

**Pathhead EU Congregational Church (SC013633)
West End Congregational Church (SC002321)**

Proposal for the formation of Kirkcaldy Congregational Church

West End version - March 2017

BACKGROUND

For around two years the churches have been working together in a variety of ways, most notably in the sharing of a minister, but also through shared services and other activities which have seen the people of both congregations come together regularly. Recognising the challenges facing both churches in continuing to function and develop, it was initially agreed in summer 2016, by the church meetings, that the leaders should begin to explore the possibilities of uniting the two congregations, to form a new Congregational Church. Following this initial exploration, it was then agreed in November 2016 that the leaders should take the discussion a stage further and begin to formally discuss union and the steps necessary to achieve this.

The overarching objective has always been the continuance of a “theologically open and progressive Congregational presence in Kirkcaldy.”

Initially this was seen as a two stage process with union taking place first and decisions about buildings coming later. However initial discussions concluded that any decision about buildings should be considered at an early stage, and form part of any proposal to unite.

To inform discussion about the buildings, surveys were undertaken of both church premises. The West End survey had taken place in late 2015, and significant work had already been undertaken during the summer of 2016 to tackle critical issues of water ingress. The Pathhead survey took place in late 2016.

At a joint meeting of the leaders with the surveyor in December 2016, the broad conclusion was that both buildings were in similar condition, and both would require repairs in the short to medium term, as well as significant investment in the longer term. Both buildings would also require significant development to ensure they are fit for purpose in the future, particularly dealing with access to the buildings, upgrading kitchen and toilet facilities and more efficient heating systems.

The one significant difference would be cost. Owing to its size, the West End building would cost approximately 50% more to develop and maintain in coming years, though some costs had already been borne in the work completed the previous summer.

An Emerging Vision

Having considered the potential costs of developing each building, it was apparent that there was no clear argument to be made for one building over the other, solely based on condition and cost. Therefore consideration had to be given to other factors which could guide our decision making.

The most important factor was the vision of what we see ourselves being and doing as a church in the future, and there was some initial discussion about this at the joint leaders meeting in early December.

Our primary purpose is to be a worshipping and witnessing faith community. However, there was a real sense that for us to have a viable future, we need to become a more outward-looking, community focused church. Central to this would be the provision of community facilities as a resource for different groups and organisations to make use of.

Two aspects were touched upon. First we would wish to have a particular focus on those who find themselves marginalised and on the fringes of society, and therefore have facilities which could be used by groups and organisations which work with those who find themselves facing barriers and exclusion (this might include homeless people, people with disabilities, older people and others). Secondly, there was also the suggestion, that with improvements, the main church buildings themselves might be developed into facilities for day conferences, public meetings, concerts etc. In addition to the building we use being a community resource, it could also potentially be an asset which would bring additional income to the church.

Already there is some use made of both church buildings by community groups, and in recent months several approaches have come from groups which are struggling to get rooms and halls elsewhere, and finding it difficult to meet the costs of room hire.

Sensitive Decisions

As this vision began to form, the minister asked for an additional meeting with the Pathhead leaders. The Pathhead building has some advantages. For example, costs of development would be less and the size of the building would be adequate for the size of even the newly formed church. However, some disadvantages had to be considered. The hall space is very limited, and therefore the conversion of the main church into a multi-use area could prove to be very expensive. Also, the location, to the east end of the town means that for those without their own transport, getting there could prove difficult, this would be especially so for those on the fringes of our communities who we envisaged serving. Furthermore, there is a concentration of denominations already in this end of the town (Church of Scotland, Baptist, Methodist, Free Church, the “Connect” Church and a Brethren Hall off Loughborough Rd).

The Pathhead Board thoughtfully considered the situation, and reached a view that for a fresh vision to develop for a newly formed Kirkcaldy Congregational Church, this would best be achieved in the town centre location. Early in the new year a meeting of the Pathhead members was called and this position was shared with them, to allow the Pathhead folk time to consider and think these issues through. It is recognised that this proposal has a very deep impact on the people of the Pathhead congregation.

Seeking a Solution

Notwithstanding the obvious challenges posed by the West End building, the growing sense is that the town centre location offers the greatest potential to develop the life of the newly formed church, and the proposal for union is based upon continuing to use and develop the town centre building, with the Pathhead building being placed on the market for sale. Potential proceeds from the sale of the Pathhead building could contribute to the costs of developing the town centre premises.

In the town centre there are three other denominations (Linktown CofS, Whytescauseway Baptist and the Salvation Army, though indications are that the Salvation Army is to move to premises further out from the town centre). A little further out from the centre are two further Church of Scotland parishes, the Scottish Episcopal Church, and the Redemption church, which uses part of the former St Andrews church building. We would not envisage “competing” with the other churches, but seeking where possible to work with them and where a need is clear, to develop additional aspects of ministry.

The strongest advantage of the town centre location (and the West End building will soon be the only Christian presence on Kirkcaldy High St) is the accessibility. Whilst parking must be paid for, this is relatively cheap, and plentiful for those who travel in by car. In addition, the building is five minutes from the bus station and about ten minutes from the railway station.

The building itself offers potential, as well as several challenges. There is still some remedial work needing to be completed (much of which would require to be done whether we were going to keep the building or dispose of it). This includes an outbreak of dry rot (and potentially another area which needs investigation), some roof and guttering repairs, and some repairs to the steeple and some of the high level stone work.

The size of the building is larger than we require, and therefore this space needs to be adapted so that it can be used more flexibly.

Development of the new Church using the Town Centre Building

Cost will of course be a factor which restricts what can be done. Discussions with church leaders from other denominations confirms that accessing grants and other funding will be very limited if we are simply seeking to preserve the building as a place for our own use. Some funding might be available on the strength of preserving its architecture and heritage, but this would be limited.

Much of the funding which is available now is contingent on being able to demonstrate that the facility is of wider community use and benefit, and this is part of the challenge that we face. We also must recognise that it is unlikely that full funding would be available for renovation, and that the principle of “match funding” would apply, where we would be expected to contribute to the over all costs.

Therefore, it is envisaged that we consider taking our plans forward in different phases so that we can begin to develop this wider community usefulness, but also we need, for the first phase to spend very carefully only on what is seen to be necessary at this stage. The different phases are not mutually exclusive, and can happen concurrently (for example the administrative aspects of amalgamation – which are outlined below – can occur at the same time as when the building plans are being developed).

Assuming that the remedial work outlined above takes place in coming months, the first phase of development will require significant changes and improvements in the town centre building. These might include:

- Creating level access throughout the ground floor of the building (modifying doorways and entrances and creating level routes from the main church through to the halls);
- Removing the remaining downstairs pews and purchasing chairs to allow for comfortable, flexible use;
- Installing efficient heating and lighting systems in the main church (and potentially, cost permitting, elsewhere in the building);
- Upgrading toilets, including creating an accessible toilet / changing area;
- Upgrading kitchen facilities, and potentially creating a servery area;
- Depending on finances, there would either be a full redecoration or making good the paintwork as necessary;
- Possibly installing a fire detection system;
- Exploring the possibility of developing the upstairs hall as a self-contained office suite for rental to a charity or community group.

This work will require to be costed, and costs will determine the extent of the work which can be done. We would need to seek input from an architect regarding design, compliance with regulatory requirements and also perhaps seeking permissions to proceed with changes to a listed building. We also need to revisit the previous survey, and build in to our projections other aspects of maintenance and development work which will be required in the short term.

This first phase of development is foundational to any longer term plans. This work would be a prerequisite for developing the life of the church itself.

Key features of developing the life of the congregation will include:

- Bringing the two congregations together and forming a shared sense of identity (for example, the name of the new church, our approach to worship and the leadership of the church);
- Developing a programme of activities which best uses the skills and gifts of the new congregation, and utilises the facilities we have (this might include café type activities, fellowship for older members and friends, possible work with younger people);
- Marketing the building and its facilities for regular use by groups and charities, marketing the potential office suite in the upstairs hall, marketing the church as a venue for events, meetings, day conferences etc;
- Considering how as a congregation we support this work – for example our own “programme” might be quite limited (it is best to do a few things well), but having church people available to support other groups and activities would serve to build links and contacts, essentially becoming a “servant church.”

It is this combination of improved facilities and good use of these by a reinvigorated church and the wider community which potentially can underpin seeking funding for a second major phase of development.

This second phase would look to secure the longer term future of the building and the congregation.

If, during the first phase, we enhance the facilities and ensure that further deterioration of the fabric of the building is kept in check, the second phase would involve a significant refurbishment of the building, dealing with the projected long-term issues which the 2015 survey highlighted. This would include:

- Applying for funding from various sources, based on the church being a well-used, viable community facility;
- Developing costed plans for major external work, for example:
 - the renewal of the roof coverings (including reinstatement of the roof vents);
 - replacement of remaining windows in the church and potentially the halls;
 - repointing and refurbishing the exterior stone work;
 - replacement of the guttering;
 - rewiring throughout.
- Depending on circumstances, it may also be a time to consider more extensive internal development, for example the creation of a floor at gallery level and developing additional facilities on the ground floor.

Taking plans forward

Assuming an agreement in principle from both church meetings, that the two congregations amalgamate, two major pieces of work would need to be undertaken over the summer of 2017.

One is the work required to plan the initial development of the building outlined above, involving discussion with architects and considering plans, funding, and how we reach decisions. Whilst the churches would still be separate entities at this stage, it is important that all members have the opportunity to be part of the decision making processes. We would therefore plan some joint meetings for all members, as well as ensuring that any working groups / planning groups include folk from both congregations. At this stage as well, assuming the Pathhead trustees have to power to do so, the Pathhead building would be placed on the market, with any potential sale having a bearing on how, and at what pace, we may proceed.

The second aspect of work is the administrative linking of the two churches, particularly as charities. Initial guidance from the charity regulator (OSCR) is that the first requirement is that an application is submitted to them for the establishment of a new charity (i.e. church). Thereafter, both existing charities (churches) would need to apply to wind up.

Central to this process would be ensuring that we comply with all requirements regarding the transfer of the property or assets of the existing churches to the new church for the continuance of the original charitable purposes.

Therefore we need to be clear what the trust deeds of both churches permit, and proceed accordingly. What is or is not permitted should not prevent the union, but will influence what OSCR may permit us or require us to do. We also need to develop a new constitution which is agreeable to the memberships of both current churches, which would be the constitution of the new church (assuming consent by OSCR).

The proposal

Note: For what is outlined above to happen, requires the agreement of both church meetings. Therefore the following proposal will be brought to each church's AGM, scheduled to take place on 26 March 2017. This section is worded differently for each church, otherwise the document is exactly the same for both churches.

Following the church meeting on 06 November 2016, the deacons and trustees have undertaken constructive discussions with the Board of Pathhead EU Congregational Church about the formation of a single Congregational Church for Kirkcaldy.

"The deacons and trustees formally propose:

- i. that a new church, which will be known as Kirkcaldy Congregational Church shall be formed, using the premises of the present West End Congregational Church for its activities;
- ii. that West End Congregational Church is wound up, in accordance with all legal and regulatory requirements;
- iii. that the remaining assets and liabilities of West End Congregational Church will be transferred to Kirkcaldy Congregational Church for the continuance of its charitable purposes."

Timeline

Draft Timeframe	
March 2017	AGM's in both churches – considering the proposal
April - September	<p>Assuming agreement at the AGM's</p> <p>Discussion with OSCR regarding the formation of the new church and winding up of the two churches, and then implementing any process which they set out for us;</p> <p>Development of a new constitution;</p> <p>Undertaking required repairs to the West End building;</p> <p>Development of plans and costings for the upgrading of the West End building;</p> <p>Placing the Pathhead building on the market;</p> <p>Church meetings in July to update on progress, ongoing joint meetings to consider plans.</p>
October - December	If there is consent from OSCR, the formation of the new church etc would proceed
January 2018	The new church is formed
Spring – Summer 2018	<p>Upgrading work commences in the town centre building (though potentially this could happen sooner);</p> <p>Consideration needed of where we would meet during this period (this will be partly dependent on whether we still own the Pathhead building or not)</p>
Autumn 2018	Re-opening and dedication of the new Kirkcaldy Congregational Centre