

VACANCY UPDATE FEBRUARY 2020

As promised, we continue our series of briefing notes, trying to keep the Congregation informed and involved in all developments relating to the filling of the ministerial vacancy. As we move into the new year, there is no shortage of issues to be addressed. This note, therefore will deal not only with the arrangements for the holding of services, but also the evolution of the Presbytery Plan, and the carrying out this year, of the repairs to the roof and the stained glass windows and the cleaning of the heraldic ceiling.

Pulpit Cover

We have been able to fulfil the normal service arrangements so far and I see no reason why that should not continue. We are blessed with the regular support of a core team of ministers, some of whom are members of the congregation, and their support and that of other friends who have preached here is deeply appreciated.

We have a full schedule up until Palm Sunday, and this includes a service on Ash Wednesday, 26th February. I am now planning the arrangements for Holy Week, Easter and the period beyond. The Kirk Session has confirmed that the normal arrangements for Holy Week will apply, and there will be services every evening of the week, with two on Good Friday. A list of those services is appended to this note and will be publicised on the Website etc.

Presbytery Plan

Progress is being made with the Presbytery Plan. The Presbytery have extended the period for comments until early March and intend to finalise the plan in April. This is at one level to be welcomed: there has been a great deal of uncertainty over the plan and it would be helpful to get clarity. And it would of course bring forward the day when we can be permitted to begin the search for our new minister.

But there are still very serious concerns about the detail of the plan and the timescales for its implementation. The Kirk Session acknowledges the potential value of working in a Partnership Group of four churches, and in particular we see the value of a linkage with St George's as a first step. But there is a feeling that the implications, both in terms of governance and financial management of creating a team of what are currently four separate churches, under a single Kirk Session, have not yet been thought through or at any rate not yet fully articulated. So, there is work to be done, in our view, before we can be confident of the direction of travel.

We have been trying to instigate regular discussions both with our partner churches and with the Convener of the Planning and Deployment Committee of Presbytery. It has been frustrating that these meetings have not been as easy to organise, nor as regular as we would have liked but meetings with both are due in the next ten days and we shall report.

It is of course open to any member of the congregation or any other individual to make his/her views known either through the elders or direct to the Presbytery

Office. But we are anxious that the views of the wider congregation are coordinated and presented with the final views of the Kirk Session. We are therefore holding an Open Meeting of the Kirk Session on Thursday 27th February at 7.30pm. The venue is not yet fixed but may be the Cathedral rather than Dunbar Street Hall, the usual Kirk Session venue. We would hope to set out the essence of the Plan, state the Kirk Session position and ingather comments from a wider base of the congregation. More details will follow.

Commencement of Works

As you will be very aware, the next stage of works, involving the repair of the roof the repair of the Stained Glass and the cleaning of the Heraldic Ceiling, is due to begin in the Spring. The tenders are due to be returned on 14th February and if all is in order a Contractor will be chosen and works will commence in the week beginning 27th April. The contract period is six months and the repaired and refurbished Cathedral will be back looking at its best by mid October 2020.

For most of that time we will be worshipping in the Cathedral as normal. But a necessary change to our scaffolding design has meant that for a period of 3-5 weeks at the beginning of the contract, and for a similar period at the end, the Cathedral will have to be closed. This is to allow for the construction and down taking of scaffolding. After much deliberation the Kirk Session has decided that during those two periods, Sunday worship will be held in the Dunbar Street Hall. Many will remember that we did this when we installed the new central heating back in 2010.

For the rest of the contract period, services will take place in the Cathedral as normal. Scaffolding will be very visible, and the ceiling will be obscured, but access to the nave and the chancel will be free and there is no reason why services cannot be held here.

Congregation Briefing

This note is intended to be helpful and informative. But we recognise it may raise questions on any of the matters raised. So, after morning worship on Sunday 9th February, there will be a short presentation from the Kirk Session on the subjects discussed in this note. It is intended to give anyone with concerns a chance to ask questions get more information and to have a chance to state concerns,

Dates for the Diary:

Congregation Briefing: Sunday 9th February 12.30pm.

Open Meeting of Kirk Session to discuss Presbytery Plan: Thursday 27th February 7.30pm.

Commencement of Works of Repair: Tuesday 28th April.

Holy Week Services:

Monday 6th April – Thursday 9th April all at 7.30pm

Good Friday 10th April Services at 12noon and 7.30pm

