**Drylaw and Blackhall United Parish**

**Steering Group Meeting**

**27.8.2023**

**Welcome** by Elisabeth to everyone joining the meeting.

**Prayer**  offered by Elisabeth

**Apologies**  from Amanda Lawson

**Minutes of the last Minute** agreed

**Matter Arising**

Blackhall elders had received a communication asking if they wished to remain as

Trustee elders and active members of the Kirk Session.

Eddie was awaiting responses which were to be made by the end of August.

**Basis of Union**

This was identified as a large part of the steering group’s work over the next months. Some of the main issues to discuss and resolve are: name of the new church, Kirk Session number, financial protocols and business. These would be discussed in the Steering Group and then referred to the two Kirk Sessions for discussion.

When ready the Basis of Union would go to the Presbytery Deployment Committee and ultimately to the PIMPIG at the Church Offices at 121 George Street. This process would not necessarily be a straight line but there may be amendments and changes requested by either parties before it is finalised.

The Basis of Union will be voted on by both congregations. After it is voted for and accepted by both congregations Drylaw will have a further vote to accept Fergus as their minister. These votes will happen on the same day. Members of the Presbytery Deployment Committee are required to be preset at each vote.

Hazel has written a very helpful discussion paper which will be helpful for members of the group to reflect on some of the questions raised. This will be sent to the Steering Group Members who are asked to keep the contents confidential in the first instance but to reflect on its contents for discussion at the next meeting. The paper will also go out to Kirk Sessions for discussion.

**Joint Services/Steering Group Meetings**

The joint services are for a time to worship together and also to get to know people, particularly at the coffee time. It was noted however, that at coffee time people generally sat with people they already knew. Going forward people would be encouraged to sit with people they did not know.

There was a consensus of opinion that it would be beneficial to have the joint services more regular that two monthly. Both ministers in particular felt that monthly was too frequent as there were issues for worship theme planning for both churches individually as well as the wider cluster grouping. There were also some practical issues in arrangements that had to be considered.

It was recommended that the Worship Group has a full discussion about the issue and bring recommendations to the Steering Group.

As an intermediate plan the next joint service will be on Sunday 8th October which will be a Harvest Thanksgiving Service, hosted by Blackhall.

As has been the practice the service will be followed by a Steering Group meeting.

**Social Gatherings**

As a further way of getting to know each other some social gatherings were identified as being a positive way forward. Joint planning was also seen as a good model and not just an invite to the ‘*other*’ churches activities.

To begin this work it was recommended that a group be set up to plan such activities.

Two people from the Outreach Group at Blackhall, two people from the fundraising group at Drylaw, Fergus and Elisabeth would make up the membership of the group.

***Fergus and Elisabeth to ask the relevant people to join the group.***

**Communication**

Throughout the process towards union communicating with the wider congregations is vitally important. As soon as possible after each Steering Group meeting a short, printed newsletter would be available to members of both churches on the same Sunday with some information from the meeting and where we are with plans.

The two Session Clerks should coordinate the timing of the newsletter.

**Sub Groups**

The three groups Worship, Mission & Communication should aim to have a meeting in the weeks prior to the Steering Group meeting.

A decision would need to be made if the newly formed Social Gathering Group should become part of the Steering Group.

**Date of Next Meeting**

Sunday 8th October 11 45am at Blackhall

**Notes from the Steering Group meeting of 27th August 2023**

**Joint Services**

The joint services are a great opportunity to worship together and to share some time over a cup of tea or coffee after the service.

We will have name labels at each joint service which will make it much easier to know people’s names. Please when you go for coffee take the opportunity to sit with some people you don’t know as this will give us all a chance to get to know each other better.

The next joint service will be on **Sunday 8th October** which will be a Harvest Thanksgiving Service, hosted by Blackhall.

**Social Gatherings**

As a further way of getting to know each other the Steering Group is going to be planning some social gatherings for us all to enjoy. Look out for details!

**Procedure towards Union**

As you might imagine there is a set down procedure to follow towards union. Kirk Sessions, the congregations, Presbytery and 121 all have a role to play. This process would not necessarily be a straight line but there may be amendments and changes requested before it is finalised.

The Basis of Union will be voted on by both congregations. Once it is accepted by both congregations Drylaw will have a further vote to accept Fergus as their minister.

It is not possible to give a hard and fast date for all this to happen but it will not be before the end of the year rather it will be further into 2024.