



The Church of Scotland

Scottish Charity Number: SC018492



### **Minister**

Rev Mrs Sarah Ross  
The Manse  
Craigmuir Road  
Blantyre, G72 9UA  
Tel: 01698 769046  
07701025785

SRoss@churchofscotland.org.uk

24<sup>th</sup> April 2019

## **Presbytery Planning Information**

Dear Presbytery Clerk,

Wishing you every blessing of the Easter season.

There are a couple of issues we would like to bring to your attention prior to the General Assembly, and request that you pass this on to your Presbytery Planning Committee for their information. You may find it useful to share this information at your Presbytery meeting and, if appropriate, send a response to myself or Daran Golby.

### **Definition of Advisory Numbers:**

There has been some confusion around the use of the term 'Advisory Numbers'. We have included material within the GA report but also wanted to inform Presbyteries more directly.

Given what we know about ministerial retirement rates, the numbers of candidates accepted for training and the number of ministers coming from other denominations, the advisory figures represent our best estimate of the number of parish ministers likely to be ministering in each presbytery in 2023. And we advise that each presbytery works to these figures when doing its planning. We are advising you what we have determined to be the most likely distribution of ministers, and advising you to use these figures in your planning.

The figures have been carefully considered based on vacancy levels and patterns of recruitment and, therefore, are reflective of the movement of clergy as opposed to the mandatory figures of 2011 that determined actual number of posts. It is presented as a tool to Presbyteries to help plan realistically for the future. It is known that some areas are easier to recruit to than others, but even these areas are invited to plan with grace and consideration. The mandatory figures of 2011 remain in place, although it is fair to say that we would not anticipate filling all these posts in the current climate. The intention with advisory numbers was to allow for creativity and innovation in developing ministry across parishes and presbyteries, rather than return to the restrictive model of mandatory that caused much pain and entrenchment. Evidence gathered shows that, for the majority of presbyteries, advisory figures are preferred.

However, we have noted another trend in presbytery planning with regards to MDS posts and this is the next matter I want to draw to your attention.

### **Capping Recruitment to MDS posts.**

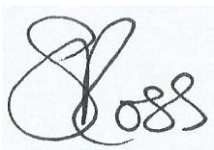
Please find attached to this email an extract from the Ministries Council General Assembly Report regarding a cap on the number of MDS posts that can be recruited to in the coming years, and the policy development that will be coming shortly. This will include a temporary pause on new advertising for MDS posts until the end of October 2019, with exceptions for Shetland and those involved in the Hubs pilot, although their posts will be thoroughly vetted. Posts already out for recruitment will be honoured if they are filled, but after the General Assembly new advertisements will not be actioned until approved by the PPTG sub group.

You will see from the report that this is in response to the potential budget deficit that would occur should all posts be filled within the coming year, or indeed before 2023. We have budget for 120 posts FTE for 2019, with approximately 109 FTE posts filled at this time, but there are 190 FTE posts in plans. There are no plans for redundancies for current post holders and would like to reassure all current post holders of this fact. However, there won't be automatic filling of posts once staff move on, although that is not to say that permission to recruit will not be given. We are also working with Priority Areas, given that they have a significant number of MDS posts allocated.

We will also be working with all Presbyteries to consider the MDS posts in their plans. We are well aware that a number of plans have MDS posts that will never be filled, and were included in good faith, but not necessarily with enough consideration of need, or circumstances have changed. If we can bring the figure of MDS posts down to a more realistic number, it would enable effective planning and budgeting. We would also like to know, when plans are submitted to the PPTG for concurrence, when MDS posts are expected to be put forward for recruitment, because we know that in some cases, MDS posts are a promise made in re-adjustment that may not be taking place for 5 years. We are not saying that you cannot have MDS posts in your plans, and plans will still be concurred with if they include MDS posts. It may just be that recruitment to MDS posts will on a criteria-led basis, and all MDS posts will have to be justified as part of concurrence.

We know that this isn't the news we would like to bring to the General Assembly, and please be assured we are not wanting to undermine Ministry Development Staff or the contribution they make to the mission work of the Church. However, we have to inform the General Assembly that under the current budget constraints we have to use good judgement. We do want to encourage team ministry and hub style initiatives, and therefore we are also working on other areas, particularly in OLM and Readership, Pioneering and Chaplaincy, to support and grow ministry and mission.

If you have any questions about the policy or the criteria please contact myself on [sross@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:sross@churchofscotland.org.uk) as Vice Convener, or Daran Golby, Partnerships and Development Secretary on [dgolby@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:dgolby@churchofscotland.org.uk) or by phone.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Ross', on a light blue background.

Rev Mrs Sarah Ross  
Vice Convener  
Partnerships and Development