THE LINK MAGAZINE BATHGATE HIGH CHURCH SEPTEMBER 2023



Scottish Charity No. SC007418

Our Mission statement -We seek to share the love of Jesus by worship, faith and fellowship with all ages.

Church office - info@bathgatehigh.com

From the Editor

Welcome to this September edition of The Link, which contains important information regarding the upcoming meeting and congregational vote on Sunday 10th September, at Bathgate High Church, immediately after Sunday worship. There is a very full and detailed article entitled "*Vacancy and Readjustment*" which outlines, in depth, the key aspects of the Basis of Union and the Basis of Reviewable Charge.

It's hard to believe that (at time of writing) September is only a week away.

Autumn is such a majestic time of year, with hazy morning hues, the slow transition to rich autumnal colours in the world of nature around us, the industrious preparation of farmers for the forthcoming harvest and spectacular, vibrant sunsets to be enjoyed!

"Look forward in faith
All time is in God's hand
Walk humbly with him
And trust his future plan
God has wisely led
His people by his power
Look forward in hope
He gives us each new hour."



Alison

Locum's Message

I am just back home from a walk with my daughter's dogs on this beautiful day. It never fails to amaze me the beauty of God's creation, the fields have been harvested, the grain gathered in and the hay baled for winter fodder. God is indeed good in all he does.

The nights are drawing in now as summer comes to an end.

The children are back to school for a new session, pray for youngsters starting school for the first time, for pupils moving to secondary education and those who have left school to go on to college, university or into employment. Remember children who find school difficult through bullying, learning needs or little or no support at home. Children who had disappointing results and their future plans have been hampered, may they know as one door closes another opens.

Our children face tremendous pressures from their peers groups, from worldly attractions and the feeling of need to conform, the loss of social skills as they are glued to their phones, iPads or computer screens.

Daily I pray to see more children and young people in our church today where they can hear of the love that God has for them. God loves them, you and I so much that he sent his only son Jesus into the world to bring the good news of his Father's love and longing for us all to return to the fold.

Jesus is the way, the only way, for us to enter the kingdom of God to share eternal life with Jesus in Heaven.

The steps to finding this peace are so simple but pride and/or ignorance hold many back.

Locum's Message Continued

Acknowledge your sinful nature, sin brought into the world through Adam. Come to the cross and recognise Jesus died for my sins, your sins, the sins of the world, accepting Jesus' death for our sins in your heart brings us reconciliation with God, our Heavenly Father, through his grace we are adopted into his family as sons and daughters, a privilege that is a gift from God.

Accept the need of Jesus, who lives and is seated at God's right hand, in our lives daily.

When Jesus rose from the dead that first Easter Sunday morning he conquered death for us, we who believe have the promise of eternal life.

When Jesus returned to his father the battle with Satan had been won, God sent his Holy Spirit as a guide to help us keep to the straight and narrow path, fight the temptations of the world.

Do you know Jesus in this personal way, do you have the peace in your heart that comes from knowing you're God's child?

Good, but what about your treasured children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and great great grandchildren – do they, too, know this peace? If not, share the good news with them today. **Jesus is the way, the only way to the Father.**

I love the illustration of Jesus on the cross being a bridge between the world's sinful way and the peace of knowing you're a child of God. Walk across the bridge today and find peace, a peace this world cannot give.

We in churches up and down the land are facing exciting opportunities but there will be challenges and many a tear may be shed but know Jesus is with you all the way.

God Bless, David Wilkie (Locum)

After an extremely long and protracted process, we are now in the position of having to make the final decision about the proposed union with St John's Church.

The Link has too few pages to give a full account of how we arrived here, but it would be wrong to feel that we have been in any way singled out for this proposed way forward. It was in 2018 that the General Assembly (belatedly?) woke up to the position of the church nationally; falling rolls, an ageing profile of members, an excess of old and expensive buildings which were not always in the right places, a reduction in income and, most crucially, a huge shortfall in the number of ministers across the country. The General Assembly called for a 'radical plan' to try to find a way forward.

One of the key aspects of this was the reorganisation of Presbyteries to reduce their number and costs. Each Presbytery was charged with producing a Mission Plan, which would include how they intended to use their allocation of the estimated national number of ministers. West Lothian joined with Edinburgh Presbytery and they produced their plan, which included how they would distribute the 16 minister posts available to West Lothian.

In Bathgate, we were in a position where all three Church of Scotland charges were vacant, so the Presbytery's plan was -

- to allocate one minister post to Boghall, given its geographical isolation and the discrete community it served.
- to allocate one minster post to a new united congregation in the town.
- to ask Boghall and the new united charge to work together to promote mission within Bathgate as a Parish Grouping.

This plan was finally approved by the General Trustees and by Presbytery just a few months ago and so we are ready to move towards the new structures within the town of Bathgate.

For the union to be agreed, both Sessions and both congregations have to vote to accept two key documents –

- **the Basis of Union**; a description of the terms under which the two churches unite.
- the Basis of Reviewable Charge; the norm is now that ministers are appointed for a fixed term, at the end of which the state of the church is reassessed by Presbytery and future plans formulated. The Basis of Reviewable Charge outlines the criteria to be used when assessing the progress that the church has made.

These long and winding documents are included at the end of this article, but the short word versions are –

The Basis of Union

Name – the new charge will be Bathgate Parish Church of Scotland.

Transference of Property and Funds – all the property and assets of the two existing charges become the property and assets of the new united congregation.

Territorial Responsibilities – the new united charge will take in the existing parishes of St John's and the High.

Kirk Sessions – the Kirk Session of the High and St John's merge.

Congregational Management – the new united charge will operate a Unitary Constitution. This means that the Session takes over the responsibilities of both the Session and the Board. The Session will appoint working groups on specific aspects of church life open to all members.

Reviewable Charge – The minister will be appointed for a period of 5 years, after which the progress that the church has made will be assessed. Presbytery will then make decisions as to future planning. The criteria used for this assessment are listed in the Basis of Reviewable Charge.

Ministerial Support – the minister will be paid according to Church of Scotland scales.

Place of Worship and Manse — it was recognised that both congregations have very strong historical ties to their own buildings. It was that felt that this had the potential to make the issue of buildings divisive and this would detract from the task of building a new congregation. It was therefore decided that Presbytery should make an objective decision as to which sanctuary and which manse to retain. This would be done on their fitness for purpose, potential for development and estimate upkeep costs. Presbytery is charged with coming to this decision by 31st December 2023.

The Basis of Reviewable Charge

This is the basis by which the progress of the church – not the minister – is assessed after 5 years. The assessment is strongly based on how effectively the church is approaching mission and service to the community. It also looks at how effectively the church is working within the Parish Grouping with Boghall for mission to the whole town of Bathgate.

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The specific criterial are -

- the extent to which the life of the congregation exhibits the five Marks of Mission.
- effectiveness of the Parish Grouping with Boghall.
- the success of an intergenerational approach to mission.
- working with local partners, including other denominations.
- involvement of the united congregation in worship and on-line resources.
- establishment of leadership core.

The Vote

The congregation is asked to vote on their agreement with the union with St John's. The congregation is asked to vote on their acceptance of the Basis of Union, their acceptance of the Basis of Reviewable Charge and thus, their acceptance of the union.

The Sessions of both St John's and the High have already voted to accept the documents and in both cases the vote was unanimous. The union forms a part of the Presbytery Mission Plan. This plan, along with both the documents being voted on at the meeting on 10th September, have been the result of hours of discussion, negotiation, compromise and agreement. They have been checked by the General Trustees as being compliant with Church Law. As such, the situation is that we vote for or against the union. There is no 'Plan B' to vote on.

There is no steer on how any member should vote; it is entirely up to each individual. We would encourage all our members to try to attend the meeting and make their voice heard by taking part in the vote. If anyone needs help with transport, please contact any Elder or the church office and we will try and help make arrangements.

Next steps (and *next* next steps)

The vote on the Basis of Union, the Basis of Reviewable Charge and thus the vote on the union takes place immediately after the service on Sunday 10th September. The meeting will be chaired by a member of the Presbytery Deployment Group. Votes are cast by an in-person, secret ballot and we are required to check that all those voting appear on the church roll as full communicant members, listed on the supplementary roll or listed as adherents. Votes will be counted and the results made known at the meeting. It is hoped that the results of the St John's vote (which takes place at the same time) will be available once our own votes are counted. On a practical note, please bring a pen!

If the congregation votes to accept the union, the union will be ratified by Presbytery at their September meeting. The union is effectively in place from this date. The legal date of the union will be decided by Presbytery as some administrative detail to do with the Charities Commission takes time to work through. The legal date is likely to be the end of 2023. At the point of the formal union, all members of St John's and the High become members of the new united charge; Bathgate Parish Church. Should anyone not wish to become a member, they are free to move to a different church if they so wish.

If the congregation does not vote to accept the union, the issue goes back to Presbytery.

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The union itself is not quite the end of the line. In order to call a minister, the call has to be approved by Presbytery. For this, we would need to complete the Parish Profile and also hold a congregational vote to accept a further document – the Basis of Parish Grouping – as this would form an important part of what might be expected of the new minister.

The full versions of the two key documents for the vote are shown below –

DRAFT BASIS OF UNION

The congregation of Bathgate High Parish Church of Scotland (SC007418) and the congregation of St John's Church of Scotland, Bathgate (SC016755) shall be united on a date to be determined by Presbytery and that on the following terms and conditions:

- 1. Name: The name of the united congregation shall be Bathgate Parish Church of Scotland and Scottish Charity Number (SC 007418) will be retained.
- 2. Transference of Property and Funds: The property and funds belonging to or held on behalf of each congregation shall belong to or be held on behalf of the united congregation and any transference necessary shall be duly effected.

- **3.** Places of Worship: The church to be used as the place of worship of the united congregation and the retention of halls will be determined by Presbytery by 31st December 2023 as stipulated in the Presbytery Mission Plan, which designates both buildings 'B'. The decision of Presbytery will be binding on all parties. The buildings not being used shall be used, sold, let or otherwise disposed of subject to the titles on which they are held, and to the approval of the Presbytery and, if necessary, the General Trustees or the General Assembly. The free proceeds of any such sale or let shall: (a) if falling within the scope of Act VII 1995, be credited to the benefit of the congregation in the Consolidated Fabric Fund; or (b) if not falling within the scope of the said Act, be held and applied for fabric purposes in connection with the properties of the congregation. In the interim, both churches at present used and occupied by the congregations shall be the places of worship of the united congregation on a shared rota basis. Services shall be conducted each Sunday at times and locations to be agreed by the Minister and Kirk Session, subject to the approval of Presbytery.
- **4. Territorial Responsibility:** The bounds to be served by the united charge shall be designated as the bounds of the parishes of Bathgate High Church and Bathgate St John's or as the Presbytery shall determine.
- **5. Kirk Session:** The elders of both Kirk Sessions shall form, with the minister the Kirk Session of the united charge.
- 6. Congregational Management: The temporal affairs of the united congregation shall be administered by the Kirk Session in terms of the Unitary Constitution, the Delegation of Assembly being authorised to issue the appropriate Deed of Constitution to the said congregation.
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7. Minister: In the current vacancies in the charges of Bathgate High and Bathgate St John's, a joint nominating committee comprising duly elected representatives of Bathgate High and duly elected representatives of Bathgate St John's (the number of representatives of each congregation being determined by Presbytery), shall proceed to the nomination for election of a minister in the vacant charge.

A Minister shall be called on a Basis of Reviewable Charge in terms of Act VIII 2021, section 9 (1), and that on the following conditions:

- a) The Presbytery shall review the appointment five years from the date of induction of the minister.
- b) At the review, the Presbytery shall consider with the Kirk Session:
 - Whether the life of the congregation exhibits the five Marks of Mission, i.e.
 - To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom;
 - > To teach, baptise and nurture new believers;
 - To respond to human need by loving service;
 - ➤ To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation; and
 - > To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.
 - Whether the life of the congregation exhibits the five purposes of the church, i.e. worship, service, discipleship, fellowship and evangelism and whether these are in a healthy balance;
 - The effectiveness of contributions to, and building up of, the Parish Grouping with Boghall Parish Church, as per the Presbytery Mission Plan;
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Vacancy and Readjustment Page 9

- The success of an intergenerational approach to mission with particular emphasis on areas of new housing in the town;
- The missional success of working with local partners, including other denominations;
- To promote the involvement of the united congregation in planning and leading worship and the establishment of an effective on-line presence;
- The extent to which a leadership core has been established and developed to enable the resourcing of all aspects of church life; and
- Such other matters as may be relevant by that time.
- c) Following such review, the Presbytery shall take a further decision on the future arrangements for ministry to the congregation, recognising that one of the options available to it is the termination of the tenure of the charge on giving the minister six months' notice in writing.
- 8. Manse: The manse to be used shall be determined by Presbytery by 31st December 2023. The decision of Presbytery will be binding on all parties. The manse which is not being used shall be used, sold, let or otherwise disposed of, subject to the titles on which it is held, and subject to the approval of the Presbytery and, if necessary, of the General Trustees or the General Assembly. The free proceeds of any such sale or let shall: (a) if falling within the scope of Act VII 1995, be credited to the benefit of the congregation in the Consolidated Fabric Fund; or (b) if not falling within the scope of the said Act, be held and applied for fabric purposes in connection with the properties of the congregation.

- **9. Ministerial Support:** The stipend of the charge shall be paid in accordance with the terms of the National Stipend Scheme.
- **10. Power to Readjust:** While the articles and terms shall form the Basis of Union for the two congregations now uniting, the united congregation shall be free, like other congregations, to adjust arrangements under the authority of Presbytery as need may arise.

DRAFT BASIS OF REVIEWABLE CHARGE

By decision of the Presbytery of Edinburgh and West Lothian, permission is granted to the congregation of Bathgate Parish Church of Scotland (SC007418), to call a minister on a Basis of Reviewable Charge in terms of Act VIII 2021, section 9 (1), and that on the following conditions:

- 1) The Presbytery shall review the appointment five years from the date of induction of the minister.
- 2) At the review, the Presbytery shall consider with the Kirk Session:
 - a) Whether the life of the congregation exhibits the five Marks of Mission, i.e.
 - i) To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom;
 - ii) To teach, baptise and nurture new believers;

- iii) To respond to human need by loving service;
- iv) To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation; and
- v) To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.
- Whether the life of the congregation exhibits the five purposes of the church, i.e. worship, service, discipleship, fellowship and evangelism and whether these are in a healthy balance;
- The effectiveness of contributions to, and building up of, the proposed Parish Grouping with Boghall Parish Church, as per the Presbytery Mission Plan;
- d) The contribution of an appropriate percentage of time by the Minister to the mission of the proposed Parish Grouping;
- e) The success of an intergenerational approach to mission with particular emphasis on areas of new housing in the town;
- f) The missional success of working with local partners, including other denominations;
- g) The effectiveness of involving the congregation in planning and leading worship and the establishment of an effective on-line presence;
- h) The extent to which a leadership core has been established and developed to enable the resourcing of all aspects of church life;
- i) Such other matters as may be relevant by that time.
- 3) Following such review, the Presbytery shall take a further decision on the future arrangements for ministry to the congregation and parish of Bathgate Parish Church of Scotland, recognising that one of the options available to it is the termination of the tenure of the charge on giving the minister six months' notice in writing.

The minister shall be free to seek to demit or to be translated as in the ordinary case of any minister inducted to a charge, provided that, if this Reviewable Charge is his or her first charge, the Presbytery hereby agree that these conditions constitute exceptional circumstances in terms of Section 4 of Act VIII 2003, and will accordingly issue the necessary Certificate if he or she seeks to be translated within five years.

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Call to Arms

With organisations restarting in the next few weeks, this is a reminder that all of these depend on volunteers from the congregation. The more hands that are involved, the more the load is spread. There are always opportunities to help out during the week at the Foodbank, Preschool, in the Office or on the cleaning rota. We are particularly keen to open the office on a Thursday from 10 – 12 noon and are looking for volunteers to allow this to happen. On Sundays, opportunities include the Welcome team, the Count, the readers' rota, the Choir, the Flower Committee, the music group and AV operators. Anyone on the Session will be able to point you in the right direction and your help would really be appreciated.

jw

The BIG Clean

Many thanks to the members of the small team that worked throughout July, when we were worshiping in St John's, to undertake this significant cleaning exercise.

Their help and commitment was very much appreciated.

Jean Logie

THRIFT SHOP

The Congregational Board have agreed that we can have our Autumn Thrift Shop in **October** on the following days:

Monday 9th to Friday 13th from 10.00 am until 3.00 pm and Saturday 14th from 10.00 am until 12.00 Noon.

We will have our normal range of new and preloved clothing together with our bric a brac, toys, books etc.

This gives you a great opportunity to make room in your house and wardrobes, by donating unwanted items, summer clothing etc. ready for your new winter wardrobe.

Having done your shopping, you can then relax as we have a restricted tea / coffee café with scones and pancakes supplied by our bakers and staff.

Should you have items / clothing that you wish to donate, please get in touch with me and I can be available at the church to receive them or alternatively arrange to collect them.

Jean Logie Church Officer.

The Guild

I hope you have all had a happy summer break. Just to let you know that the "Guild" resumes on the 6th September for our next session. I am still making the syllabus up, but I am sure it will be as interesting as it has been in the past.

We will be going back to our usual meeting place in the Lesser Hall on Wednesday afternoons at 1:30pm.

It will be good to meet up again and also to have some new members too.

All are welcome.

Yours, in His service,

A Ferris (Secretary)

Country Dancers

Hello friends, we have had a longer break than most organisations but I think I was being overcautious.

If you are interested, I think if we can get back to try the dancing again on the 12th September at 1:30pm in the Lessr Hall as usual. Hope to see you all again and any more.

Agnes Ferris



Bathgate Churches Together Page 1

The group met on Tuesday 1st August 2023 in St Columba's Episcopal Church.

The meeting opened with a reading from John 6: 5-13, followed by a short reflection and prayer.

Matters Discussed:

Christian Aid [CA]

It was agreed that the stall held at Bathgate Market on 8th July was a success and, despite the rain, raised the sum of £507.50 for Christian Aid. We were delighted that two representatives from CA, Lauren Petherbridge from Livingston and Rozelle Bosch from Shotts, visited us and were a great encouragement. It was a worthwhile venture but we have taken note of ways to improve running the stall if we decide to undertake this next year. Any unsold items left from the stall on the 8th were taken to charity shops, apart from good pieces, which may well sell at another stall. It was agreed that they can be included in the Christian Aid Coffee morning being held in the High Church on Saturday 7th Oct.

The BCT bank account

Our treasurer, Margaret Samuel, reported that our current balance in the account is £464.13.

Pedestrian Precinct Planter

It was generally agreed that the planter, maintained by BCT, is looking good and encouraging comments have been received from people passing by. Alastair, who has been responsible for planting seeds and bulbs, was reimbursed for some expenses submitted.

Bathgate Churches Together Page 2

Harvest Supper

After discussion, it was decided not to go ahead with a Harvest Supper this year. A suggestion was made that we could consider a joint BCT meal on Shrove Tuesday next year. This idea will be followed up at a future meeting.

Preliminary arrangements for Advent and Christmas

It was generally agreed that we should be better prepared this year if we are taking a role in the ceremony of switching on the Christmas lights in the Pedestrian Precinct, organized by West Lothian Council. Contact will be made with Nairn Pearson to ascertain when the event will be held this year and to make sure that there will be a microphone and loudspeakers properly tested and working for someone to give the traditional short Christmas message. It was agreed that the BCT should organise carol singing, with sheets of carols printed and given out to the public. This will be discussed at the next BCT meeting.

Discussion took place about holding services on each Sunday evening during Advent to which all are welcome. Suggestions were:

Sunday 3rd Dec: Choral evensong at St Columba's with Participation from members of the other churches.

Sunday 10th Dec: Christmas Celebration at Boghall.

Sunday 17th Dec: Carols and lessons at St John's.

Sunday 24th Dec: Christingle service at High Church.

Details of these services are still to be confirmed.

Bathgate Churches Together Page 3

The Bathgate Tryst Project [formerly known as the Bathgate Poverty Initiative].

Margaret Hardy reported that ideas had further developed, although they are not yet finalised. Under new proposals, being discussed with the Trussell Trust, the Tryst Hall in St John's would become the primary distribution point for the food bank in Bathgate and would be open on Mondays and Thursdays from 11.00am to 4.00pm.

There would also be various facilities available for needy users, including one or more washing machines and dryers [washing powder to be supplied by Morrisons.] A debt advice person may be available. Bathgate Rotary have also offered their support.

A Warm Space

Aileen mentioned that help could also be made available by providing a warm place in the EU/URC church over the winter. Subsequently, it has been confirmed that funds would be made available for this, but as it is an EU/URC initiative, their hall would be used. Opportunity would be given for BCT to be involved.

The meeting ended by saying the grace to each other.

Our next meeting is on Thursday 28th Sept. at 2.00pm in St John's Church.

Liz Orr



Flower Committee

We continue to be overwhelmed by the generosity of our congregation in gifting flowers for church use.

The Flower Calendar is now full for the rest of the year. Unfortunately, due to continuing illness and staff shortages, we regret still having to limit only 1 name per week on the Calendar – gifting just enough flowers for 2 arrangements. Despite repeated pleas for more drivers to replace those who have retired or given up driving, sadly no new names have been received. Disappointingly, this has a knock-on effect on delivering church flowers and reduces our pastoral care commitment to vulnerable members within our fellowship.

As we "Move Forward in Faith," hopefully all will be well to allow us to reap and enjoy the seasonal fruits of harvest!

Beth Anderson



Bessie's Quote

Church Blooper:

Ladies don't forget the Thrift Shop soon, it's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house.

Don't forget your husbands!



Messages of Thanks

Thank you for the beautiful flower arrangement brought to us by Beth, they're much appreciated.

Also, thanks for the chat we had with Beth.

Jean and Jim McLean



Thank you for the lovely flowers I received and to the Flower Committee for a beautiful arrangement.

Also, thanks to Brenda for delivering them to me.

Edith Spence



Bathgate E.U. United Reformed Church - Autumn Show

Dear friends at Bathgate High,

We will be having our "Autumn Show" on September 27th, 28th and 29th commencing at 7:30pm. This is an evening of songs and a one act play. We would greatly value your support.

Tickets are £5 and will be on sale at your next Coffee Morning on Saturday 16th September. Alternatively, please pay at the hall door on the night of the show.

Many thanks,

Aileen Baird



CONTACT INFORMATION

Interim Moderator: - Rev Nelu Balaj Church Office 01506 650517

Locum:- Mr David Wilkie Mobile 0757 8006922

Session Clerks: - Mr John Wood sessionclerk@bathgatehigh.com

Mr Ian McLean

Mrs Liz Orr

Church Officer: - Mrs Jean Logie, Mobile 07710 057034

All other office bearers/ head of groups contact via Church Office Phone 01506 650517 Email: - info@bathgatehigh.com

Treasurer: - Mr Ian McLean

Clerk to the Board: - Mrs Brenda Kilpatrick

Property Convenor: - Mr Dave Robertson

Sunday School and Creche: - Mrs Carolyn McCusker

Safeguarding Officer: - Mrs Carolyn McCusker

Boys Brigade: - Mr Graeme Robertson

Guild:- Mrs Agnes Ferris

Data Protection Officer:- Ms Lorna Hutcheon

Roll Convener:- Mrs Janette Peel

WFO Convener:- Mrs Anne Graham

Musical Director: - Ms Alison Paul

Pre-School:- Mrs Karen Redmond

Flower Convener: - Miss Beth Anderson

Pastoral Care Team: - Miss Bessie Stein

Country Dancing: - Mrs Agnes Ferris

Food Bank: - Mrs Christine Robertson

The Church Office is open Monday to Wednesday and Friday from 10am-12noon.

Bathgate High Parish Church, Gideon Street, Bathgate EH484HB.