

## A few ideas from teams to think about

### Communication

To organise a 'Workshop' on church use of Social Media such as Facebook and our websites.  
Improve communication about work of Kirk Session with congregations and also how we report to and share information among elders.  
Improve sharing of what happens in the linkage to raise awareness and encourage participation.

### Mission

Acknowledge and publicise the many ways mission is already lived out throughout the linkage.  
To identify ways to build on links with young families already known through Baby Brunch, Messy Church in West Linton and school chaplaincy.  
Hold a Cradle Roll Party at Carlops  
A picnic and open-air Celtic service in grounds of old Newlands church.

### Worship

To explore how we can enable the minister to spend a little more time at each church on Sundays to enable building and sustaining of relationships.  
Review worship times across linkage.  
When might joint services be good? e.g. move joint Easter Songs of Praise to Pentecost.  
Worship Leaders across linkage to meet to support, share resources and plan together.

### Pastoral Care

Recognise what happens already is extremely pastoral, including, hospitality and inclusion of Castle Craig residents, flowers delivered and visitation, cards sent for all of life's events.  
The new Open Gate initiative based in Newlands for the whole area.  
We identified the need to review the size of elders' districts and ways of using gifts of others.  
Planning sessions to equip elders and others in visiting, e.g. bereaved families, those with dementia and their carers, and how we might improve our listening skills.

### Relationships

Building, renewing, creating, and restoring relationships lies at the heart of all that has been happening and in our future plans. Open conversations, confidential chats, Listening Spaces, Session meetings, working together, cross-linkage teams, all centre around relationships. We all have to desire to create a church community and with those beyond congregational life which is relational. Jesus calls us into community and commands us to love one another and our neighbour as ourselves and, of course, it all begins and ends in our relationship with God who made us and loves each one of us.



## Where are we Now?

Interim Ministry Update: June 2019

Carlops, Kirkurd & Newlands & St Andrew's West Linton



The main focus for our Interim Ministry is:

- ⇒ Coming to terms with our history
- ⇒ Discovering our new identity
- ⇒ Planning for our Future

### Lenten Conversations

During the period of March & April I hosted evenings focussing on 5 of the main themes identified in the Objectives set by the Transition Support Group and agreed by the three Kirk Sessions. We spent time exploring **Worship, Mission, Communication, Relationships and Pastoral Care**. Each evening welcomed between 20-30 people from across the linkage and involved some input from myself with some biblical background, stories, slides, as well as a few facts and figures. We also shared questions and experiences in groups with feedback as we sought to identify what might be our main priorities. **We listened to one another, shared experiences, wondered what we might do better together and affirmed what was unique to each congregation.** The whole focus was on our shared ministry as Christ's church in this part of his kingdom and how best to live that out.

*"Communication works for those who work at it!"*  
John Powell

We were all keen to identify some manageable and meaningful tasks aware of the resources we have and not to burden ourselves with too much. **It is not about how effective we are but how faithful we are.**

### Sharing in Communion



Having met in the three churches over the period we ended by sharing **Holy Week Communion** in the peaceful setting of Newlands Church. With the chairs in a large circle around forty people gathered to share bread and wine together as we remembered the significant event of the Last Supper. **It was a meaningful way to end our series.**

### Short Term Teams

We decided to set up a few teams to pick up on our conversations and identify the practical and focussed next steps along this journey. These teams include elders and members from the three congregations as we seek to hear more voices and share experience. **Worship, Mission, Communication and Pastoral Care** teams have already

met once and will do so again shortly. Already a few important actions have been identified, but just as importantly **relationships have been formed or strengthened and a growing trust is emerging which had been a little bruised or broken.**

## Elders Gathering

Following these meetings, the elders from the three churches met in May to reflect on a few areas including how we might best shape and order our leadership for the future. To retain the identity of each congregation is important, but to find a way of working together which would make the best use of our resources is also important. **How do we make the most efficient use of our time and gifts as elders for the benefit of the church and its mission?** We sought to identify the best purpose and content for the times we all meet together, and how that differs from the separate Kirk Session meetings.



## Radical Action Plan

We looked at some aspects of a report which was discussed at this year's General Assembly about the future shape and ministry of the church and how that might impact our parishes. We await remits sent to local Kirk Sessions for discussion based on these.

## Unitary Constitution

We also reflected on the need to formally adopt the Unitary Constitution in the three churches, which although each already practically works in this format it will be necessary to formalise and the congregations will be asked for their agreement on this in due course and further information will be distributed.

## Naming

We also named issues yet to be addressed and I intend planning the engagement with this with the Session Clerks.

## Session Clerks' Meeting

The clerks of all three Kirk Sessions will be meeting soon to reflect on where we are, plan the next stage, arrange meeting dates for the Kirk Sessions for the coming year and meetings when the three sessions gather together.

## Presbytery Plan

The Presbytery of Melrose and Peebles, as you know, is currently undertaking a review of all the ministries, congregations, and buildings in Presbytery with the intention of having a proposal at the end of the year. This would clearly be a good time for us all to

be ready to participate in that new vision. Although my task with you is not about a future Presbytery plan, it is about enabling you to be as healthy a church as possible. I imagine you will have engaged with one another at a deeper level than many congregations in Presbytery by the nature of this process we are sharing together.

“The Church exists by mission, just as a fire exists by burning. Where there is no mission, there is no Church; and where there is neither Church nor mission, there is no faith.”  
*Emil Brunner*

## Timescale

My intention of holding these gathered conversations before Easter and Team meetings before Summer was in order that we have a good idea of progress before we enter Autumn. I will have been with you for almost a year by the time you receive this and so it is a good point at which to pause and reflect. It has been a very busy year, especially for your elders and others who have engaged with the process. It is this engagement that enables your elders and the congregations to own and support the way forward. I am with you to help facilitate conversations, encourage true listening, address issues and offer suggestions. **However, it is your will and commitment that will continue the journey into the future.** I have committed to be with you through this year and into next, at which point, our shared hope and intent is that you will be ready to carry forward the ideas you have prioritised in a recovered stable, open, and trusting relationship. **That depends not only upon what you are able to take up for the future but also what you are willing to lay down from the past.**



It is through faith that all of you are God's children in union with Christ Jesus. You were baptized into union with Christ, and now you are clothed, so to speak, with the life of Christ himself. So there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free people, between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are the descendants of Abraham and will receive what God has promised.

*Galatians 3.26-29*

## Here for you ...



Your Interim Minister, Stewart McPherson, is available if you would like an informal chat or a confidential conversation.

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