

We do not plan to make any major changes to the churches or halls in this period. We will continue to work to the structured maintenance plan.

The Congregational Board will review current usage of the buildings and explore whether there is scope to make them available more widely to voluntary and commercial organisations.

The Board will examine the cost and feasibility of replacing the minibus which is expected to reach the end of its useful life in 2015. This will include consultation with the people and organisations which currently use it to make sure there is a sound business case for the next 5+ years.

Conclusion

“Mortals make elaborate plans,

but GOD has the last word.” Proverbs 16:1