

# **The Church of Scotland International Presbytery**

## **Report of the Local Church Review of the congregation of St. Andrew's, Rome April 2018**

### **1. Introduction**

The Local Church Review of the congregation of St. Andrew's, Rome took place from Friday 13<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> April. The Presbytery's LCR Team comprised the Rev. Alistair Bennett (team leader), Alec and Rhoda Grant.

Given the travel logistics a Skype conference was held with the Session Clerk, Inge Weustink in advance of the meeting and the LCR process outlined.

Given the changes and difficulties this congregation has faced in recent years it was stressed that the emphasis of the visit would be on encouragement, with the LCR team being provided in advance of the visit of that information which would be considered helpful. This reflects the fact that all members of the team found the current process overly bureaucratic, burdensome and time-consuming in a way which would not necessarily be helpful.

The April date was to coincide with the team leader being in the UK on 6<sup>th</sup> April. It is recognised that the LCR report would normally be submitted within one month of the visit. However given some of the issues raised during the visit it was felt it would be more beneficial to both the congregation and Presbytery's Superintendence Committee if the report was delayed until nearer Presbytery's October meeting and include updates.

### **2. The following meetings were held as part of the LCR visit:**

9.00am, Friday 8<sup>th</sup>: Meeting with the Session Clerk, Inge Weustink.

10.30am, Friday 8<sup>th</sup>: Meeting with the Locum Minister, the Rev. Willie Strachan.

2.30pm, Friday 8<sup>th</sup>: Meeting with the Treasurer, John McGhie.

10.00am, Saturday 9<sup>th</sup>: Meeting with the Property Convenor, Mark Shalaby.

11.00am, Saturday 9<sup>th</sup>: Meeting with the Kirk Session.

### **3. Findings**

Not surprisingly the major concerns were the lack of permission to call a minister, almost two years into the vacancy, and the issue of the two floors above the sanctuary which had previously been rented by the Italian Ministry of Defence but had now been unoccupied for four years. This has had a significant effect on the finances of the congregation and left them with the difficult task of finding a new tenant(s).

On the positive side the congregation have been well served by the Interim Moderator, the Rev. Kim Hurst who has visited four or five times a year to chair meetings of the Kirk Session or deal with major issues. The appointment of the Rev. Willie Strachan as Locum from December 2017 to June 2018 has provided continuity and stability and proved beneficial to the life of the congregation.

This is a gathered and international congregation with a membership of around 90, an average attendance of about 65, but varying on any given Sunday between 50 and 100. Many of the members are on relatively low incomes and demonstrate their commitment by their attendance at Sunday worship travelling considerable distances by public transport.

### **Worship**

Members are involved in services through welcoming and reading the lessons. There is also a small but enthusiastic choir. Given the number of locums since the summer of 2017, each introducing a variety of worship styles, the congregation have to be commended for their openness. A recent highlight, under the ministry of Willie Strachan, was the admission of five new members by Profession of Faith.

### **Congregational Life**

There is an opportunity for members and visitors to spend time together following worship either in the hall or the roof terrace. There is an active Sunday Club which participates in worship services from time to time.

Pastoral care, given the dispersed nature of the congregation, tends to happen informally but with Willie Strachan more than willing to visit when notified of a pastoral need.

This is a congregation which has had a considerable outreach programme, now curtailed by the loss of rental income. However, the long-standing relationship with the Missionaries of Charity in Tor Bella Monaca continues, as does participation in the annual Rice Bowl fundraising organised by Churches Together in Rome and provision of the church vehicle, twice weekly from November to April, for the Salvation Army's programme feeding the homeless in the city of Rome.

The Kirk Session and congregation recognise the importance of the ecumenical dimension of the church's witness and programme. It is recognised by the Kirk Session that this important aspect of work, along with a willingness to learn at least some Italian, will be required of a future minister. A positive relationship with the Scots College and the Roman Catholic Church, as well as other denominations including the Korean Church, who use the sanctuary each Sunday, is to be expected.

The buildings are well used every day of the week by a variety of groups including charitable groups, and the Kirk Session plan to review the levels of contributions made by each of these groups before the end of 2018.

## **Finance**

The primary reason for the lack of permission to call a minister was the failure to submit accounts for the years 2015 and 2016. This followed the death of the previous treasurer and a long period of inattention to the accounts. John McGhie, and elder for many years, took on the task of updating the accounts which have now been signed off. It is assumed that during that time the AGM of the congregation could not have been held.

Up to the end of 2013 income had been extremely high due to the rent being paid by the Italian MOD. From 2014 income has fallen sharply while congregational income has remained fairly flat. Total income for 2017 is approx. 51,000 Euros of which Congregational Income accounts for 30,000 Euros.

There is an urgent need to find a solution to the two vacant floors of which the Presbytery Business Committee are aware. However, the state in which the property was left, with minimal and inadequate reparation from the Italian MOD requires a suitable developer to be found.

## **Buildings**

The building inspection of the Rome properties took place during the LCR visit in April 2018.

The Rome church dates back to 1885 and both Manse and Sanctuary are contained in the same building. The building has four floors and a basement.

The Sanctuary, on the ground floor, is in good condition and well cared for by the Fabric Convenor, Mark Shalaby, and his small team. A single toilet is located on the ground floor providing facilities for the less able members of the congregation. Time was spent with Mark discussing the property as a whole and this was extremely helpful.

Beneath the Sanctuary are basement rooms which serve as a hall and meeting rooms. There is a kitchen which adequately provides catering space for church functions. A toilet area is also located downstairs providing three toilets and a handwash basin.

The basement is accessed by a staircase leading to an outside alleyway. There is work to be done on parts of the wall leading to the basement and also the alleyway. This is an ongoing humidity problem.

The Manse, on the top floor, is accessed by a lift as well as stairs. This is a two bedroom apartment in a satisfactory state of repair although there is some work to be done in the bathroom, etc. The Fabric Team have this in hand and the work will be undertaken before a new minister is appointed.

Above the Manse there is a roof area with a terrace and a very small apartment. This is accessed by a stair only. The terrace is put to good use for various church activities. Once you have climbed the stairs the view from the terrace is magnificent. Rome at your feet!

The outside of the building is in good repair and the forecourt kept in good condition. This space is used for parking and one space is rented out to the Indian Embassy next door.

The main problem facing the congregation is the use of the two floors vacated by the Ministry of Defence four years ago. These floors are in poor condition. The Kirk Session has been trying to secure a tenant(s) but until this happens it is extremely difficult to know how to refurbish this part of the property.

The Manse will, of course, have to be thoroughly inspected prior to the arrival of a new minister but all in all the buildings are in a good state of repair and decoration.

### **Kirk Session**

At the meeting with the Kirk Session (8 elders) a significant issue arose which had been flagged up at the meeting with Willie Strachan. Joseph, from Sri Lanka, performed handyman and other duties around the church but was living with his two children (a 9 year old daughter and 8 year old son) in the one room studio on the roof terrace. While there was a concern to support Joseph and his family, it was recognised that what had been a short-term provision was totally unsuitable and potentially unsafe. It was agreed by the Session that this situation would be addressed, if necessary with advice from the Church's Safeguarding Department.

Understandably the other main issues raised were the refusal of permission to call and the vacant floors. There is a question as to whether a prospective new minister should be involved in discussion about the vacant property or whether it should be resolved before he/she is called.

The view of the LCR team that the property issue was not in itself a sufficient reason to withhold Permission to Call now that the relevant Financial Accounts had been submitted and signed off.

### **4. Update**

The issue of Joseph and his family was resolved as promised and work has been done on the roof terrace to return it to its original use.

Following the visit a recommendation was made to Presbytery's Business Committee which granted the congregation Permission to Call.

At the time of writing the issue of the vacant floors remains unresolved.

## 5. Action Plan

<b>Congregation</b>	<b>St Andrew's Presbyterian Church of Scotland</b>	<b>Plan of Action from September 2018</b>	
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### PLAN OF ACTION – SUBMISSION FORMAT (to accompany the Local Church Review report)

The "ACTION PLAN" should use the "SMART" formula as the matrix for its implementation :

<b><u>S</u>pecific</b>	Well defined. Clear to anyone who has a basic knowledge of the activity.
<b><u>M</u>easurable</b>	Know if the task is obtainable and how far away completion is. Know when it has been achieved.
<b><u>A</u>greed Upon</b>	Agreement with all the stakeholders what the tasks should be.
<b><u>R</u>ealistic</b>	Can be achieved within the availability of resources, knowledge and time.
<b><u>T</u>ime Based</b>	Enough time to achieve the task. Not too much time.

Action Point Number	Action Plan	Timescale	Who Responsible
1 Governance, Finance and Worship	1.1 Working collaboratively with Presbytery, to manage the time of Vacancy , maintaining the mission and worship of the Church and prayerfully taking appropriate steps to fill the ministry vacancy;	Indefinite, but aiming to be able to start the recruitment process not later than November 2018	Kirk Session & Congregation in conjunction with Interim Moderator
	1.2 Keeping members informed of progress in 1.1	Immediate and ongoing	Kirk Session & Interim Moderator
	1.3 Establish sub committees of the Kirk Session, covering <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finance</li> <li>• Property and Fabric</li> <li>• Mission</li> <li>• Social</li> <li>• Young people, and</li> <li>• Communication and Publicity</li> </ul>	September 2018 onwards	Kirk Session and Interim Moderator

Finance  Worship	1.4 Consider appointment of new elders	September to December 2018	Kirk Session and Interim Moderator
	1.5 Identify ways to increase congregational income so as to cover annual expenditure and avoid using reserves	October 2018 onwards	Finance Sub Committee
	1.6 Continue to foster close relations with other faith denominations, including preparing and leading shared services/events  1.7 After a time of consultation and information-gathering assess demand and need to develop special Services for Young people and Young families	September 2018 onwards  November 2018 onwards	“Churches together in Rome” representative and Interim Moderator  Young People’s Sub Committee
2 Work with Young People	2.1 Establish Young People’s Sub Committee	October 2018	Kirk Session
	2.2 Liaise with young people on activity(ies) to celebrate The “Year of the Young People	September 2018	Young People’s Sub Committee
	2.3 Consider establishing a programme of youth activities	January 2019	Young People’s Sub Committee
3 Physical Resources	3.1 Undertake work set out in Manse refurbishment Schedule	Target completion date of December 2018	Property and Fabric Sub Committee
	3.2 Identify new income generating tenants/activities for vacant floors	February 2019	Property and Fabric, and Finance Sub Committees
	3.3 Repaint and refurbish the stairwell	May 2019	Property and Fabric Sub Committee
4 Church and Community Relationships	4.1 To maintain and develop ongoing working relationships with embassies to the Holy See	Ongoing	Interim Moderator
	4.2 Identify ways in which the congregations can support people in need.(in both the congregation, and the wider community)	Immediate and ongoing	Mission Sub Committee
	4.3 To promote to the community the availability of church buildings for activities that promote Christian	November 2018	Kirk Session

	worship, and/or spiritual, mental and physical wellbeing		
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## 6. Deliverances

### Presbytery

1. Receives the Report.
2. Commends the Interim Moderator, Locums, Elders and members of the congregation for sustaining worship and congregational life during the vacancy.
3. Endorses the vision of the Kirk Session, to be shared with the Nominating Committee, that any prospective minister be committed to fully engaging ecumenically and ideally prepared to learn Italian.
4. Commends the Kirk Session for the thorough analysis conducted in preparing and Action Plan and encourages the Kirk Session and congregation in its implementation.