



**Cathedral Church of St Machar
Old Aberdeen**

Charity No. SC 008157

TO ALL MEMBERS AND ADHERENTS OF ST MACHAR'S CATHEDRAL

10TH September 2020

Dear Friends

Vacancy Process: Recruitment of New Minister

- (a) Election of Nominating Committee**
- (b) Consideration of Candidates in Same Sex Relationships**

Election of Nominating Committee

I am pleased to report that we have made progress in the journey. In "normal times" we would now hold a meeting after morning worship when we would elect a Nominating Committee to find a minister to be considered by the Congregation. But the Corona Virus has made it impossible to follow this procedure. Even although we have now resumed weekly worship, church meetings of this size are still not authorised. In any event, our attendance limit for services is set at 50, so it would exclude a substantial part of our normal congregation.

So the Commissioners to the General Assembly have authorised the appointment of Nominating Committees by postal ballot. Accordingly, I am inviting you to nominate anyone whom you think suitable to be a member of the Nominating Committee. To assist you in this process, I attach a brief note of its tasks, to give you an idea of what is involved, and a Nomination Form. I would ask that nominations be returned to me not later than 5pm on **Wednesday 30th September**. You may choose to send your nomination to me by post at the Cathedral, or you can email me at bryce.grant@outlook.com. The use of the Nomination Form is not mandatory (It is my invention and has no status). But it is intended as a useful check up on what you need to include: your own name and address, the name and address of your nominee, the name and address of a seconder and a statement that your "victim" knows what you have in mind and that she/he is prepared to stand. Because of the difficulty in meeting up, I am not looking for counter signatures from seconds or nominees. But I am relying on anyone making a proposal to have both to the nominee and to the seconder.

There are 13 places on the Committee, and if more than 13 nominations are received, the regulations require me to issue ballot papers to you all for a postal vote. I look forward to hearing from you.

Consideration of Candidates in Same Sex Marriages or Civil Partnerships

The current Church of Scotland position on candidates in same sex relationships is that they may not normally be called or inducted to a charge. But the Church recognises the deeply held views on both sides of this question, and by an Act of 2015 have permitted



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Kirk Sessions to vote by secret ballot on whether or not to depart from the Church's established position and to consider candidates for their vacancy who are in such relationships. The procedure does not force the Session to take any step – if the Session simply does nothing and the selection process goes on then no such candidates can be considered. But should the Session wish to consider the matter, they have to set dates for two meetings at which they will deliberate then vote on whether or not to consider such candidates. The first vote is deliberative in nature, while the second is formal and binding. If at either meeting the vote goes against the consideration of such candidates, the matter then drops. But if a positive vote is carried at both meetings, by secret ballot, then the Nominating Committee, when appointed, will be under obligation to comply with the Kirk Session's position, and to receive and consider applications from such candidates

The Kirk Session of St Machar's Cathedral has already agreed to consider the matter and so the first meeting on the matter will take place at the already scheduled Kirk Session meeting on 24th September at 7.30pm.

If required, the second meeting will take place a fortnight later, on Thursday 8th October. Kirk Session meetings are of course all held "virtually" for the moment and secret ballots will utilise the secret facility on Zoom.

The decision is one for the Session to make, and the Act is silent on the right of any individual to make representations. But I should consider it part of my duty to make Session aware of any comments or opinions I receive,

Summary

As can be seen, there is a lot going on, and I hope I have explained it adequately. But it is all positive and if things go according to plan, we should have the Nominating Committee up and running by the end of October. But I shall ensure, by letter, email or social media that you are kept informed. In any event, if anyone wishes to find out more about the Nominating Committee or to discuss the procedures around ministers in same sex relationships, both the Interim Moderator, Rev Ian Aitken and I are available for discussion. Ian's contact details are:

Phone: 01224 686929; email: laitken@churchofscotland.org.uk.

With every good wish,

Alan Grant
Session Clerk

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