

## Kilmalcolm Building determination

Visiting Team from Glasgow Presbytery	
Rev Hilary McDougall	Congregational Facilitator and Depute Clerk. Member of the former General Assembly Panel of Arbiters
Rev Mike Gargrave	Minister Thornliebank Parish Church Member of the former General Assembly Panel of Arbiters
Mr Mike Dinnes	Presbytery Buildings Officer and retired architect

Date of visit	Wednesday 12 <sup>th</sup> May 2021
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### ***Summary of Terms of reference as provided by the Presbytery of Clyde***

The group should comprise of an odd number of members. None of the group should have any links with either Kilmalcolm congregation. If possible, at least one member of the group should have some experience of dealing with similar cases. The group will have the following remit:

In seeking to arrive at a just and transparent determination of which buildings should be chosen for use by the united congregation in Kilmalcolm, the group should first and foremost apply the planning principles laid down by the General Assembly in Act VII 2003; the primary principle being mission.

Prepare and submit a report giving due consideration as to which set of buildings is best placed to advance the mission and worship of the united congregation over the next 10 years. In addition assess the viability of the buildings in respect of future maintenance costs and upkeep of the buildings. The report should conclude with a recommendation on which building should be retained.

### ***General comments***

The visiting team were warmly welcomed by a small group of representatives from each of the congregations and all health and safety matters in relation to the pandemic were strictly adhered to.

Each group provided a comprehensive tour of their sanctuaries and hall spaces and were candid about work which had been undertaken previously and about work which was outstanding because of challenges relating to the pandemic or of funding.

Each group shared some of the history of their buildings as well as what they were able to do presently and what their hopes were for the future.

A presentation was provided for the visiting team by the representatives from each of the congregations.

The visiting team is grateful for all of the above and that all questions were answered willingly, courteously and fully.

## Kilmalcolm Old

### **Missional focus, pre pandemic, presently and future focused**

#### ***Sanctuary***

The sanctuary has a modern AV system with retractable screen. The system allows for the recording and live streaming of services which has allowed for an average of 200 people per week to participate in on-line worship. Some of these people have no previous formal connection with the church. Currently, in-person worship is simultaneously streamed for those who cannot or do not wish to come to the church building.

Using the same AV technology and covered by the appropriate licensing, Film Nights with hospitality are hosted for the community in the sanctuary. The sanctuary provides a comfortable venue for such outreach.

#### ***Murray Chapel***

The Murray chapel is open 2 hours each day Mon-Sat for anyone who wishes to enter and spend time in prayer and contemplation. Members of the congregation volunteer as stewards to welcome visitors. While the visiting team was there, a member of the public unconnected to the church, came to sit in the chapel and then asked to book a seat for Sunday worship.

#### ***Junior Church***

Numbers at weekly Junior Church are small, however contact with families is also nurtured through Messy Church which takes place at various points during the year and attracts healthy numbers of children and adults. The Kidston Hall provides spacious accommodation for these activities.

#### ***Hall usage***

Large number of groups use the separate Kidston Hall including both church groups and community groups. While renting hall space to community groups is not always a missional endeavour it was good to hear of the Outlook Group, and Bereavement Group which provide a meeting place for churched and non churched alike. The OK Fest of music and drama is organised by the church and draws in many community groups and organisations.

Catering facilities in the Kidston Hall are very good and provide up to date facilities to offer Christian hospitality.

#### ***Church and manse grounds***

The well-tended church garden is inviting to passers-by and seating encourages people to stop and rest in the grounds of the church.

Part of the woodland in the manse garden is being developed to create a pilgrim pathway, based on Celtic spirituality and legend of St Columba meeting St Mungo beside the Gillburn. Local schools have shown interest in being part of this project. The project is explained in detail on the church website. For the united congregation this will project will provide an opportunity to engage in spiritual matters with the community.

#### ***Social media***

The website is up to date and communicates information about the church. The Facebook page posts midweek meditations and live streamed Sunday worship can be accessed here also.

### ***Other relevant planning principles***

#### ***Ecumenism***

There are good relationships with the local Episcopalian Church however it has proved more difficult to engage with the Roman Catholic Priest.

#### ***Priority to the Poor***

The congregation collect food items and deliver them to the Port Glasgow Foodbank.

#### ***Financial responsibility***

We understand that hall lets from community groups contributes approximately £6,300 p.a. to church funds.

#### ***Communities***

Members of the congregation's 'Community Issues Team' attend Local Council, Civic Trust and Community Police meetings to understand the issues affecting the community.

### **Viability of buildings Kilmalcolm Old**

This suite of buildings is well maintained throughout although there is reported to be some localised areas of water ingress requiring minimal expenditure to address. The recent reroofing of the main church buildings is of comfort and a long trouble free life should be expected of this element of the fabric.

The roof of the adjoining Kidston Hall is in need of immediate attention. This was part of a planned programme which has been delayed by lockdown and is intended to be carried out in the very near future. It is understood that funding is in place for this work.

The quinquennial report suggests a figure of £111,540 is required in the short/medium term and includes the above noted issues. This sum is considered to be on the high side and may show some savings in practice.

Despite its age, the property is in very good order and is clearly well maintained. It is reported that considerable sums have been spent on dry rot treatments, all backed by insured guarantee, which is usually the biggest threat to buildings of this age and construction.

Services are of a modern design and all covered by service agreements where appropriate.

### **Kilmalcolm St Columba**

#### **Missional focus, pre pandemic, presently and future focused**

##### ***Sanctuary***

The Sanctuary of Kilmalcolm St Columba will hold 500 people. There are currently no services taking place in the church building and there is no AV technology to allow worship to be streamed, although a large screen and projector are available when required.

### ***Cissie Laird Chapel***

Originally a gardener's store, this space was converted to a chapel in 1989. A regular Bible Study takes place in this space.

### ***Hall usage***

Both the Lesser Hall and Large Hall are used extensively by the community for activities for all age groups. Over 800 people pass through the halls in normal times. The Large Hall is also used as a Polling Station and Inverclyde Council use the space for meetings. There is a large kitchen on the upper floor and a smaller facility on the ground floor level. Both provide the opportunity to share Christian hospitality. The halls are connected to the main sanctuary.

### ***Church grounds***

The grounds round the church are well tended and, in the past, have been used for Church Fetes and by wedding photographers.

***Manse grounds*** [see info above re: Kilmalcolm Old]

### ***Social Media***

The website requires some development in order to be utilised as a tool for mission. The Facebook page has regular posts of an inspirational nature but it was difficult to locate news of what was happening in the church.

### ***Other relevant planning principles***

#### ***Ecumenism***

There are good relationships with the local Episcopalian church and the Roman Catholic Church uses the Large Hall at St Columba for coffee mornings. The 'Wednesday Break Out group' which runs between October and April attracts members from all denominations.

#### ***Priority to the Poor***

Collections of food and financial donations are gathered for those in need. Overseas aid is provided by the congregation.

***Financial responsibility*** – we understand that hall lets from community groups contributes approximately £12,148 p.a. to church funds.

#### ***Communities***

Kilmalcolm St Columba have a long standing relationship with St Columba's school. Assemblies, prize-givings and musical evenings take place in the sanctuary and appropriate staging is stored in the church to extend the chancel. Some community events have taken place in the sanctuary in the past.

The document 'St Columba Church, Kilmalcolm – statement of facts' says it is clear that the church is serving the community and this is communicated in the Large Hall and elsewhere by artwork and Bible texts displayed on the walls.

### ***Viability of buildings St Columba***

Using figures from the recent quinquennial reports, there is an anticipated sum of £87,984 is projected for both hall and church.

One issue with these sums is that some noted defects are not quantified, mainly the issue of water staining to the main hall and widespread water ingress to the tower. Having been assured by the KS that the damp issue in the hall is not from water ingress, the problem is clearly a condensation issue and requires complete removal of the ceiling, treatment of the roof finish to minimise condensation and the introduction of an effective ventilation system to the ceiling void. All of this will be very difficult to achieve and therefore very expensive in practice. I suspect that one necessary aspect of this would be to lower the ceiling level, which would have knock-on effects to the overall volume of the hall, its acoustics and to the windows. This is an unfortunate result of the design of this part of the buildings.

Greater discussion of this problem will require to be had with appropriate consultants. Costs are unlikely to be less than £40K.

The issue of water ingress to the tower is more difficult to address until the full extent and nature is clear. As the building is Grade A listed (rightly so), the work will be strictly controlled as regards materials and method. Expensive scaffolding will be necessary and the work may be weather dependent.

The KS have already identified 5 phases of repair work, 3 of which have been completed, all very expensive and all likely to be grant aided. It is possible that some of the remaining phases have already received funding although not completed due to lockdown issues.

Some stone repair work at high level has deteriorated since the quinquennial report was done and would now be considered as urgent.

The sanctuary is in good order internally and has clearly been well looked after as has the rest of the building. Unfortunately, the issue with the building fabric has more to do with age or design than maintenance and is certain to generate large repair bills. This is likely to be an ongoing issue.

## General Comments regarding buildings

The anticipated cost figures taken from the quinquennial reports were queried by some but should be taken as accurate as they are based on works being carried out under full trades contracts by recognised contractors. They allow an element for realistic inflation and all necessary attendances and work to normal professional standards.

It is sometimes tempting to look at these figures in isolation and see excessive sums for apparently small items. This must be avoided and allowance must be made for the amounts quoted to avoid sums being obtained higher than anticipated. If smaller amounts are genuinely achievable then that is of benefit to all. Knowing how much something would cost on a voluntary basis is unrealistic and often leads to false economies.

## Conclusions

Both buildings are situated within a stone's throw of the centre of the village which provides for extensive opportunities for intentional mission. It was pleasing to hear that ecumenical relationships between both congregations and other denominations were

healthy and that priority to the poor, many of whom live outside of the village and parishes, is provided through generous practical and financial donations.

The missional focus in both congregations is evident to differing degrees.

Currently, St Columba's hall facilities provide space for a larger number of community activities but it is not clear that the church is reaching out to these groups in an intentional way. The sanctuary space hosts weekly assemblies for St Columba School but the church has no chaplaincy input to the school or the local primary school.

In the past, St Columba have run Alpha courses and looking to the future they spoke of missional activities including posting QR codes with Biblical verses around the village for children to discover and placing Christian based activities in the library which might then encourage children to enter the church building. It wasn't clear whether this was a vision of the Kirk Session or of a smaller number of individual members.

Kilmalcolm Old also have contact with the community through their halls although the footfall is less. Their Messy Church sessions and Christmas Nativity in a stable on a local farm, suggest creative ways of connecting with families in the community. The use of the sanctuary for Film nights is an easy win as far as outreach is concerned and provides opportunities, in a non-threatening way, to build relationships with the community and to share faith where appropriate. It has been evident across the Church of Scotland during the pandemic that many more people have connected with the church through on-line worship and this is likely to continue in the post pandemic world which we will hopefully inhabit. The sanctuary is well equipped to resource this.

The Murray Chapel which is open daily to passers-by, provides a quiet space to encounter God. This need will continue as the town lives with the fall out from the pandemic.

The plans to develop the manse grounds have already attracted funding and work is underway bringing church and community together. It is hoped the united congregation will get behind this innovative project.

Greater use and careful development of social media will create better channels of communication with those beyond the congregation.

It is the view of the Visiting Team, that with careful timetabling, the activities going on in both churches could be accommodated in one suite of buildings.

**Conclusion:** It is the determination of the Visiting Team that Kilmalcolm Old would provide an idea base for mission looking towards the post pandemic world.