



Towards our Union

News from Craigmillar Park, Mayfield Salisbury and Priestfield Churches

Issue 6: August 2023

This is the sixth in our series of monthly newsletters.

Whether you have been away on holiday or been staying here in Edinburgh, we hope you've been enjoying the summer.

Getting Together

Over the last few weeks of July and into August our three congregations have been worshipping together Sunday by Sunday in Mayfield Salisbury's building. The arrangements seem to have gone very smoothly indeed and to have been widely appreciated. Here are just a few quotes from across the congregations.



"I have been enjoying the services and getting to know different people."

Craigmillar Park

"I've been finding it very helpful seeing who does what and how things happen when we join together."

Priestfield

"It's worked tremendously well. There's a real buzz."

Mayfield Salisbury

Our shared experience over the summer bodes well for our union and is the result of everyone making a real effort.

Basis of Union – an Update

Our draft Basis of Union was submitted to Presbytery on 26 April. Following a meeting of Presbytery's Deployment Group it was returned to us with a number of minor changes. These related to presentation rather than substance.

Our Steering Group was happy to accept these suggested amendments and advised Presbytery's Deployment Group of this in mid-May.

The Deployment Group is required to consult with the Church's Faith Nurture Forum, the Principal Clerk and the Law Department of the Church before progressing.

Unfortunately, at the time of writing we haven't had any further feedback on our revised draft. This may be because of the sheer amount of work falling on relatively few shoulders at 121. No doubt these pressures will be being exacerbated with key people having their summer holidays. We will continue to press for a response.

While we have been waiting, we have also been advised of an essential part of process which has to be undertaken before our votes on the Basis of Union can proceed. This is the 'Basis of Severance' to dissolve the linkage between Craigmillar Park and Reid Memorial. Each of these congregations needs to agree the severance and, it is suggested, their votes can only take place once it is known there will be a vacancy. At the moment the Rev Alex

McAspurren is looking to further his work as a minister elsewhere but until his move is confirmed the voting procedure looks as if it will have to be paused.

As a result, the actual date of the union may have to shift further into 2024. We will keep you apprised of any developments.

This is potentially a disappointment given what we have achieved to date, but we remain positive and keen to support all the individuals involved in and affected by the planned union.

Beyond the Union

The hiccup outlined above hasn't delayed much other work. We've been busy developing and agreeing recommendations for the Kirk Session of Newington Trinity, post union.

If each congregation affirms the union in the votes and Presbytery approves, the new Kirk Session will come into effect on an agreed date. It will be for the Newington Trinity Kirk Session to confirm any new arrangements but as these have been drawn up and agreed so far, we can anticipate that the new Kirk Session will be likely to support them.

Governance – or in other words how we operate – is an important issue. The three Kirk Sessions have proposed that the Kirk Session of Newington Trinity be around twenty strong (including the two ministers). This size will aid decision making and respect the charity trustee responsibilities of elders on the Session. It is proposed that elders will serve on the Kirk Session on a three or four year rotation, but they will still remain as 'active elders' when not on the Session.

As we will be blessed with a wide group of elders with many skills, if the new Kirk Session agrees this approach, those elders not initially on the Kirk Session will continue to

be active in the congregation and eligible for future re-appointment to the Session.

All elders and members of the congregation will be able to participate in the Session's committees – or activity groups. These cover the range of issues which the church needs to address. Each will operate under delegated authority and will be responsible to the Kirk Session.

The proposed initial activity groups, which reflect the Five Marks of Mission as well as the need for the management of business, are:

- Worship and Music
- Mission
- Pioneer Ministry
- Pastoral and Nurture
- Social Life
- Justice and Society
- Caring for Creation
- Communication and digital presence
- Property and management of resources
- Finance

Much additional background detail is set out in the governance report considered by the three Kirk Sessions. If you would like a copy, simply contact your Session Clerk. They will be happy to let you have a copy.

The three Kirk Sessions have also agreed that our current staff should continue in post with the new congregation with the same roles. This will provide for certainty for the individuals involved and continuity for the work of the church.

The role of the pioneer minister requires further discussion, and it is hoped in the autumn to provide opportunities for all three congregations to come together to consider the issues of a pioneer ministry further.

Communion

Our morning worship together on Sunday 6 August will include communion.