

BARRY PARISH CHURCH LINKED WITH CARNOUSTIE CHURCH

Report of Working Group investigating possible union between Barry & Carnoustie Churches.

February 2017

BACKGROUND

Following the Local Congregational Review carried out by Angus Presbytery in May 2016 when the visiting committee recommended that both congregations 'reconsider the nature of their relationship and whether or not a formal union might be to their mutual financial benefit and facilitate future development' a joint meeting of both Kirk Sessions on 19th September 2016 agreed to set up a joint working group, comprising an equal number of members from each congregation, to investigate the potential for a union.

Members were then appointed at subsequent meetings of the respective Kirk Sessions.

WORKING GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Hugh McKenzie, Shirley Murison, Jan Scott & Malcolm Sim (Barry Parish Church)

Mandy Ferguson, Irene Hoar, Alex McGill & Sandy Thornton (Carnoustie Church)

REMIT

The remit adopted by the Working Group was -

"To consider in detail the range of issues likely to arise during discussions on a union, with a view to identifying those matters on which there is a strong possibility of joint agreement by both Kirk Sessions and members, and those matters which are likely to cause greatest difficulty, together with trying to come up with possible ways forward to overcome the more difficult issues."

MEETINGS

The Working Group met on three occasions with meetings being held in Barry Church Hall on 21st November 2016, 30th January 2017 and 20th February 2017.

DISCUSSIONS

The Group decided to examine four main topics, namely Finance, Buildings, People and Outreach in the hope that detailed discussion of these would highlight the issues which could easily be overcome from those which might be more problematical.

Under Finance, discussions took place on possible income and expenditure following a union, record keeping, how expenditure would be allocated following union, the anticipated financial health of a joined congregation, etc.

Consideration of Buildings was, as anticipated, a much more difficult topic, as neither congregation would be keen to see their church closed as part of a union, with the effects of such a decision likely to be considerable. Maintaining two places of worship within a union was not seen as realistic. A possible new build solution was briefly discussed but the costs were considered prohibitive. Carnoustie's plans for the interior development of their Church, and the effect this development might have on the future of a union, received some attention, and proved to be a decisive factor.

Although the Group did not get round to dealing in detail with Outreach, the importance of it and possible ways of increasing the church's presence in the community did arise during other discussions.

No discussion took place on People i.e. working and worshipping together and how the membership might help the combined congregation grow.

CONCLUSIONS

Towards the end of the meeting on 20th February it became evident that the closure of one church on union, whether on financial grounds, future maintenance requirements, for other arbitrary reasons or due to the internal refurbishment of Carnoustie Church getting the go-ahead, would be unacceptable at this time, and accordingly a recommendation be made to the respective Kirk Sessions that union between Barry and Carnoustie be not pursued at this time as it would not be to our mutual financial benefit or facilitate future development.

In recognising the inevitability of a union at some time in the future being brought about by some event, and the likely necessity to close one church building, it was agreed to recommend that a joint working group be established so that immediate steps be taken to work and worship more closely together, especially in relation to outreach projects, so that when the time comes, union might become a natural progression.

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