

Summary of Presbytery Meeting

The Presbytery of Perth met at Perth: St Matthew's Parish Church on Saturday 1st November 2025 at 10.30am. The meeting was duly constituted with prayer.

News from FAPLT

The Rev Dave Rankin gave an update on the work of the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team:

Cause of Decline

- A 2023 Deliverance tasked FALPT and the Theological Forum to investigate:
- Declining church membership.
- Decrease in numbers entering ministry.
- Recommendations to be presented at a future General Assembly.

Legacy of Slavery

- The Church of Scotland acknowledged its historic complicity in transatlantic slavery.
- A report was received at the 2023 General Assembly.
- Work was underway to frame a formal apology for GA26.

Church Planting & Resource Church

- Focused discussions on new opportunities in a university city.
- Encouragement to pray for divine guidance.
- Further details to be shared soon.

Day of Prayer

- Scheduled for Saturday, 29 November.
- Aimed at spiritual renewal and unity after recent challenges.
- Online prayer resources were available to support participation.

Report from the Business Committee

Business Convener - After years of dedicated service, including chairing the Transition Group and three years as Convener of the Business Committee, the Rev Fraser Penny announced his decision to step down. He expressed deep gratitude to the Presbytery staff and Business Committee members for their collaborative efforts during a period of significant change. Special thanks were given to the Clerks for their indispensable contributions, with a call for continued support and shared responsibility among members. The Rev Colin Renwick was proposed as the new Convener, with the Rev Lorna Tunstall nominated to succeed him as vice-convener. Serving as Convener of the Business Committee had been an honour, and he

thanked Presbytery for its trust. Despite challenges in forming the new Presbytery, the faithful ministry of congregations, elders, ministers, and office bearers remained a source of hope. Amidst change, much good continued, and we work and pray together for God's glory and the growth of Christ's Kingdom. He was grateful to have played a small part in its journey.

Staffing - Following Ruth Rankin's resignation, Karen Kelman had been appointed as Communications Officer, bringing valuable skills and fresh ideas to enhance the Presbytery's outreach. Mrs Vic Olu-Audu stepped down as Treasurer and Finance Officer but would continue assisting on a self-employed basis, alongside Martin Dunsmore as Acting Treasurer. A survey of congregational treasurers revealed mixed views on the Finance Officer role. Consequently, the Presbytery decided not to reappoint the position but to create a part-time Treasurer post, working 15 hours per week. This role included financial oversight and limited advisory support to Congregational Treasurers.

Review of Salaries - The Presbytery proposed a 2.5% staff salary increase, aligning with the rise in ministerial Stipends, and had included this in the upcoming budget from the Finance and Stewardship Committee.

Associate Moderator - Presbytery was asked to approve the role of Associate Moderator to support the Moderator for one year, especially with inductions and services, with the expectation of progressing to Moderator in June. The Rev Brenda Elwell-Sutton, an Ordained Local Minister, currently serving Dundee Northeast as Interim Moderator, was proposed as the first Associate Moderator. Brenda had contributed significantly to Presbytery in various roles, and her acceptance of the nomination was warmly welcomed.

The Guild - Christina Paterson had finished her term as Convener of Guilds Together and would be succeeded by Renee Riddell.

Moderator's Visit - The Rt Rev Rosie Frew, Moderator of the General Assembly, visited the Presbytery from 1st–5th October, engaging with congregations and organisations across its eastern region. Her itinerary included diverse events, from youth groups to a Dementia singing group, and concluded with a joyful Songs of Praise service at Dunblane Cathedral, where Long Service Certificates were awarded. Special thanks were given to Ed Morton for his excellent coordination. Rosie's warmth and enthusiasm were deeply appreciated. The Presbytery now looked forward to welcoming her again for the second part of her visit in March 2026.

Principal Clerk - The Rev Fiona Smith, Principal Clerk of the General Assembly, had resigned. Her gracious, humorous, and patient guidance had been invaluable to this Presbytery and others. Her departure was a significant loss to the Church, and the Presbytery extended its heartfelt thanks and best wishes as she entered the next phase of her ministry.

Bertha Park – It was noted that the Rev Anne Stott retired on October 31st 2025 as Community Minister for the Bertha Park Presbytery Mission Initiative and Anne was warmly thanked for her excellent services in growing the Bertha Park PMI since she began her Ministry there in 2019.

Rev Anne Redpath – It was noted that the Rev Anne Redpath had been appointed as Associate Minister at St Madoes and Kinfauns linked with Errol and that she would be Introduced at the Service of Linkage to be held at Errol Parish Church on November 6th 2025. Anne had also resigned as one of the Presbytery Chaplains and it was agreed to appoint the Rev Eddie McKenna to this post from November 1st 2025. Anne was warmly thanked for her services as Chaplain and Eddie was welcomed to the role.

Presbytery Mission Plan Implementation Officer - Powers were granted to the Business Committee, in consultation with the Planning committee and Finance and Stewardship committee, to explore the possibility of creating a full or part-time post for a Mission Plan Implementation Officer and to report back to Presbytery as soon as possible.

Presbytery Treasurer – It was agreed to cease having a full time Presbytery Finance Officer and agreed to appoint a Presbytery Treasurer on the basis of 15 hours per week.

Condolences – Presbytery offered condolences to the Rev Donald Fraser on the death of his daughter. It also noted with sadness, the death of Mrs Lorna Keillor, elder at Montrose Trinity and member of Presbytery and offered condolences to her husband James. The Rev Craig Dobney's mother had died and the Presbytery offered condolences.

Vacancy Procedure Committee

Crieff - The Rev Andrew Philip of Crieff Parish Church had demitted his Charge. He expressed his gratitude and humility for his 31 years of Ministry which had begun in the Presbytery of Falkirk. He had been Minister of Crieff for the past 12 years and thanked his congregation. The Moderator thanked the Rev Andrew Philip and wished him God's richest blessing.

Westgait, Dundee - The Rev Jim Connolly had retired as one of the Team Ministers at Westgait, Dundee. He addressed the Presbytery. He had been ordained in 1982 and was a member of the 'Christian Conjurers'. He gave thanks for the opportunity to serve as minister at Dundee: West, now Westgait, and prior to that at Dundee West. His retiral was not 'The end' but a new beginning and he trusted in 'God's small voice'.

Local Church Review – Perth: St Matthew's

The last ever Local Church Review was presented to Presbytery – the General Assembly has ended LCRs. St Matthew's was a welcoming city-centre church known for its inclusivity and cultural engagement. It was set to take pastoral responsibility for St John's Kirk and collaborate with Perth North Church, with discussions underway. The Kirk Session was reviewing its team structure. The church's flexible sanctuary and facilities supported worship,

events, and community use, though financial sustainability remained a challenge. Income from a leased flat was vital, as other facility revenues fell short. Despite limited reserves, the congregation met its obligations. A grant had been approved for steeple repairs, though other maintenance needs remained outstanding.

The Minister, the Rev Fiona Bullock was praised for her dedicated ministry and efforts to engage those who might not otherwise connect with the church. However, elders had voiced concern about the significant demands placed on her, particularly in light of recent changes from the Mission Plan. The situation highlighted the need for realistic expectations regarding the workload that could be managed by one individual, regardless of their talents and commitment, emphasising the importance of support and shared responsibility within the congregation.

The Rev Fiona Bullock offered a God News story about the many positive developments which were taking place at St Matthew's. Numbers attending Sunday worship were around 100 per week and 6 new Elders had recently been Ordained.

Presbytery commended Fiona for her prayerful and committed leadership and for reaching out to the community effectively.

Planning

Scone and St Martins, Cargill Burrelton, Collace, Kinclaven, Coupar Angus, Bendochy and Kinclaven

After discussions with the Kirk Sessions of the above congregations, the Planning Committee proposed that the congregations of Cargill Burrelton, Collace and Kinclaven unite and then form a linkage with Coupar Angus and Bendochy, who will also unite. It was proposed to adjust the parish boundaries to incorporate other rural villages like Balbeggie and Guildtown to form one large rural charge staffed by 1 full-time MWS. This would allow the congregation and minister of Scone and St Martins to concentrate solely on the village of Scone. The ministry allocation for Scone would be reduced to 0.5, although this would not affect the position of the current minister. Representatives from Scone and St Martin's sought to change the proposal to allow their role in it to be reconsidered and for more consultation to take place. However, Presbytery did not agree and voted to go with the committee's proposal.

Conference Session: Vision Building for the Presbytery

The Rev Craig Dobney introduced the Rev Kaye Gardner who was an 'Itinerant' Minister and was Ordained in June 2023. There followed an interview style presentation where the Rev Kaye Gardner asked how, and by what means the Church might move forward. She questioned whether churches were 'going through the motions' or actively engaged in following Jesus. There were several instances, especially amongst younger people of a witness revival, these were not co-incidences but 'God-instances'.

Following the presentation, there was an opportunity for individual prayer. The Moderator thanked the Rev Kaye Gardner for her presentation.

Church in Community

Education – The Rev Stephen Miller, a former Headteacher and now OLM, addressed concerns about the Church’s role in education, particularly RME and Church Representatives on Local Authority (LA) Education Committees.

Key Points:

- RME remained a core Curriculum Area; its place was secure nationally.
- ESG had re-established links with Education Scotland and supported LA Reps via conferences and webinars.
- Church Reps’ experiences on Education Committees vary; some felt valued, others marginalised.
- RME in Primary was squeezed by focus on Literacy, Numeracy, and Health & Wellbeing.
- Secondary RME was strong, with high uptake in RMPS qualifications.
- Religious Observance was legally protected, but chaplaincy experiences differed widely.
- Headteachers’ attitudes were pivotal to church-school engagement.
- The “Serve Your Local School” website offered practical ways for churches to support schools, from mentoring to breakfast clubs.

Stephen emphasised relationship-building over assembly access as the key to meaningful school involvement.

CrossReach – The committee were relieved that CrossReach had found funding for the Perth Prison Visitors Centre until the end of March 2026. However, its future was still uncertain and CrossReach was reaching out for local support. A meeting had been arranged for Friday 14th November (at 1.30p.m. at the CrossReach office in Perth), open to all interested in finding a way forward for the Centre. Those interested were asked to alert the Presbytery Office if they wished to attend.

Prisoners Week - The theme for this year’s Prisoners Week was “***Crossroads. What next?***”, and the launch service would be held at Letham St Mark’s Church, Perth on Sunday 16th November at 3p.m., to which all were welcome. A further service would be held the following Sunday at Tullibody: St Serf’s at 6.30p.m., led by one of the chaplains at Glenochil Prison, Rev Philip Hacking.

Society, Religion and Technology Project – The committee were sorry to hear of the demise of the Church of Scotland Society, Religion and Technology Project; since 1970 it had

monitored, commented upon, and given guidance to churches, providing a faith perspective on the many scientific and technological developments over 55 years.

Mission Partners - Our Mission Partners in Mwandi, Zambia, Keith and Ida Waddell would be back in Scotland from November 13th to February 4th. They would be happy to share their stories with churches within the Presbytery. If Congregations wished a visit to hear more about the important work in Zambia, please contact them directly (keithida2014@gmail.com) or our committee's convener (marjorie.clark@btinternet.com).

Fair Trade Fortnight - Fair Trade Fortnight, held from September 22 to October 5, focused on tea and highlighted the importance of fairly traded goods in ensuring fair wages and safe working conditions for producers. Despite Traidcraft's closure, Traidcraft Tea remained available via True Origin, and fairly traded products could still be found in supermarkets thanks to years of advocacy by churches and others.

Finance and Stewardship

The committee regretted Mrs Vic Olo-Audu's resignation as Finance Officer but appreciated her continued consultancy support. Martin Dunsmore was thanked for stepping in as Treasurer. Instead of appointing a new Finance Officer, a part-time Presbytery Treasurer would be sought to oversee finances and offer limited training. Presbytery was asked to approve the 2026 budget and a small dues increase. Funds saved may support a new role, possibly a Mission Plan Implementation Officer. Due to new legislation on insolvent congregations, annual reporting of historical shortfalls was critical. Congregations were urged to submit outstanding accounts promptly, with thanks to those who had done so.

Ministries

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

- Val Rose would have her second placement confirmed'
- The service for Gavin Berry's Setting Apart would take place on Tuesday 18th November at Carnoustie: Trinity in Barry Church.

God Welcomes All - The committee looked forward to welcoming Phill Mellstrom from Faith Action to help introduce **God Welcomes All** at an event on the afternoon of November 22nd. Further details would follow.

Training Team -

- **Worship Leader Accreditation.** The Ministries Committee agreed that **Alan Fraser** (Montrose: Trinity) and **Lynne Mitchell** (Cargill Burrelton) were appointed as Worship Leaders in Presbytery.
- **Worship Leaders Get Together** - This meeting was held in Riverside Church, Perth on Saturday 20th September with 22 Worship Leaders attending. The unanimous view was that the opportunity to meet together was greatly appreciated and should be, at

least, an annual event. The Training Team will review the responses from the attendees and will bring back a report with recommendations for the Committee. Comments and suggestions from those who attended will be appreciated.

Date of next Meeting: The Presbytery would next meet for Ordinary Business on Saturday 7th February 2026 at St Matthew's Parish Church, Perth.