



## Formartine Churches Together

News Brief No 4

Working Group Meeting (Number 3)

Zoom, Tuesday 14 December 2021, 7:30pm

**Summary:** Here we go again! There's an 'old' 1993 cult classic called, "Groundhog Day," where actor Bill Murray wakes up one morning to realise that he is living the same day, the 2 February over and over again. The Working Group were due to meet in Methlick Parish Church on Tuesday 14 December 2021, but because of the rise of Covid-19 cases (Omicron variant) and the First Minister's announcement earlier that day, we decided to meet online. There is this uncomfortable feeling that we're starting all over again: a rise in cases, new regulations and for some a move back online. Will we ever break the cycle? Will we ever see the 3 February and the end of Covid-19? Yes – but maybe not in the manner we initially hoped.

Bill Murray's character slowly matured over the course of this film so that he saw the eternal loop as a blessing and not a curse. It was an opportunity to do good and an occasion to grow in love for God (*my addition*) and neighbour. Eventually, he got to the point that no matter what happened, even if he was doomed to relive the same course of events again and again, he was content, because he had found love. And at the moment he found love, he woke up and found that it was the 3 February.

I don't know how many waves of the Coronavirus we're going to go through, how many times we're going to wake up thinking, "Here we go again," but I do know that the Formartine Area Churches and the Working Group in particular have got to the point where we are more open to one another and willing to work together than ever before. And, I believe, this *fraternité*, this love for one another, will be our saving grace. We will see the 3 February, even if we have to endure a few more waves of this wretched virus.

### How will this be made manifest in practical terms?

Well, over the last two meetings of the Working Group, we have been deliberating over various models of working together. We have looked at the pros and cons of Unions, Linkages, Guardianship, New Charge Developments, Dissolution and Hub Ministry. We have come to the conclusion that, *in principle*, the best way of working together will be under a Single Parish Model.

## What is a Single Parish Model?

In short, the idea is that all four congregations would unite to become one Church of Scotland Parish. That said, there would be a commitment to maintaining a missional presence and opportunities for worship in each of our respective communities. The administrative edifice would be simplified. There would be one Kirk Session as opposed to four Kirk Sessions and One Board. The new Kirk Session would be comprised of a representation of elders from each of the respective churches. Duplication would be reduced and members and elders would be freed focus their energies on aspects of worship, mission and service that would build up the church and communities. The ministers would work across whole of the new Formartine Parish according to an agreed 'portfolio' and would have a specific remit and specific area/s of responsibility. Local leadership teams would be established in each church and the whole people of God would be encouraged, empowered, trained up to have an active role in the life of the church.

**What's next?** - The Working Group are aware that the Single Parish Model will have to be approved by all the Kirk Sessions and in due course the congregations. However, there is a lot of work to be done still before we are at that stage. Over the coming months (January – March 2022), we will be looking at aspects of structure, ministry, fabric and finance, but as we said before: **We would like to hear from you! We believe communication is really important and that it's a two-way street.** We will communicate often and clearly throughout this process, but we also want to listen, hear any questions or ideas you might have about the churches working together. The details of the Single Parish Model for the Formartine Churches is far from complete, so we would welcome your input. Please free to contact your minister or Interim Moderator and we'll be happy to feed your thoughts back to the Working Group. The more input we have from church and community the better.

### **Tarves and Barthol Chapel**

Rev. Dr. Alison Swindells - [aswindells@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:aswindells@churchofscotland.org.uk)

### **Udny & Pitmedden**

Rev. Anthony Craig - [aacraig@btinternet.com](mailto:aacraig@btinternet.com)

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### **Methlick**

Rev. Dr. Will Stalder - [wstalder@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:wstalder@churchofscotland.org.uk)

I'm not sure if this is the final wave of the Coronavirus we're going to face. I hope so. What I do know is that whatever happens with Covid-19, with God's help and with hearts open to one another in our respective churches and communities and a willingness to work together, we will be the stronger for it, and hopefully, we will wake up one morning soon and find that's it's 3 February.

We wish you a Merry Christmas a Happy New Year! Stay safe and well and until we see or speak to one another again, may God bless each and every one of you!

Rev. Dr. Will Stalder  
Minister of Methlick Parish Church

Rev. Dr. Alison Swindells  
Minister of Tarves and Barthol Chapel

Ministers of the Formartine Area Churches  
Friday 15 December 2021