

## The Way Ahead

I have been in this presbytery since 2009 and so I have watched your journey for a significant number of years and understand that it hasn't always been an easy one. I have stood before you on a couple of occasions and shared the Presbytery's view for the way ahead. Now I stand before you again, at the instruction of the Presbytery as your Interim Moderator for the foreseeable future.

There are a few things I think it is helpful for you to know as we begin this journey together

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- I am not perfect
- I have a number of other responsibilities apart from yourselves, and so I cannot do everything that you would expect from your minister
- I believe that I am called at this time to help lead you forward in this uncertain time in the life of the church, but please know that a minister can only lead people if they are willing to follow.

It is not just this congregation or the other congregation in your linkage that are facing uncertain times. The General Assembly this year took the decision that we cannot continue as we are. By 2025 the fulltime ministry of the Church of Scotland will be reduced to 600 posts. The Presbytery Mission Plan to make that possible will be enacted across the country over the next 12 months. In the Presbytery of Stirling we will reduce from 35.2 to 21.5 ministries. The planning to make this possible will be done by consultation across the bounds of the presbytery in the first half of next year. Your linkage will be entering into conversations with my congregation and the congregations of Alva and Menstrie to consider how we can best use ministry resources and develop our mission and service in the coming years.

This is a huge task. It is one that will affect every single congregation and you, as a linkage which is vacant are no more and no less affected. I would want to stress that absolutely no decisions have already been taken.

I suppose that what I am saying to you at this stage is that change is coming because to continue the church into the future, we need to change. We need to look at one another, within congregation, between congregations, not as competition but as fellow travellers who have all committed to one thing, to accept Christ as Lord and follow him.

Alison E P Britchfield  
Interim Moderator  
21 November 2021