

St. Leonard's Parish Church

Presbytery of St. Andrews

"Your talent is God's gift to you. What you do with it is your gift back to God."

Leo Buscaglia

Moving to the Unitary Constitution

A Proposal to Improve our Current Structures

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1 Summary of Proposal

The proposal contained in this Strategy Document can be summarised in these deliverances to the Kirk Session:

- The Kirk Session recommends to the congregation that St Leonard's Church adopts the Unitary Form of Constitution in place of the current Model Deed of Constitution.
- The Kirk Session will arrange for an Extraordinary Congregational Meeting following morning worship on a date to be arranged in order for the congregation to vote on a change to the Constitution of St Leonard's Church.
- The Kirk Session will implement the new church structures, methods of reporting, and meeting schedule to start at the beginning of the 2018-19 session (i.e., September 2018).
- The Kirk Session encourages all groups within the existing structures of St. Andrews: St Leonard's Church to become fully aware of the new Unitary Form of Constitution and to implement any necessary changes in order to meet the new system of working.

2 Introduction

It was during the recent vacancy that the merits or otherwise of moving to the Unitary constitution were first raised in the Kirk Session. However, it was decided that this was something that should be left until the vacancy had been filled. A number of months having now elapsed since the end of the vacancy, the Kirk Session feel it is now time to bring a firm proposal to the congregation for, if the congregation is willing, implementation in the current calendar year.

Some of the issues that we continue to face and which move the Kirk Session to recommend this change are:

- The General Assembly is instructing all parishes using the model constitution to consider changing to the unitary constitution and the model constitution is no longer allowed to be adopted.
- Under the OSCR (Office of the Scottish Charity Register) regulations which govern charities in Scotland, all members of the Congregational Board are considered Trustees and with the Kirk Session are jointly responsible for all decisions made. However, under the Model Constitution, the Congregational Board are not party to decisions made by the Kirk Session (although they are still responsible for such decisions). Added to this, not all elders on the Kirk Session of St. Leonard's are members of the Congregational Board, and as such are not directly involved in the decisions the Board takes.
- the need for better communication and involvement across the congregation;
- the need to improve the culture of trust and devolved decision making;
- duplication of work and decision making at Board, and Kirk Session meetings.

3 Constitution of St Leonard's Church

For a number of years the constitution of St Leonard's Church has followed the Model Deed of Constitution. Indeed, until recent years, all congregations were "recommended and urged ... to adopt the Model Deed" (1965 General Assembly). For those unacquainted with the intricacies of church constitutions, a short background may be helpful.

3.1 The Model Deed of Constitution

Without going into too much detail, the Model Deed differentiates between the sacred and temporal matters, between the spiritual and material.

The Kirk Session, while having overall responsibility for the dealings of the church, is primarily concerned with the spiritual well-being of the church members and for the missionary outreach to the parish. The Moderator of meetings is the Minister.

The decision making on the temporal matters of finance and fabric is 'devolved' to the Congregational Board, made up of elders and elected church members. The Board can be chaired by any of its members.

3.1.1 Pros for Model Deed of Constitution

The benefits of the Model Deed over the earlier *quoad omnia* constitution (which consisted of only the Kirk Session) are as follows:

- more time is released within the Kirk Session for discussing spiritual matters, high level strategy and reflection, rather than detail or minutiae;
- there is a seemingly natural division between the spiritual and temporal matters;
- the Minister does not have to chair the meetings of the Congregational Board, but can do so if he/she wishes;
- members of the congregation could be involved in the decision-making of the church by being elected to serve on the Congregational Board;
- the presence of some elders on the Congregational Board meant there should be a clear sense of united purpose between the Kirk Session and Congregational Board.

3.1.2 Cons of the Model Deed of Constitution

While the Model Deed resolved issues that had afflicted some, though by no means all, *quoad omnia* congregations – particularly the issue of finding time to discuss spiritual matters in a meeting that had to deal with temporal decisions – there are also cons that are particularly relevant to our situation:

- when work is further devolved into committees, in our case there can be duplication of decision-making and, thus, wasted time and resultant inefficiency;
- the separation between spiritual and temporal can start to look somewhat arbitrary as they are in fact intertwined;
- the number of meetings can become excessive;
- it can be difficult to fill the available spaces on the Congregational Board from the membership.

3.2 The Unitary Form of Constitution

As of 1 November 2003 the General Assembly introduced a new form of constitution, the Unitary Form. At a casual glance it looks remarkably similar to the old *quoad omnia* constitution that congregations were encouraged to move away from.

Instead of a separation between spiritual and temporal, and between Kirk Session and Congregational Board, there is only one main court: the Kirk Session, which has oversight of both matters. Indeed the actual text of the constitution is basically the same.

However, there are key differences to the old *quoad omnia* constitution in the way in which the Unitary Form of Constitution can be implemented which make the Unitary Form appealing for our current situation at St Leonard's. These include:

- an allowance for a far more flexible approach to church structures;
- a clearer decision-making structure;
- better informed and faster decision-making;
- greater responsibility and independence given to Action Groups;
- little risk of duplication of decisions;
- fewer meetings for most members of the Action Groups and Kirk Session;
- the ability to promote a clearer sense of direction for the overall strategy of the congregation;
- and the provision of more time in Kirk Session meetings to devote to group discussion, guest speakers, etc.

While the Unitary Form of Constitution is relatively new, an increasing number of congregations within the wider Church are taking advantage of it.

What we hope might be achieved with the adoption of the new constitution is not simply a change of structure, but a change of culture. There are so many different aspects to our congregational life at St Leonard's, for which we are grateful and most fortunate. However, a move to the Unitary Constitution would encourage a more devolved decision making structure and process. This allows more people to take responsibility for the areas of church life with which they have been entrusted, within the parameters set by the Kirk Session and through the development of Action Groups, allowing as many as want to and as many as possible to take an active part in the work of the congregation. The vision is for these groups to enjoy devolved responsibility, being trusted to get on with the work they have been given and, where and if appropriate, they will have a budget.

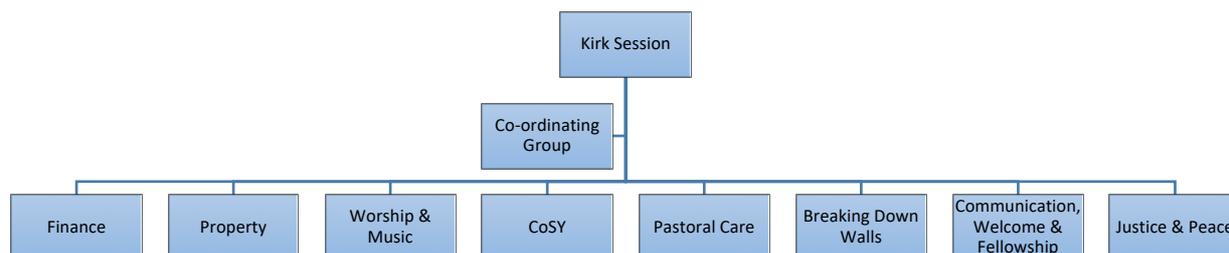
4 The Proposed Shape of St Leonard's Church under the Unitary Form of Constitution

In order to best appreciate the Unitary Form of Constitution, it is easiest to describe how it could be implemented for our situation at St Leonard's.

To do that this part of the document will look at the overall structure and how that structure would operate. In section 5 we will look at the individual remits of the 8 Action Groups.

4.1 Proposed Organisational Structure

The diagram shown overleaf shows the organisational structure proposed for St Leonard's Church under the Unitary Form of Constitution.



4.1.1 The Kirk Session

The Kirk Session would continue to have oversight of the whole life and service of the congregation within our parish; with responsibility for the spiritual and temporal oversight of the affairs of the congregation. Members of the Kirk Session would be the Trustees of St Leonard’s Church.

The Kirk Session meetings would be open to all and an invitation would be extended to the congregation to attend. There would be an opportunity for any member of the congregation to speak, however, final decisions would remain in the hands of the elders.

The Kirk Session would continue to be moderated by the Minister.

4.1.1.1 Session Clerk

The Session Clerk would be responsible for the orderly keeping of records of the Kirk Session, including keeping the minutes in proper form, for issuing extract minutes, and for dealing with all correspondence. The Session Clerk would serve for a maximum appointment of five years.

4.1.1.2 Appointment of Elders

The Acts of the Church of Scotland allows for various different means by which to appoint new elders. Traditionally in St Leonard’s Church this has been by nomination and appointment within the Kirk Session.

There may be concern that the ‘democratic’ element that is allowed by the Model Deed whereby members of the congregation are elected to serve the Congregational Board will be lost under a move to the Unitary Form of Constitution if the present system of appointment of elders is maintained.

The Act (Act X, 1932, amended) also allows for

- Nomination and direct election by the members of the congregation;
- a system of signed lists, in which members of the congregation submit a signed list of names and the names having the greatest numbers of votes are elected.

It would be proposed to, perhaps under a trial period of 5 years, use a hybrid system whereby the whole congregation (including elders) is given the option to nominate names to the Kirk Session. Assessment and appointment would then be made by the Kirk Session.

4.1.2 The Coordinating Group

The Coordinating Group would be led by either the Session Clerk or Deputy Clerk, with the Church Administrator to take minutes.

The Coordinating Group would comprise the Minister, Session Clerk, Leaders of Action Groups, and any other co-opted members.

The remit for the Coordinating Group is described below in section 5.2.

4.1.3 Action Groups

The Action Groups are where the bulk of the work will happen. They would comprise both elders and members.

Each Group should have a Group Leader, who may or may not be an elder, who would serve for a maximum of five years. The membership of each group would consist of a maximum of 7 (seven) and a minimum of 5 (five), with a Quorum of 3 (three). The Group Leader, or another member if agreed, would take a basic minute of each meeting and prepare the report to the Kirk Session. Details on reporting and minutes are provided in sections 4.2.2.

A person would normally serve for a 3 (three) year term, with no more than 2 (two) consecutive terms. Current Congregational Board members would be encouraged to remain active in the decision-making through their continued participation on one or more Action Groups.

Remits and budgets for each Group are outlined in sections 5.3.1 – 5.3.16.

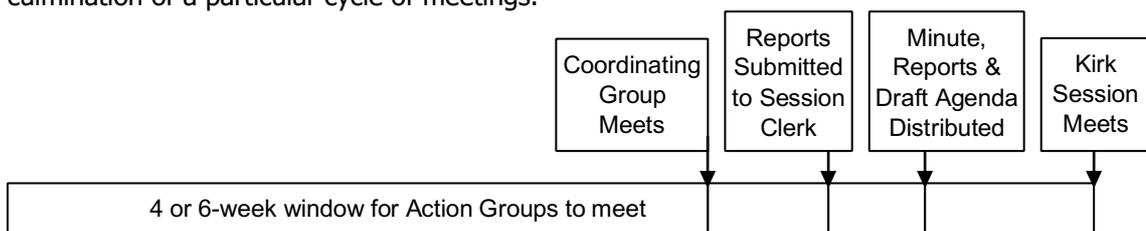
4.2 Method of Working

Central to the working of any structure is communication, particularly communication between different groups and office bearers, and between the Kirk Session and the congregation as a whole. This would be facilitated by a change in the method of working.

The model proposed is the same as that adopted by other congregations who have moved to the Unitary Form of Constitution.

4.2.1 General Overview of Reporting Structure

The reporting structure would revolve around the Kirk Session meeting as the culmination of a particular cycle of meetings.



The cycle would begin with a window of opportunity in which the Action Groups would meet, which could be 4 or 6 weeks depending on the frequency of Kirk Session meetings.

Two weeks before the Kirk Session meeting the Coordinating Group would meet in order to prepare for the Kirk Session meeting, draft the agenda, coordinate Group activity and so on (full remit in section 5.2). Final reports from the Action Groups must be in the hands of the Session Clerk (electronically by email) by the end of that week. The Session Clerk would prepare the minute of the previous Kirk Session meeting and a draft agenda for distribution to all elders at least one week before the Kirk Session meeting

Reports from the Action Groups would be collated and distributed by the Church Administrator. Extra copies would be available for church members at the Kirk Session meeting itself.

4.2.2 Reports and Minutes

The system of reports will be essential to the smooth operation of the Unitary Form of Constitution. Some guidance might be useful so that Action Groups are aware of the expectations that this system would introduce.

4.2.2.1 Action Group Minutes

It would be expected that all Groups keep a minute of their meetings. The minutes do not need to be a word-for-word account of all that was discussed at the meeting; however, all decisions that are made should be recorded, and it might be helpful to note in summary form any discussions that led to a decision.

The minutes should follow the Church of Scotland guidelines for keeping minutes. They should be available for inspection by the Kirk Session, if necessary.

4.2.2.2 Action Group Reports

The Report would include

- a note of decisions made,
- a summary of any discussion the Group thinks may be useful for the Kirk Session to know,
- a list of recommendations to bring to the Kirk Session for a decision, if necessary.

A standard template would be provided for all Action Groups.

The Report would be produced by the Leader of each Group with the assistance of the Group Secretary.

4.2.2.3 Coordinating Group Minutes

A minute of the meetings of the Coordinating Group will be kept by the Secretary in accordance with Church of Scotland guidelines.

4.2.2.4 Kirk Session Minutes

A minute of the Kirk Session meeting would be kept by the Session Clerk. This minute would be included in the papers distributed before each Kirk Session meeting.

4.2.2.5 Guidelines on Keeping Minutes

The following guidelines should be adopted in keeping minutes:

- It is recommended that a minute of a meeting be produced quickly following a meeting when memory of the meeting is still fresh.
- Minutes should be produced electronically.
- A designated minute folder should be used.
- Minutes may be kept loose leaf with the option of periodically binding them.
- Each page of the minutes should be numbered sequentially with that which has gone before (this is to ensure that no page is later inserted into the minute folder), with a year indication. For example: "Page 03/2014" would refer to page 3 of the minute from 2014.

- A copy of the draft minute should be circulated to all Group Members and passed to the Co-ordinating Group.

5 Remits for Kirk Session, Coordinating Group and Action Groups

In this section a general remit for all Action Groups, an outline of the specific remits for each group and the role of Group Leaders will be provided.

5.1 The Kirk Session

As previously described in section 4.1.1, the remit of the Kirk Session is the same as under our current Model Deed of Constitution.

The Kirk Session can call for an extra meeting at any time.

Moderator: The Minister

Minutes: Session Clerk

The responsibilities of the Kirk Session include

- concern for the spiritual welfare not just of the congregation but also of the parish as a whole;
- the provision of church services;
- concern for the organisational life of the congregation;
- the need to maintain good order, administer discipline, judge and determine cases, and see that Assembly legislation is observed;
- oversight of Safeguarding Policy and Register as well as the implementation of Safeguarding regulations
- judging the fitness of those who desire to receive the Sacraments;
- maintain both a Baptismal Roll and a Communion Roll;
- Appointment of the Organist, the Church Officer, the Church Administrator and one of its number to represent it in Presbytery.

With the dissolution of the Congregational Board, the responsibilities would also include oversight of the

- maintenance and insurance of the properties of the congregation;
- preparation and distribution of an annual budget to members of the congregation;
- encouragement of a level of liberality to meet budget requirements;
- the level of salaries of church officials, including contracts of employment;
- payment of salaries of Church officials and other expenses of the congregation;
- meeting of the Ministries and Mission allocations;
- raising of additional funds, if need be, subject to the approval of the Presbytery, (where the funds are to pay for extraordinary repairs or improvements, the approval of the General Assembly's Committee on Parish Appraisal and of the General Trustees is also required);
- church funds to ensure they are used exclusively for Church of Scotland purposes unless specially raised or donated for other purposes;

- acceptance of loans only if repayment can be assured;
- termination of contracts of employment and supervision of all paid employees;
- Congregational Accounts in a form that shows income and expenditure, assets and liabilities;
- proper auditing of the Accounts of the congregation and its organisations;
- arranging for the Stated Annual Meeting required to approve the accounts;
- Preparation of Accounts; submission of the examined accounts, after approval by the Kirk Session, for approval by the congregation and thereafter by the Presbytery.

5.2 The Coordinating Group

Leaders: Session Clerk or Deputy Clerk

Minutes: Church Administrator

The remit of the Coordinating Group would include

- evaluating and coordinating Group activity regularly, reviewing each Group's activities, and, where applicable, coordinating the effort of the Action Groups;
- updating and recommending a rolling two year plan for the church on an annual basis, involving the Action Groups in recommending future plans and strategy to the Kirk Session for approval;
- ensuring all major issues and changes are brought to the Kirk Session for discussion and approval;
- encouraging Action Groups to become involved in partnerships and to share experiences and resources;
- responding to matters sent down by Presbytery and / or the General Assembly.

5.3 Action Groups

The following remits and guidelines would, by necessity, need to be kept under continual review and be open to change, subject to Kirk Session approval.

The Minister and Clerk should be considered as ex officio members of all Action Groups.

5.3.1 The Role of Action Group Leader

This will entail

- monitoring the activities of their Group;
- ensuring that the Group are reminded of and work towards achieving the goals within their remit;
- reviewing and proposing amendments to the remit as required, via the Coordinating Group and Kirk Session;
- coordinating Group activities – with other Action Groups directly and through the Coordinating Group;
- and ensuring Group reports are received by the Session Clerk in time for distribution prior to Kirk Session meetings.

5.3.2 General Remit for all Action Groups

All Action Groups shall

- hold meetings as required by the Kirk Session, and record actions arising to ensure the remit of the Group is carried out effectively;
- provide written reports to the Session Clerk (in electronic form via email) at least 10 days in advance of Kirk Session meetings, detailing, in brief, work completed since the last Kirk Session, work expected to be completed before the next report, and with matters for decision by the Kirk Session presented as a deliverance;
- ensure that no one person is doing all the work of the Action Groups, the workload must be shared amongst all members of the Group and / or other parties from the congregation are to be utilised as and when appropriate;
- coordinate activities of the Action Groups via the Coordinating Group, and by active liaison with other Groups when required;
- regularly review the work of the Group, liaising with the Coordinating Group, and seeking Kirk Session approval for future plans;
- ensure Action Group activities are communicated to the wider church and community on a regular basis, via articles in the church magazine, church notices, flyers, etc.;
- Identify expenditure requirements, operating within a budget forecast approved by the Kirk Session and liaising with the Finance and Property Groups regarding the use of church resources, and to bring any expenditure over and beyond any Group budget to the Kirk Session for approval if appropriate.

5.3.3 Finance & Stewardship Group

The purpose of the Finance Group is to provide the financial wherewithal to support the other Action Groups in their work and oversee the Finances and Stewardship of the Congregation.

Leader: Finance Convenor

Secretary:

The remit for this group includes:

- maintaining and controlling St Leonard's Church's finances: overall income, expenditure, budgets, forecasts to be reported to Kirk Session as and when determined by the Kirk Session;
- support the work of the Treasurer, providing support where needed;
- oversight and promotion of the Gift Aid and WFO schemes;
- bringing to Kirk Session the appointment of auditors;
- notifying the Kirk Session of any changes to Mission & Renewal, National Stipend Fund and Presbytery Dues, and seeking approval for any charges for Church Buildings;
- assisting each Group in developing their budget, monitoring progress, and agreeing guidelines for the operation of Group budgets with the Kirk Session;
- seeking ways to fund special projects from internal and / or external sources;
- playing a key role in developing the financial stewardship of church members: promoting Christian giving, and explaining Christian spending within the wider church;
- leading role in Stewardship Campaigns;

- actively promoting awareness of the financial situation of St Leonard's Church;
- soliciting advice available from national advisers on stewardship when necessary.

5.3.4 Property Group

The purpose of the Property Group is to maintain and develop the Congregation's fabric in order to enable better the work of the other Action Groups.

Leader:

Secretary:

Budget: £? spending outside budget requires Finance Group Approval

The remit for this group includes:

- creating a positive environment for all current and possible future church activities and uses;
- developing a programme of maintenance and renewal of church fabric;
- ensuring that all work over a budget of £1000 is supported by three quotations;
- budgeting the work programme to stay within the discretionary annual budget and to seek Kirk Session approval for any spending over that limit;
- liaising with Presbytery in ensuring that a building survey and property valuation are carried out every five years;
- seeking Presbytery approval for any fabric work over the Presbytery's £?????? limit;
- ensuring that insurance cover is adequate for all buildings;
- arranging letting of buildings, maintenance of any rental agreements and to liaise with property users, ensuring this is reported to the Coordinating Group;
- ensuring that all buildings and surrounding area comply with Health & Safety and other legislation as required;
- actively keeping up to date with current legislation as it applies to the church's buildings;
- developing the fabric in order to meet the needs of internal as well as external users;
- liaising with Worship and Music Group to ensure Sound and Vision equipment within the church is adequate;
- overseeing special building and fabric projects as requested by the Kirk Session;
- active liaison with other Action Groups to find out what material needs they have in order to best meet their goals.

5.3.5 Worship and Music Group

The purpose of the Worship & Music Group is to develop the worship life of the congregation and the musical offerings offered to the wider community.

Leader: The Minister

Secretary:

Budget:

The remit for this group includes:

- encouraging participation in worship services by church members;
- researching new opportunities for worship in the life of the community and congregation and feedback to the Minister on such initiatives;

- oversight of Adult Education opportunities such as Lent Studies, new members classes and other opportunities for exploring faith together;
- encouraging musical involvement and participation, in concert with the Organist;
- developing participation of children and young adults in worship;
- ensuring resources for worship are available;
- support for Flower Ministry
- coordinating arrangements for the Sacrament of Communion;
- ensuring the CCLI licence is up-to-date through the Church Office and Administrator;
- along with Property Group, ensuring the sound equipment is functioning and suitable.

5.3.6 PASTORAL GROUP

Leader: **Secretary**

Budget

The purpose of the Pastoral Group is to develop pastoral care of the congregation.

The remit for this Group includes

- to assist the minister in developing, implementing and evaluating the pastoral care policy for the church, through liaison with the elders, visiting group, parish nurse and other appropriate bodies
- to develop a strategy to identify those in need – sickness, bereavement, isolation
- to implement a system of support for those people
- to identify and organise appropriate training eg bereavement support
- to liaise with the church’s safeguarding officer
- to develop and extend the prayer life of the church, along with the Worship and Music Group
- to have general responsibility for the church transport system.

5.3.7 CHURCH OF SCOTLAND YOUTH (CosY) ACTION GROUP

Leader: **Secretary:**

Budget:

The purpose of the CosY Action Group is to develop, nurture and oversee the participation in church life of the age group from birth to 25 years.

The remit of this group includes

- Oversight of the St Leonard’s Parish Kids, crèche and all forms of ministry to young people
- Looking at ways to encourage and develop other youth groups in the church ie secondary school age
- Looking at ways to encourage participation of students in conjunction with the Breaking down the Walls group
- Participation in the Church of Scotland’s first ever Year of Young People 2018 (resources and ideas available on the C of S website)

- Appointment of leader and overall responsibility for the Under-Fives Group
- Recruitment of volunteers for youth work in the life of the congregation.

5.3.8 BREAKING DOWN THE WALLS GROUP

Leader: **Secretary**

Budget

The purpose of the Breaking Down the Walls Action Group is to develop the missional life of the congregation within St Leonard's itself, in the community within which we live.

The remit of this group includes

- Working within the congregation to remove barriers between people to help us worship and serve together
- Working within the local 'religious' community to serve the needs of the community
- Working within the local wider community to reach out to those who do not normally consider St Leonard's a part of their lives, except for marriages, funerals etc
- Co-ordinate with the Worship and Music Group and the minister in worship that focusses on our local missional work.

5.3.9 COMMUNICATION, WELCOME & FELLOWSHIP GROUP

The purpose of the CW&F Action Group is to develop welcome, communication and fellowship strategy within St. Leonard's Church and to the wider community

Leader: **Secretary:**

Budget

The remit for this group includes:

- implementing ways of bringing both new people and 'dormant' church members into active church life in coordination with other Teams where necessary, and in partnership with other local churches when appropriate;
- Oversight of the Newsletter/Magazine
- Oversight and development of a Welcome Strategy. ie. 'Congregation Buddy' for new members; pew Welcome Cards; Information Packs for new members giving information about Church and community
- utilising available resources that will assist in outreach;
- studying what other churches are doing in the way of mission, and sharing what is learnt with the Kirk Session;
- promoting the work of St. Leonard's Church in the wider community, e.g. keeping local press informed of church activities, church web site, Facebook/Social media etc;
- promoting regular contact with parish, e.g. Christmas & Easter Cards;
- developing a number of 'Bridge' events within the church to which all the community could safely be invited (e.g., concerts, dances, speakers)
- Preparation and production of the various rotas covering Elders Duties; Sunday Readers etc.

5.3.10 JUSTICE & PEACE GROUP

The purpose of the Justice & Peace Action Group is to place concern for justice and peace at home and overseas at the heart of congregational life and to witness to this concern in the local community.

Leader

Secretary

Budget:

The remit for this group includes

- Strategy for mission outside our local area – what do we want to put our energies into in the context of service in the wider world
- Focal point for the work of the Christian Aid group, Leprosy Mission, Fairtrade
- When appropriate, co-ordinate with the Worship and Music Group and the minister in worship that focuses on the wider world.
- Encourage social concern and action in congregational life.

6 Conclusion

This Strategy Document has attempted to provide a full description of the need for change to our current church structures, acknowledging that the current structures have served us well in the past, but also being realistic that there are other forms of church structure which may better suit our current plans and aspirations.

It is hoped that this document will provide the information that is required to help the congregation make an informed choice and move forward. All details in this draft structure are open to debate, discussion and improvement.

We will discuss this proposal at the Kirk Session meeting on Tuesday 1 May, 2018