

SCHEDULE

THE PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Principles

1. The National Guidelines approved by the Assembly 2005 were the Church's first attempt to use national Census data in a consistent way across the country. Taking seriously the implications of the Third Article Declaratory, they encouraged the church to apply a uniform numerical model to developing Presbytery Plans. Since the number of posts available to each Presbytery was directly related to the population it served, Presbyteries were encouraged to try and allocate ministries to equally sized population units.

2. The Church has learnt from this first round of Presbytery Planning. While population will remain a key element in Planning, it is evident that there are other factors that need to be taken into account. Furthermore, the experience gained means that the church has the capacity to cope with a more sophisticated set of principles that will inform its Planning.

3. In 2010 the Assembly approved the report of the Special Commission on the Third Article Declaratory and reaffirmed its commitment to a territorial ministry by passing a declaratory Act. In large part, the principles which follow are drawn from the report of the Special Commission and sections of its report are quoted.

4. Mission: The primary principle

(a) Mission is the primary principle for deploying ministry. The template for our ministry is the ministry of Jesus. The Church's ministry is a participation in the ministry of Jesus Christ. Jesus' ministry was a ministry rooted in and focused on mission. It is captured in the phrase, 'As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' (John 20:21)

(b) The first and most important consideration for Presbyteries in shaping their Plans, therefore, is this mission imperative given by Jesus. The Special Commission² recognised this when it stated that the phrase ordinances of religion "must be interpreted dynamically in missional terms not statically in reactive terms. Our calling is nothing other than the challenging of the people of Scotland with a vision of God's kingdom and asking them to respond to it in faith and love." (8.7.1). It is not sufficient, therefore, for a Presbytery to ensure that every house in Scotland is in a Parish. It must endeavour to use the resources it has available to engage in the mission imperative given to us by Jesus. This will involve both existing patterns of ministry and emerging ones.

5. Secondary Principles

The church has affirmed a number of important principles that help to explain what is meant by being a church focused on mission. Presbyteries in their Plans will therefore take account of the following:

(a) Communities: Every community of every size in every location within Scotland is part of a Church of Scotland Parish. While population should no longer be the only principle in shaping Presbytery Plans, it still remains the starting point. Our calling as a church is not primarily to resource congregations: it is mission to everyone in the land.

(b) Ecumenism: “The Commission² readily acknowledges that reaching the people of Scotland is an ecumenical task and one to which the Church of Scotland contributes along with other denominations as partners in the gospel.” (8.8.1). If a particular community is well served by another denomination, there may be no need for the Presbytery to duplicate that. Where a community is equally well served by the Church of Scotland and another denomination the Presbytery should explore what local possibilities there might be for recognising each other’s ministry so that resources can be used elsewhere.

(c) The poor: The General Assembly has repeatedly affirmed that the gospel imperative is priority to the poor. At a time when resources are scarce, it is tempting to take away from the most marginal communities where churches are often very fragile and small. However pressing the reasons may be locally, this must be resisted because it makes a mockery of the gospel and the repeated commitments of the General Assembly.

(d) Whole people of God: This material’s primary aim is to assist the church in making the most effective use of paid ministries. However this takes place in the context of the ministry of the whole people of God. The Commission noted that “the living out of the commitment of Article III may well involve an increasing number of communities where the ministry is exercised largely by the eldership and membership of the Church, albeit under the oversight of an ordained minister.” (8.5.6) Therefore a further principle to guide Presbyteries in their deployment of ministries is how they might be used to encourage and enhance the ministry of the whole people of God.

(e) Congregations: The church has “a commitment to maintain worshipping, witnessing and serving Christian congregations throughout Scotland.” (9.3.5). One of the ways in which the gospel finds visible expression is in committed congregations under the power of the Holy Spirit. They both express the gospel and commend the gospel. In their Planning, Presbyteries will identify congregations that are outward looking, which engage with their communities and the wider church and consider how they might build on these strengths.

(f) Mixed economy: Whilst affirming the importance of the Parish system and recognising the importance of a sense of ‘place’ the Special Commission stated that this needs to be expressed in a variety of ways. It quotes Martyn Percy, “For the Church to find its place in the modern world, it will have to create new spaces for new communities and different opportunities for differentiated niche groups.” While in many communities the sense of place is best expressed in something physical and tangible, that is not universally true. The Church will need, for example, to discover how to relate to those whose belonging is primarily through networks or the virtual world.

² *ie the Special Commission on the Third Article Declaratory, which reported to the General Assembly of 2010.*

(g) Financial responsibility: Presbytery Planning does not mean ensuring that congregations which make a net contribution to central funds take priority. Nonetheless a degree of financial realism is required and it is appropriate that some consideration is given to congregational financial responsibility. Some congregations are more generous than comparable ones and all congregations are expected to make a financial contribution appropriate to their means. At present one third of congregations are net contributors and two thirds are net receivers. However, per capita giving can be much higher amongst some of the poorest congregations than it is in some of the wealthiest. It makes sense for Presbyteries to consider the complex financial picture and allocate ministerial resources to congregations that take their financial stewardship seriously.

(h) Buildings: There is a connection between ministry and church buildings, although that connection is neither uniform nor universal. At a national level there is a consensus that the Church of Scotland has too many buildings, numerous buildings that are under utilised, buildings that are too large for present day needs and buildings that are in the wrong place. At a local level however, almost every church building is deemed essential. There is no simple solution to this problem. The starting point however should be mission. Presbyteries will want to consider which buildings are essential and useful for the mission they envisage.

6. These principles do not offer a simple template for Planning. It is acknowledged that no two Presbyteries will apply them in precisely the same way. What is critical, however, is that all Presbyteries begin by taking seriously the primary commitment to mission. In doing that, each Presbytery will want to consider how the secondary principles affect the way they Plan for mission. Wisdom, judgement and balance will be needed in deciding how much importance should be attached to each one.