

LONGNIDDRY PARISH CHURCH

Stated Annual Meeting

to be held in Longniddry Church at ~10.45 hrs. Sunday 17 March 2024

AGENDA

Constitution

Sederunt

Minutes of Previous Meeting on 19 March 2023

Matters Arising

Urgent Matters Not Previously Notified

Session Clerk's Report

Treasurer's Report

Minister's Report

Close

LONGNIDDRY PARISH CHURCH

STATED ANNUAL MEETING 19 MARCH 2023

1. CONSTITUTION

At Longniddry Church on Sunday 19 March 2023, the Congregation met and the Stated Annual Meeting was constituted with prayer.

2. SEDERUNT

There were present the Rev. Dr. Robin Hill, Chairman, and forty-one members of the Congregation whose names are recorded in the Sederunt Book. Apologies for absence were recorded in respect of eleven members.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the Stated Annual Meeting held on 13 March 2022, previously approved as correct by the Kirk Session at its meeting on 17 May 2022, were presented.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

None.

5. URGENT MATTERS NOT PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED

None.

6. SESSION CLERK'S REPORT

Mrs Morrison summarised her report from the Achievements and Performance section of the 2022 accounts for the Church. She highlighted that 2022 was our first year “back to normal” after the Covid19 pandemic. We continued to hold services of worship every Sunday and livestreamed them too. We held our first in-person communion in church and many other activities returned. Our bible studies, prayer diary and prayer and contemplation sessions continued. Our social activities restarted in 2022: hospital transport, Wednesday Club, Sporting Memories, the Guild. The Minister was able to go back into the local schools and we welcomed pupils back into the Church for Christmas services too.

The congregation engaged in several activities to support charities helping people in the wider world: shoeboxes filled with necessities for YMCA in Ukraine and Blythswood Care and a donation of £10,000 to YMCA Scotland to support Ukrainian refugees. We also made donations to Christian Aid and the Grassmarket project and restarted our collection of food for the East Lothian Foodbank. We also raised funds to help local people keep warm during this cost of living crisis. We continue to reach out to people moving into new housing in the village and in the new Blindwells development.

We began 2022 with 274 members, gained three new members, lost 8 through death and reclassified some people on our Roll but who are not members. So we ended the year with 25 members and about 25 others who are actively engaged in Church life. One long-serving elder stood down from the Session during the year.

Mrs Morrison thanked all members and office bearers for their faithful service and support of the church. Without them, none of our achievements would have been possible.

7. TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr Clarke gave his report on the Church's finances. The key message was our finances were in good shape in 2022 thanks to the support of everyone who gives to the church and to careful management of costs. 2022 was a more "normal" year. Two of our income streams – plate offerings and hall rental s- have largely returned to 2019 levels. This is seen in the increase in our unrestricted income from c£78,000 in 2021 to c£81,000 in 2022. Expenditure in 2022 was c£87,000 and almost exactly half of that was our Ministry and Mission payment to the central church. This covers the costs of recruiting, training and paying ministers. We don't pay our minister directly, but our M&M allocation is based on our income. In other expenditure we have continued to maintain the church and manse to a high standard and we are benefiting from the investment made in 2021 on technology to livestream from the church. Mr Clarke also noted the donation of £10,000 from church funds to YMCA Scotland for YMCA's work to help Ukrainian refugees. That donation together with a fall in the value of our investments meant the 2022 accounts show a General Fund deficit of c£16,000 but our general reserves remain strong at c£114,000, giving us a good buffer against unforeseen events. We also collected donations of £3,462 for the Preston Seton Gosford Area Partnership to buy hot water bottles and blankets etc to help vulnerable people in our community keep warm.

Mr Clarke ended by thanking everyone who supported him in the management of the Church finances and he also thanked everyone who continues to give to the Church to support our work.

8. MINISTER'S REPORT

The Minister reported that this is a time of significant challenge for the Church of Scotland. The Covid19 pandemic led to a re-thinking of what church is. This coincided with the Church of Scotland issuing its radical plan involving church closures, redundancies and planning for insufficient numbers of ministers to support all our current charges.

But the biggest challenge we face is trends in population changes. The Baby Boom was followed by a significant fall in the birth rate in Scotland and so a fall in Scottish workers. The Baby Boomers are now all retiring. Immigration is needed and we have seen this in Church of Scotland ministers too with immigrants from Africa and elsewhere.

When our minister retires (in about six year's time), we will find it hard to get a minister – there are fewer ministers and they are retiring or leaving parish ministry earlier than expected due, in part, to stress. There are fewer younger people in our congregations so there are fewer being called to the ministry. The ministry is not necessarily an attractive career option.

Our minister's job has changed dramatically over the years. It has moved from a pastoral role to one as a trainer and encourager, organiser and administrator and a resource and mission planner. The congregation struggles to support the young so our minister invests his time in the local schools.

The role of Presbytery is changing to be one at the forefront of mission and outreach, resourcing congregations to make meaningful connections of faith to the wider community.

A big part of our minister's job is encouraging people in the pews to realise that every single church elder and member has gifts which can be brought out and used in worship or in pastoral care. In similar vein, our Bible study courses are all to do with adult Christian education, equipping people in the pews to think theologically and so find new depth – new meaning – in their faith.

This encouraging role has seen the minister use his study leave in imaginative ways. He has worked on a plan to have gospel swing bands in each of our presbyteries, encouraging musicians and singers (often with no church connection) to find a voice and a place in a joyful local gathering of worship and praise. This process might end up with new bands being formed. Or it might end up with fresh expressions of church.

This year, he will use his study leave to create resources for overworked ministers to see them through Advent and Christmas, through the provision of multi-purpose resources which can be adapted as sermon-starters, or school assemblies, or Bible study groups.

There is a lot for us all to do in the next six years. It will be a time of almost unimaginable change when the congregation will probably be seeing less of him and more of our worship team and our pastoral carers. But this is not a time of crisis. It is a time of opportunity when, at last, the Church of Scotland will come to take the ministry of all God's people with the seriousness which it has always deserved.

Mrs Abigail Morrison, Session Clerk, thanked Rev Dr Hill for his service to the Church in 2022

Mrs Morrison also paid tribute to Mrs Ailsa Hill for her work on behalf of the Church and for the continuing support she gives to our minister and thanked Miss Katie Hill for her administration role for the Church.

The congregation showed their heartfelt appreciation for Rev Dr Hill.

9. CLOSE

The Chairman closed the meeting with the recital of the Grace.

CHAIRMAN

CLERK