Presbytery of Edinburgh Strategic Plan

Values and Principles

This document lays out, in summarised form, the values and principles that might animate and guide the Presbytery Plan of the Presbytery of Edinburgh. The *values* of the Plan define the attitudes and standards that should animate a Plan that will directly affect thousands of church officers and members, and indirectly affect hundreds of thousands of Edinburgh’s citizens. The *principles* of the Plan refer to the foundational beliefs that ground its policy decisions and implementation. These principles may be unfamiliar to some within the Church, yet they are supported by the bulk of research into contemporary ministry and mission, and have been adopted by many other Edinburgh churches.

**Values**

*Faithfulness*

Above everything else, the Plan aims to be faithful to the vision that God has for the city of Edinburgh, and not to our own personal visions.

*Realism*

As part of this, the Plan makes decisions on the basis of fact, and not as we would like the world to be.

*Ambition*

The Plan does not settle for the way things are, however, but shares with God God’s ambition to see our churches and city transformed.

*Fairness*

Realism, tempered with God’s vision, mean that the Plan will attempt to be impartial and objective in its recommendations

*Transparency*

The work of the Strategy Committee, and the creation and execution of the Plan, will be carried out in a spirit of full transparency, honesty, openness, with clear communication to Presbytery a priority.

*Flexibility*

Scottish society is changing at an unprecedented speed, and any Plan we create must be flexible enough to respond quickly to new developments.

**Principles**

*We Exist for Others, Not Ourselves*

William Temple once said that the Church is the only institution that exists primarily for the benefit of those who are not its members. That means that all strategic decisions have to be made on the basis of missional, and not merely congregational, considerations. Jesus Christ came not to be served but to serve, and the Church is not above its Master.

*Ministry and Mission Shared by Presbytery and Congregations*

Ours is a Presbyterian - and not Congregational – Church, and therefore good working within the Presbytery is crucial. Ministry is not only the work of particular congregations but of the whole Presbytery, and the Plan recognises this by acknowledging Presbytery’s role in identifying areas of strategic importance, and directing personnel and finance to these areas.

*Working with Other Churches*

The Church of Scotland is part of the Universal Church, of which the other denominations and churches of Edinburgh are also part. As such, we share our ministry and mission with them, and, where possible, we should seek to express this through shared ministry and mission.

*Policies Determined by Fact, Not Anecdote*

Following our core values of realism and fairness, the Plan is, wherever possible, directed by evidence rather than personal impression or bias. This involves close consideration of census and social attitude data, contemporary missional thinking, and the practices of other churches. This is particularly important in relation to the use of buildings.

*Breaking the Identification of Ministry with Parish Ministers*

Parish ministry will always be the bedrock of the Church of Scotland. Yet a shortage of ministers, economic constraints, and the need to mobilise the whole Church to maintain and grow the Church mean that ministry can no longer be identified solely with parish ministry. As such, some parishes and worshipping communities within the Presbytery will no longer be led by full-time ministers of Word and Sacrament.

*Parish Churches as One Means among Others*

Related to this, and to our core values of ambition and flexibility, is the culture shift needed to see parishes as one means of undertaking ministry and mission among others. We live in a period of unprecedented numerical decline and unprecedented missional opportunity, and new forms of church community will be necessary to grasp this opportunity.

*Recognising Healthy Churches that Grow in Prayer, Discipleship, and Mission*

When making policy decisions regarding the future of particular congregations and distribution of resources, cognisance will be taken not only of financial giving or number of members but *health*, understood as growth in prayer, discipleship, and mission. In addition, congregations which excel in these areas should be closely studied, and their experience and giftings used for the benefit of the wider Presbytery.

*Integration of All Presbytery Business with the Strategic Plan*

The work of Presbytery can at times feel less coordinated than it might be. If we are to reform our ministry and mission in a time of genuine challenge, the process of planning must integrate with all the other work of Presbytery.