

# A guide to Presbytery

## Presbytery of Hamilton

This leaflet is designed to provide an introduction to Presbytery and some brief guidelines as to its structures and workings. Essential information, including contact information and statistics, is published via the website to provide background for your work.

## Functions of the Presbytery

The Presbytery of Hamilton is a part of the Church of Scotland and has responsibility for the preaching of the Word and administration of the Sacraments within its bounds or geographical area. It exercises general oversight and discipline of ministers and elders in the discharge of its duties; encourages those who discern a call to ministry and supervises those in training for ministry; decides whether a call to a charge within the bound should be released and then sustained; arranges Ordinations and Inductions; considers and decides on matters of Church property, finance and the distribution of parishes; debates and reports on issues sent down by the General Assembly or referred by Kirk Sessions; makes rules regarding congregations within its bounds; enforces the laws of the Church; reports its actions and decisions.

Membership of Presbytery comprises ministers, members of the Diaconate, serving and retired, and elders elected by Kirk Sessions or by Presbytery. Except where Presbytery resolves otherwise, meetings are open to any member of the public, including the press.

To support the work of Presbytery, the various charges (which may comprise an individual congregation or a number of linked congregations) are divided into eight areas covering Hamilton, Strathaven, Motherwell, Wishaw, Airdrie, Coatbridge, East Kilbride and Uddingston & Bothwell.

## Introduction

No document can answer all your questions and there is no substitute for forming bonds and relationships within Presbytery that will be helpful to you.

This can be done, at least in the first instance, through fellow committee or team members and the relevant convener who will offer the help, advice and encouragement you need to find for yourself an effective and fulfilling role as a member of Presbytery.



Ordinary meetings are held in Dalziel St. Andrew's Church, Motherwell on the first Tuesdays of September to December, February, March and May and the third Tuesday of June. Meetings commence at 7:00 pm.

## How an elder becomes a member of Presbytery

When a member of the Church of Scotland is ordained as an elder, the vows include an undertaking to take due part in the administration of the affairs of the Church. For most elders, this means the business of their Kirk Session. However, elders have an important part to play in the superior courts of the Church: the Presbytery and the General Assembly.

Since the Reformation it has been the custom to have approximately equal numbers of ministers and elders in the superior courts of the Church.

Each Kirk Session has a duty to elect annually one member to be its Representative Elder at Presbytery. This election takes place within two months of the close of that year's General Assembly and the elder's commission runs from 1 July to 30 June (in practice, for a new elder in particular, the first exposure to the work of Presbytery is likely to be either the August committee meeting or the meeting of Presbytery in September). The Kirk Session also issues a certificate of *bona fide* acting eldership.

Since ministers who are not inducted to a charge but who live and work within the bounds may also be members of Presbytery, there is an inbuilt majority of ministers which is addressed through the appointment of a corresponding numbers of elders (Additional Elders), elected annually by Presbytery.

### The role of the elder

For centuries the Church has arranged its charges in groups of convenient size and given these groups responsibility for the conduct of their affairs. The Presbytery is essential link in this process of decision making, subject only to the authority of the highest court of the Church, the General Assembly.

Duties of the Representative Elder include regular and diligent attendance at meetings of Presbytery and its committees; becoming familiar in its workings and taking an active part in its proceedings. The Representative Elder also has a role in ensuring that the Kirk Session is kept informed of the decisions and work of Presbytery, supporting the Kirk Session on matters referred to it by Presbytery and conveying back responses or raising matters which the Kirk Session may wish to bring to the attention of Presbytery.

## Committee structure

Ministries

Mission, Education and Discipleship

Local Church Review / Implementation

World Mission

Church and Society

Stewardship and Finance

Property

Business

Superintendence

Complaints

Nominations

Vacancy Matters

The day to day business of Presbytery is handled by its committees, the composition of which may change annually, although conveners and vice-conveners are appointed for fixed terms. Members are generally allocated to committees on the basis of declared interests and areas or expertise.

Presbytery's committees in their objectives and terms of reference are designed to support both the work of Presbytery and of the wider Church. They are therefore subject to review. Committee arrangements were last revised in November 2014.

## Presbytery meetings

As befits a court of the Church, proceedings of Presbytery are generally formal. Presbytery's arrangements for its conduct of business are governed by its Standing Orders.

Ordinary meetings of Presbytery take place at regular intervals for the transaction of ordinary business.

At the commencement of each meeting, the Moderator enters and acknowledges those present through an exchange of bows before announcing opening praise. During this worship, normally at the end, Presbytery is formally constituted through prayer as a court of the Church.

At an early point in each ordinary meeting, Presbytery considers and approves the written minutes of its previous meeting. These are distributed to members along with the agenda for each meeting. Presbytery then considers and approves the agenda for the meeting proposed by its business committee.

Particular items may be heard at a specified time under an 'Order of the Day' appointed by Presbytery.

The agenda normally comprises consideration of reports and related deliverances (actions that Presbytery is being asked to take) from each of Presbytery's standing committees. These are provided in written form to members in advance of the meeting so that members can consider the intended business of the meeting and identify questions that they may wish to ask. Reports and deliverances are presented by the convener of the relevant committee, with the convener highlighting any specific or important matters in the report, before answering questions from members.

Due notice having been given at a previous meeting, Presbytery also meets *in hunc effectum* in order to transact particular business or in conference in order to allow full discussion of a specific issue. The Moderator may also authorise the calling of a meeting *pro re nata* to transact a particular item of business.

From time to time, arrangements will be made for speakers who are not members of Presbytery to address Presbytery on a topical issue, usually in support of a committee's work.

Students and Readers are received formally by Presbytery on an annual basis.

Each meeting closes with an adjournment and a Benediction.

Those presenting reports or addressing Presbytery do so from a lectern positioned at the front of the venue. Members asking questions or making comments are also asked to speak from the lectern having identified themselves to Presbytery. All those speaking address themselves to the chair, with the correct form of address being "Moderator".

Presbytery's communications sometimes make use of Latin terms in order to capture succinctly the meaning or purpose of an action.

The following serves as an explanation of the frequently used terms.

***ad hoc***

for that purpose only

***ad vitam aut culpam***

for life or until fault

***bona fide***

in good faith

***de fidele***

(oath) an undertaking faithfully to discharge the duties of an office

***ex officio***

by virtue of the office or post held

***in hunc effectum***

(a meeting) for that purpose only

***in retentis***

retained in the records

***locum tenens***

someone holding an office temporarily

***post preces***

after prayer

***pro re nata***

(a meeting) for a matter which has arisen unexpectedly

***quorum***

the minimum number to constitute a valid meeting

***quoad omnia***

literally "for all purposes" ie. both civil and sacred: used to describe a parish church administered by an all-purpose Kirk Session

***quoad sacra***

literally "for sacred matters only": used to describe other charges other than those originally UP, Free or UF.

***sederunt***

list of those present

***simpliciter***

as it is, without comment

***sine die***

without a specified time limit

***ultra vires***

beyond the power of the Court

# Office-bearers

## **Moderator**

Presbytery's Moderator is elected annually by all members. During his or her year in office, the Moderator presides at all formal meetings of Presbytery and leads its acts of worship and special services. The Moderator may be a minister or elder.

## **Clerk**

The Clerk, who is appointed at the pleasure of Presbytery, works on a full time basis and assumes responsibility for Presbytery's records, handles correspondence, ensures proper communication of Presbytery's decisions, advises on the application of the Church law and procedure and offers pastoral support to those engaged in ministries across Presbytery.

## **Treasurer**

The Treasurer is in charge of Presbytery funds which are raised by means of an annual assessment on congregations. The holder of the office usually has appropriate business experience or professional qualifications.

## **Officer**

Appointed to attend its meetings and execute its orders.

## Presbytery Office

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