

Presbytery of Perth

Summary of the Presbytery Meeting of September 9th 2025

SCOTLAND DEMANDS BETTER

David Bradwell, the Public Life & Social Justice Manager of the Church of Scotland, gave details about the 'Scotland Demands Better' campaign which aimed to highlight and address issues of poverty in Scotland. Members of Presbytery and local congregations were encouraged to support a march in Edinburgh on the 25th October: <https://www.scotland-demands-better.com/>

VACANCIES

Dundee Law

The Rev Stuart Sharp, minister at Killearn linked with Strathblane, had been elected as Minister A within the Team Ministry at Dundee Law Parish Church and the Presbytery sustained the Call to Stuart. Stuart told Presbytery that he had experienced a mixture of excitement about his new ministry in Dundee, and sadness about leaving his congregation of Killearn linked with Strathblane. The Rev Peter Kaela, an Assistant Minister at Menstrie Parish Church, was elected as Minister B within the Team Ministry the Call was signed by was signed by 110 members and adherents, with a further 12 who signed the Induction will take place on Tuesday October 28th.

Dundee Craigowl

Mr Chris Barlas, a Probationary Minister at the Mount Kirk, Greenock linked with Greenock East End Church had been elected as minister of Dundee Craigowl Church and Presbytery sustained the Call to Chris. The Induction will take place on Tuesday October 21st.

Sidlaw

Presbytery bade farewell to the Rev Donna Hays, who is retiring from Sidlaw Parish Church. Donna said that throughout her long Ministry, served latterly at Sidlaw, she had sought to put people first. She had been honoured to have been called as the first Moderator to the new Presbytery of Perth. The Moderator wished her God's richest blessing.

Almondbank and Tibbermore linked with Methven and Logiealmond

Presbytery also thanked the Rev Robert Malloch for his services to the charge of Almondbank and Tibbermore linked with Methven and Logiealmond and the Moderator wished him God's richest blessing. The Rev Dave Rankin was appointed as Interim Moderator.

BEING A TRUSTEE

The Clerk gave a visual presentation about the responsibilities of being a Trustee which were to:

- Ensure accountability and act with reasonable care and skill.
- Manage resources responsibly in the charity's best interests.
- Ensure compliance with legal requirements and public benefit purposes.

Trustees had general control and management of charity affairs which included Assembly Trustees, Presbytery, Kirk Sessions, Congregational Board members and Deacon's Court members. The Church of Scotland was a designated religious charity (DRC) with procedures for handling complaints and misconduct within the charity framework.

CONGREGATIONAL ACTION PLANS

The convener, Robert Nicol, presented a report about Action Plans.

The 2025 General Assembly had repealed the Local Church Review Act (Act I 2011). The Faith Action Programme Leadership Team (FAPLT) had concluded that the LCR process was too demanding for the limited resources available to Presbyteries. They were also aware that Presbyteries would take 10 years to complete the cycle of what were supposed to be 5-yearly reviews. Instead of being subject to an LCR, each charge was now required to have a 5-year Action Plan. This Plan must be developed and approved by the Kirk Sessions of the charge, who were required to consult Presbytery. The Congregational Support Committee would manage this on behalf of Presbytery and would aim to assist Kirk Sessions with the task, not as 'inspectors', but by providing challenge and encouragement.

We should not lose completely the focus that was given by the old Plan of Action. The new, exhaustive, list would give equal weight to 'boilerplate' issues as to missional forward thinking and could lead to a 'tick-box' approach. Sessions should therefore prioritise and pick out the 3 or 4 items that they saw as being essential to the realisation of their vision, as opposed to what needed to be done to just keep going.

Sessions would be asked to put themselves in one of three categories:

- i) Already have a satisfactory Plan of Action and are confident in developing it into an Action Plan.
- ii) Have a good idea of what to do, but would like some advice.
- iii) Have no existing Plan of Action and are not sure where to begin.

Kirk Sessions of vacant charges should nonetheless develop an Action Plan and may find that their Parish Profile will be a good starting-point.

The committee would issue guidance to Kirk Sessions on how to prepare an Action Plan. There would be a template for the Plan, which was being prepared by the Principal Clerk's Department and FAPLT.

APPRENTICESHIP ROUTE

The Very Rev Dr Martin Fair presented a verbal report with a video presentation. The Apprenticeship Route provided a wider access into the ministry and would be for:

1. Discernment
2. Formation
3. Classroom Learning
4. Hands-on Learning

He was delighted that 11 apprentices, 5 from the Tayside area had now started and was excited about how God would shape and prepare them for a life of service. Members of Presbytery were asked to hold each in prayer.

BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Given the size of the Presbytery and the role of Moderator, the Business Committee proposed to appoint an Associate Moderator to work alongside the Moderator during his/her year in office.

Several bursary accounts previously managed by former Presbyteries were incurring bank charges and showing no financial growth. To address this, Rev. Prof. Lesley Stanley and Nigel Orr were tasked with reviewing the funds to explore more effective use. Following their investigation, the bursary monies were consolidated into the general Presbytery account. These funds would now be held as restricted assets, ensuring they continued to serve their original intended purposes whilst benefiting from more efficient financial management.

The Rt Rev Rosie Frew, Moderator of the General Assembly, would visit the Presbytery twice: October 1–5, 2025 and March 25–29, 2026. The October visit would focus on the eastern side, while March centred on Tayside. A programme of events was planned for October, ending with a Songs of Praise service at Dunblane Cathedral on October 5th.

It was a requirement of OSCR that when accounts were submitted they must contain the names of all Trustees unless an exemption had been granted. The Presbytery was required to submit details of Trustees, including names and dates of birth, and that information would be held by OSCR. Kirk Sessions were required to do the same and failure to comply would result in removal as a Trustee.

Presbytery congratulated the following ministers on reaching significant anniversaries of their Ordination:

David Searle

60 years

Blair Gillon	50 years
Alexander Stewart	50 years
Michael Erskine	40 years
George Gammack	40 years
Andrew Greaves	40 years
Alan Miller	25 years
Margaret Steele	25 years
Nicola Frail	25 years
Geoffrey Redmayne	25 years

Presbytery noted with sadness the death of the Rev Robert Ramsay, who dedicated over 40 years of service to the Ministry, including over two decades at Invergowrie Parish Church, and noted that condolences were sent to his family. It noted the death of Mrs Lexi Smart, long standing Session Clerk, latterly at East and Old and Inverarity and noted that condolences had been sent to her family.

Presbytery Theard from the Rev Margaret Michie following her retirement as an Ordained Local Minister and warmly thanked her for her services to Presbytery since her Ordination in 2013.

The Very Rev Dr Martin Fair addressed the Presbytery about his Call to the Church of Scotland congregation in Bermuda. He said that i had been a privilege to serve as Parish Minister at the former Arbroath: St Andrew's, and at the national offices of the Church of Scotland. God had now called him back to Bermuda where he had first served in Youth Ministry.

Presbytery noted that that the Communications Officer, Mrs Ruth Rankin, had resigned from her position on July 31st and warmly thanked her for her excellent services to Presbytery.

Presbytery noted the resignation of the Rev Grant Maclaughlan as Mission Convener, thanked him for his services, and appointed the Rev Craig Dobney as the new Convener.

PLANNING

Abergalgie and Forteviot

The Presbytery Mission Plan instructed the Kirk Session to make a decision about the building which was to be retained. A thorough review had taken place, with an architect and buildings officer appointed to look at both buildings. The Kirk Session decided that Aberdalgie Church was best suited to its Mission and therefore requested that was redesignated as category A. The Planning Committee supported this request. The Forteviot building would remain category B, to be disposed by the end of Plan. After debate, Presbytery agreed to this.

MISSION

The Rev Grant Maclaughlan, outgoing Convener, presented a verbal report. The committee encouraged parishes to share their missional activities, highlighting engagement with the *Five Marks of Mission*. A Church Desk form would be distributed mid-September to gather stories ranging from small acts—like supporting refugees or offering inclusive spaces—to larger initiatives such as church planting. These stories may be shared via social media, webinars, or future Presbytery reports to foster connection and inspiration.

Seven congregations had joined the “*Growing Young*” initiative, each supported by a coach. Two webinars had taken place, with a full-day conference scheduled at Holy Trinity Wester Hailes, Edinburgh.

The Rev Mairi Perkins continued her impactful work with adults with learning difficulties and autism. Her initiative, “*Same God, Different Boats*,” included a new logo, website, and Instagram presence. Highlights included a pilgrimage to Iona and collaboration with Kinross Parish Church and Prospects Across Scotland. Mairi also volunteered with Southton Smallholding and would lead the Christmas service at the Bield.

CHURCH IN COMMUNITY

Prison Visitor Centre - Following the concern raised at the last Presbytery meeting about the lack of funding for the Perth Prison Visitors Centre, the committee had engaged with various parties concerned. An alternative provider had not yet been identified; CrossReach had agreed to continue to operate the Visitors Centre until the end of 2025, by which time it was hoped that a new provider would be found. The committee continued to assure the current staff and volunteers at the Centre of the Presbytery’s support and commitment to its future. They were currently compiling a list of all the CrossReach projects in the Presbytery area, with a view to exploring how best they could be supported.

Anti-Immigrant Protests - Recent anti-immigrant protests in Perth, targeting a local hotel, had prompted concern within the Presbytery. In response, faith communities held counter-protests to show solidarity with asylum seekers. The Presbytery was now reflecting on how the Church could respond meaningfully—by shifting the narrative to recognise the humanity and stories of those affected. Congregations were encouraged to share how they have engaged with refugees and asylum seekers locally. To support this, Scottish Faiths in Action for Refugees (SFAR) had compiled a comprehensive resource guide for Faith Leaders, which had been shared in the Presbytery Round-up to aid compassionate and informed action.

Prisoners’ Week - The national service to launch Prisoners Week (16 – 23rd November) would be held in Letham St Mark’s Church, Perth on the afternoon of Sunday 16th November. The theme this year is “Crossroads”, and resources for congregations to engage with the issues would be available shortly. A warm invitation was extended to all to attend the service at Letham St Mark’s.

Poverty Alliance - There would be two opportunities for church members to engage with other campaigners nationally; the "*Scotland Demands Better*" march in Edinburgh on Saturday October 25th was being organised by the Poverty Alliance, of which the Church of Scotland is a member. There would be an information evening about this in Dundee on Thursday 11th September from 7 – 8.15pm.

Christian Aid - Christian Aid encouraged support for the '*Stop Climate Chaos*' lobby of MSPs on Saturday 18th September at Holyrood. Participants required to register for this beforehand, and could do this online.

MINISTRIES

Readers in Training - Three Readers in training had satisfactorily completed their placements.

- a) Graham Leese would have his 2nd placement with the Rev Fraser Penny (Dunkeld Cathedral) and the Rev Neil Glover (Aberfeldy I/w Dull & Weem I/w Grantully, Logierait & Strathtay).
- b) Val Rose would have her second placement confirmed.
- c) Gavin Berry had now completed all his requirements for Readership and will be Set Apart shortly.

OLM placement review – Stephen Miller's review had been delayed due to holidays and illness. A meeting had been held with Stephen and three representatives of the committee on 29th July. The Committee received the report and agreed with the recommendation to continue Stephen's placement working with School Chaplaincy in the Perth Area, in partnership with his appointment to Faith Action. There would be another review in the spring of 2026, which may see the Faith Action appointment reach a natural conclusion.

Ministers' Travel Expenses - Only 21 Ministers had submitted spreadsheets, with 17 including matching claim forms. Nine made no claims, eight of which were verified. However, 33 Ministers had failed to submit anything, making it impossible to confirm lawful travel expense claims for the majority. Some logs were inadequate, listing only monthly mileage totals, which breached HMRC rules requiring itemised journeys. The lack of claims limited the Church's ability to monitor ministerial duties and created challenges for future Ministers who may rely on expense claims. Those with sufficient means were encouraged to claim and, if desired, donate the amount back to their congregation — allowing for Gift Aid benefits. The widespread non-compliance was a source of concern for accountability, sustainability, and fairness within the Church.

Conversations in Worship - Phill Mellstrom from Faith Action would lead a consultation with Local Worship Leaders and Readers in the Madoch Centre, St Madoes, on Tuesday 16th September at 7.30 pm to explore support and patterns of service for these valued servants of the Church. The committee hoped to have Phill back in the Presbytery to help introduce '*God Welcomes All*' at an event in November.