WORSHIPPING GOD, INSPIRING FAITH, CONNECTING PEOPLE

Strategic Plan 2018 – 2028
Whatever we do, we do prayerfully, with humility and seeking to be in tune with the Spirit of God at work in the world.

Our mission is to live out the call of Jesus to...

**Love God and Love our Neighbours**

As a Church, we will achieve our mission through...

The Church of Scotland is part of the worldwide Christian Church. We worship God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We believe the good news of God’s grace and love shown to all in Jesus Christ. In word and action we aim to follow in Christ’s footsteps, whose life, death and resurrection reveal God’s saving love for us. We are called to share God’s love with others and to work together for justice and peace in the power of the Spirit.

The Church of Scotland is part of the worldwide reformed Church. We take as our basis of faith and life the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. Within Scotland, we serve the whole nation through Parishes covering every part of the land, offering welcome, comfort, support and service for all.

Who we are...

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Our Goals are to enable and support...

Enable...
- People confident in faith serving in communities
- Thriving intergenerational churches
- Growing congregations
- People engaged with local and global concerns

Support...
- Well-supported ministry teams
- Well-equipped spaces in the right places
- Sustainable Finances
- Effective Local, Regional and National structures
We live in a world where change has never been more rapid and radical. Our institutions, including the Church, all face issues of coping with both the speed and depth of change. This is both technological and structural. It goes to the very roots of who we are and what we do and involves being constantly challenged at every level to rethink the way things have been.

For an organisation like the Church, which adopts change slowly, this is particularly stressful and unsettling. As we plan our priorities for the future, we will take account of this context of rapid and ceaseless change in developing the ability to adapt appropriately.

In setting the context in which we work, we are also pointing to some of the issues which will help to shape our priorities. While the Church has a ‘counter-cultural’ role, we also need to work with the culture of innovation and development which characterises so much of our society today.
We are building on key strengths – the first of which is our people. Committed to following Jesus Christ daily, they can be found in every community in Scotland. Whether through paid employment or as part of the nation’s largest body of volunteers, they can be found both worshipping on a Sunday and every day of the week supporting a wide range of activities which benefit people and communities.

Since the Scottish Reformation (1560), the Church of Scotland has fulfilled its national role through having a parish covering every part of the land. We recognise that we now live in a pluralistic society where many different views are held on the religious life of the nation. In this context, the Church of Scotland maintains its witness to Christ while working harmoniously with others on matters of justice, social reform and wider issues of common interest wherever possible.

The Church is ecumenical and international in its outlook and work, engaging with partners in the Gospel across a wide spectrum. While we retain a unique place in Scottish society, we are no longer in a place where it is possible to fulfil the territorial role on our own. We recognise the need to share both ministries and buildings with others in ecumenical partnership, observing the principle that “churches should act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately”.

Through CrossReach, the Church’s social care arm, and local congregations the Church delivers high quality social care to people across Scotland. This includes services for children and families, for older folks, counselling services, criminal justice work, addressing homelessness and care for those involved in substance misuse. Through the centuries, the Church has also been a strong advocate for social reform.

Our Priority Areas work focuses on Scotland’s poorest communities and those on the margins of society. It aims towards a reinvigorated and sustainable worshipping people and community life in all priority area parishes.

**Our Strengths**

- Committed people seeking to live out the Gospel
- A base in every community in Scotland
- Largest national body of willing volunteers
- Ecumenical breadth and outlook
- Positive history of engagement in social reform
- Proven record of social care delivery
- Many opportunities to network across society
- Working with people at the margins of society
The current trajectory of figures for the Church is downwards, across the board. We have falling numbers of Ministers, Elders, people in our congregations and finances. There are missing generations in congregations. Not only do we have very few children compared to ten years ago, or similarly young people (under 25s), the number of folks in their 30s and 40s is also very small. Given that the majority of those attending Church are over 60, these missing generations pose a real challenge to the very existence of the Church. We cannot afford to ignore this and fail to produce a plan to address it.

Around 75% of our Ministers are aged over 50. Best estimates suggest that the number of full-time paid ministers will fall to around 550 in the next 5-6 years, leaving a shortfall on the current model of ministry of around 300. Our success in recruiting other forms of ministry has been limited, so creative thinking and planning are needed. The present model of one Minister to one parish is no longer sustainable.

It is obvious that falling congregational numbers and ministers will lead to a parallel fall in income. This means we will need to manage limited resources carefully and prioritise what we do – a key element of strategic planning. This includes addressing the challenge of external funding in relation to CrossReach as it seeks to support some of society’s most vulnerable people where the state is not doing so.

Our history has included divisions which have left a legacy of too many buildings, many of which are too expensive for small congregations and some of which are in the wrong places.

Our structures for supporting the local church in its mission are cumbersome and uneven. Some work is not carried out in the right place. National structures are shaped around mid-week day time meetings, which are difficult for working people to attend. There are too many Presbyteries, unevenly distributed with many already unsustainable. If we fail to address these issues, support for local mission will not be effective or even possible in some cases.
Some Principles

• Whatever we do, we do prayerfully, with humility and seeking to be in tune with the Spirit of God at work in the world.

• The activities which we undertake must be sustainable.

• In fulfilling our mission, there will be flexibility of delivery and choice appropriate to context, consistent with our priorities.

• We operate locally (Congregations), regionally (Presbyteries) and nationally (Councils and Committees) – we are committed to working in an integrated and cooperative way.
People Confident in Faith serving in Communities

This is important because...
By enabling people to gain confidence in living out their faith through active service and discipleship, individuals, congregations and communities will build resilience and local communities will flourish. This will help the Church of Scotland become more positive about the future and address decline in membership. The Church, both locally and nationally, will nurture a deepening spirituality and support individuals and congregations in being open to share faith with others in word and action, witnessing to God’s presence in the world.

Links particularly to – Worship / Active Discipleship

The roles we will play in this will include...

Local: in the context of Local Church Review, developing and delivering a mission plan for the Parish which deepens faith, offers educational opportunities, encourages active service and engagement in issues of justice and concern, and supports growth in faith and the confidence to share it.

Regional: fully implementing Local Church Review processes which encourage and support congregations to grow in new ways and develop achievable missional plans. Use Presbytery resources imaginatively and cooperatively to support events and opportunities for people to grow and deepen in faith.

National: signposting opportunities and resources which support growth in faith and understanding, identifying and, where required, creating relevant additional resources.

What we will measure is...

- By 2020, through ensuring that all congregations have regular opportunities for nurture, prayer and bible study, people will demonstrate deepening spirituality and a desire to learn and share more about faith.
- By 2023, all congregations will have completed a Local Church Review process, producing a mission plan for their Parish.
- By 2025, more people will take up learning opportunities which deepen faith and increase awareness of the Church in the community.

This will be influenced by...

- The extent to which people's gifts are identified, nurtured and deployed in service by local, regional and national leadership.
- The quality of Local Church Reviews and the effectiveness of Presbyteries in monitoring and supporting their implementation.

This also connects closely to:
Thriving Intergenerational Churches; Growing Congregations; Effective Local, Regional and National structures.
We are called to share God’s love with others and to work together for justice and peace in the power of the Spirit.
This is important because...
The Church of Scotland seeks to be a place of welcome, hospitality and sanctuary for people of all backgrounds and ages, with a special concern for those at the margins. It achieves this both through the outreach of local congregations and through the work of CrossReach, where many who have no prior experience of Church can experience its care for them. It enables people to have confidence in their faith, a deepening spirituality and opportunities to grow in discipleship through service of God and our neighbours.

The Church is a place where Christian education is accessible and open to all: where people choose to belong and to grow in faith. Both nationally and locally, the Church is an outward-looking, learning organisation which celebrates diversity, develops and is renewed through partnership with others, ecumenically, locally and globally.

Links particularly to – Worship / Active Discipleship

The roles we will play in this will include...

Local: sharing the Christian faith in engaging and modern ways, including the use of digital media. Offering welcoming and attractive gathering spaces for people of all ages and activities which respond to their own identified interests.

Regional: promoting and coordinating high-quality intergenerational work across Presbyteries, ensuring that resources are shared and supported.

National: supporting Presbyteries in the dissemination of best practice in growing intergenerational congregations, including the resourcing of youth work. Removing obstacles to the participation of a wide range of people, especially younger people, in the national life of the Church and encouraging them to be involved.

What we will measure is...

• By 2020, high quality resources for study and learning will be made available and used to support growth and service for all ages.

• By 2023, strong links will be established with ecumenical and global partners, sharing good practice in nurturing discipleship and missional engagement.

• By 2028, there will be clear signs of congregations becoming sustainable and growth-orientated with multiple generations and backgrounds of people present.

This will be influenced by...

• The Church investing in modern technology and utilising social media effectively.

• The nurturing of strong connections to share experience with ecumenical and global partners enabling mutual learning.

This also connects closely to:
People confident in faith serving in communities; Growing Congregations; Effective Local, Regional and National structures.
Growing Congregations

This is important because...
Congregations in every parish across Scotland and beyond are well led and engage in God-centred worship and prayer which is uplifting and inspiring. This leads to sustainable worshipping communities which are growing in a wide range of ways and are active in their wider neighbourhood. Congregations are confident in developing new approaches to congregational life, church planting and community engagement, because they are engaged both in offering worship and in receiving excellent Christian education and training for service, delivered in flexible and accessible ways.

Links particularly to – Worship / Active Discipleship

The roles we will play in this will include...

**Local:** preparing, leading and participating in worship of the highest quality. Encouraging individuals and congregations to develop their biblical and theological understanding, stimulating enthusiasm for learning more about faith and fostering places of invitation outwardly focussed on mission.

**Regional:** identifying places and opportunities for developing new approaches to congregational life which enable the Church to grow, including planting new communities of faith, where appropriate in ecumenical partnership.

**National:** fostering a culture of service and growth by supporting regional planning and offering access to excellent educational and training opportunities.

What we will measure is...

- By 2020, the Council of Assembly, in cooperation with Presbyteries and other Councils, will develop criteria to enable identification of appropriate places for new and emerging congregations; for growing congregations; for situations where the goal is ongoing sustainability; and where congregations have no long term future.
- By 2023, congregations will develop a clear focus on becoming sustainable and growth-orientated with targets appropriate to context, including the presence of multiple generations of people.
- By 2028, new congregations will be planted and established reflecting the communities which they serve in terms of background, age, gender and variety, especially in new areas of opportunity.

This will be influenced by...

- The ability of congregations to be visible places of welcome, hospitality and sanctuary to those who are searching for spiritual wholeness, justice, peace and a sense of belonging.
- The physical spaces in which we worship and the quality and attractiveness of the worship which people experience and in which they engage.

This also connects to:
People confident in faith serving in communities; Thriving Intergenerational Churches; Well-equipped spaces in the right places; Effective Local, Regional and National structures.
The Church of Scotland seeks to be a place of welcome, hospitality and sanctuary for people of all backgrounds and ages
People Engaged with local and global concerns

This is important because...
Achieving the primary goal of loving God and loving our neighbour relies upon the consistency of the Church engaging in practical service with communities, locally, nationally and globally. The Church maintains its commitment to engagement with, empowerment of and service alongside the most vulnerable and marginalised, both within Scotland and across the world. In serving the wider community and in partnering others in doing so (e.g. Christian Aid), the Church fulfils its calling to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. Accordingly, communities will feel that the Church is more integrated locally and understand the value of the Church engaging with wider society.

Links particularly to – Worship / Connecting with Communities

The roles we will play in this will include...

Local: working together for justice and peace, showing hospitality and sharing faith in word and action. Identifying those people and organisations in each Parish with whom it may be possible to work in addressing issues of common interest, which reflect Gospel values.

Regional: actively promoting connections and networks of support for congregations seeking to work with others for global issues. Fostering strong bonds with other regional political, social and Church bodies in support of local congregations fulfilling their missional goals.

National: identifying networks of learning and exchange through partnership with a variety of agencies and organisations. Pointing to resources and offering support to enable the Church, locally and nationally, to offer a prophetic witness and to join in appropriately with others who are already doing so.

What we will measure is...

- By 2022, there will be evidence of increased, positive congregational involvement in local community issues, particularly in relation to justice, the alleviation of poverty and social inclusion.
- By 2025, every Presbytery will have forged links with local partners, including CrossReach services, and global partners with a view to enriching the lives of congregations within their bounds.
- By 2028, we will ensure an appropriate level of contribution from the Church locally, nationally and internationally, to debate and activity in the public square.

This will be influenced by...

- The effectiveness of connecting and integrating the ongoing work of CrossReach with both local congregations and the work of the other national Councils of the Church.
- The extent to which the Church of Scotland is able to learn from and contribute to the life of the World Church.

This also connects to:
Thriving Intergenerational Church; Growing Congregations.
This is important because....

The context in which we offer ministry is changing and consequently the shape and forms of ministry are changing. With fewer full-time parish ministers available, new and challenging opportunities are opening up for team ministry. This requires flexibility and imagination, so those presenting to undertake any form of ministry will be recruited, educated, developed and supported in a manner which will enable them to minister effectively with and to all of God’s people in the context of a team. An inspiring and accessible range of resources is being made available which will support the wide range of requirements that exist within the worshipping communities of the Church of Scotland.

Links particularly to – Worship / Active Discipleship

The roles we will play in this will include...

Local: identifying and encouraging people with gifts for ministry to come forward for education and training for service in a variety of ministries.

Regional: actively supporting and nurturing both those who are training for and those who are serving in the ministries of the Church. Identifying and enabling opportunities for team ministry across boundaries (parish; ecumenical; Presbytery; etc.).

National: developing, in cooperation with educational and other partners, excellent, fully-integrated education and training programmes, delivered in accessible ways. This will also include developing new forms of training for those in recognised ministries, Elders and lay leaders.

What we will measure is...

• By 2021, an integrated training programme, with flexible access, which covers all aspects of lay and ordained ministerial education and training, will be in place, providing excellent preparation and ongoing support for developing ministry teams.

• By 2023, there will be evidence of improved wellbeing and resilience within the workforce that comprises the ministries of the Church.

• By 2028, well-prepared ministry teams, drawing on experience from experimental programmes, will be in place across the country, offering excellent local leadership.

This will be influenced by...

• The formation of strong partnerships with educational institutions able to provide integrated, reflective, ecumenical patterns of ministerial formation, which meet the developing needs of the Church.

• Ongoing research into different forms of support and development (for example, currently – Hub Ministry, Path of Renewal, Pioneer Ministry, Go For It, Presbytery Mission Initiatives).

This also connects to:

People confident in faith serving in communities; Thriving Intergenerational Churches; Growing Congregations.
Well-equipped spaces in the right places

This is important because...
Buildings are essential for the mission of the Church in the local community and for the coordination of work nationally. The Church of Scotland has a base for mission in every parish, but also has a historical legacy of more buildings than it needs or can sustain. We will ensure that an appropriate number of well-equipped spaces for worship, discipleship activities, service provision and engagement with the community are available. This will mean fewer buildings, but ones which are equipped and ready to sustain God’s mission locally and nationally.

Links particularly to – Worship / Connecting with Communities

The roles we will play in this will include...

Local: with appropriate support from regional and national bodies, ensuring that all properties are properly maintained, cooperating in identifying properties that no longer suit the missional context. Identifying, where appropriate, potential alternative places and spaces for worship, mission and service provision.

Regional: taking a proactive approach to the prioritising of future buildings strategy for all charges; networking expertise across the Presbytery and actively supporting congregations where change is essential.

National: delivering an integrated approach to Church property management. Developing innovative policies around the funding of work on property.

What we will measure is...

• By 2020, the General Trustees and Council of Assembly will have in place an integrated strategy for the appropriate development and disposal of buildings, leading to the optimum number of sustainable, better-equipped and affordable places for future mission.

• By 2021, the national offices will be fit for purpose and sustainable, either in a renovated George St building or in alternative premises.

• By 2028, all Presbyteries will have drawn up and begun implementation of a plan for the use, development or disposal of all buildings within their bounds.

This will be influenced by...

• Effective and cooperative engagement of Presbyteries in ensuring that congregations work with the national support agencies to achieve this goal.

• Strong leadership from the General Trustees, offering expertise to those responsible for buildings locally and nationally.

This also connects to:
Sustainable Finances; Effective Local, Regional and National structures.
The Church of Scotland has a base for mission in every parish
Sustainable Finances

This is important because...
Money is only one of the resources which the Church of Scotland has, but it is a critical element in enabling it to fulfil the command to Love God and Love Your Neighbour. Regular patterns of reflection on Christian stewardship are an essential part of growing and flourishing congregations. The Church will move away from deficit budgets to achieving annual balanced budgets, locally and nationally, which are focussed on the priorities agreed in this plan and will lead to overall financial sustainability. These will reflect the outlook of a flourishing organisation.

Links particularly to – Worship / Active Discipleship / Connecting with Communities

The roles we will play in this will include...

Local: engaging in regular stewardship activities encouraging good use of time and talents and including a clear focus on the purpose and importance of Christian giving. Seeking to increase annual giving in line with inflation to ensure the full funding of the Church’s priorities for service, mission and ministry.

Regional: ensuring that congregations within their bounds are viable and sustainable, taking account of their context.

National: through a consultative process, providing guidelines on income generation and offering support to Presbyteries to implement these. Continuing to keep under review the Mission and Ministry allocation process.

What we will measure is...

• By 2021, the Church at a national level will achieve and maintain a balanced annual budget which fully supports its priorities.
• By 2023, national guidelines on ways of maximising income generation will have been drawn up and implemented.
• By 2025, all congregations will have completed a full cycle of stewardship activities, with a particular focus on the purpose of Christian giving. A clear process for ongoing stewardship should be in place.

This will be influenced by...

• The effectiveness of Presbyteries in inspiring a sense of urgency and worthwhileness among congregations about engaging in active stewardship.
• Effective monitoring of income against expenditure both locally and nationally, leading to appropriately pitched budgets.

This also connects to:
Growing Congregations; Well-equipped spaces in the right places; Effective Local, Regional and National structures.
Effective Local, Regional and National structures

This is important because...

In order to function well as a Presbyterian Church, the Church of Scotland needs a well-balanced relationship between its structures locally, regionally and nationally. Well resourced, professional regional bodies will connect to local and national structures, taking their place confidently in a thriving Church. As one of the largest charities in Scotland, the Church complies with charity regulation, employing governance structures which are comprehensive and effective, supporting the key Goals. Staffing levels nationally, regionally and locally will be appropriately tailored to need, with national staff and structures geared to supporting locally identified solutions. With an efficient, supportive and just legal framework which enables, releases and protects all within it, the Church will create a conscious interdependence among local, regional and national bodies, freeing people to live out the gospel in word and action.

Links particularly to – Worship / Active Discipleship / Connecting with Communities

The roles we will play in this will include...

Local: identifying and forming teams of ordained and lay, stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministries. Being open to appropriately supported change. Exercising creativity in addressing the challenges of new and emerging forms of worship, ministry, church planting and community engagement.

Regional: engaging positively and enthusiastically in reshaping the regional structures of the Church, to support the needs of changing and reinvigorated congregations. Developing regional staff teams appropriate to servicing needs.

National: developing a Workforce Plan and adjusting staffing levels and Council and Committee structures in line with this. Fostering a culture of supporting solutions aimed at addressing locally identified needs. Ensuring that Councils become more effectively connected to regional structures, which in turn enable connection with congregations and their needs.

What we will measure is...

- By 2020, significant steps will have been taken towards the regional structures of the Church being more effectively resourced to enable key support to congregations and strong links to national structures.
- By 2021, governance structures will be streamlined to enable effective implementation while maintaining compliance with charity regulations.
- By 2021, a national Workforce Plan will have been drawn up and implemented ensuring appropriate levels of staffing to meet the strategic priorities of the Church.
- By 2023, the framework of Church Law will be rationalised, ensuring clarity, accessibility and consistency.

This will be influenced by...

- Cooperative patterns of working amongst the Presbyteries, the Council of Assembly and the Principal Clerk’s Office, which avoid any unnecessary delay in achieving the reform necessary to support the key strategic objectives of the whole Church.

This also connects to: All other indicators in this plan.
For more information.

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