Campsie Parish Church Kirk Session

A unitary constitution?

The legal basis for a unitary constitution (from Church of Scotland guidelines)

The control of the affairs of the Congregation, both spiritual and temporal, shall...be vested in the Kirk Session of the Congregation (hereinafter referred to as “the Session”).

The Session may constitute committees and shall specify their remit and duties and may specify any restriction or condition on the committee which it considers appropriate. A committee may constitute sub-committees and shall specify their remit and duties ...

The Session shall have the power to appoint as a member of its committees or sub-committees any member of the congregation and may in addition appoint as a corresponding member persons who are not members of the congregation. Such corresponding members shall be entitled to attend meetings of the committee or sub-committee concerned and may speak but shall not be entitled to vote nor to propose motions.

The Session may arrange for any of its functions to be discharged on its behalf by a committee (retaining nevertheless full responsibility for the diligent discharge thereof). When delegating to a committee with powers, the Session shall cause to be minuted the powers so delegated and any conditions or restrictions applicable to the delegation.

Why we might move to a unitary constitution

We currently work under the New Model Constitution which requires a Kirk Session and a Congregational Board. Each of these can delegate to committees and sub-committees; we have: the property committee, the finance committee and the pastoral care group among others. However, in practice, all decisions are made and most discussions take place at either the Board or Session, which can lead to diffuse discussion, repetition and occasionally poor decision-making.

Under a unitary constitution it is possible to delegate significant powers to a number of committees, each charged with responsibility for some aspect of the church’s life and mission. These powers may (and in many instances should) include being able to authorise expenditure up to a previously agreed amount without referring back to Session. It is important to recognise that this does not remove from Session the final responsibility for all church activity or, as trustees, expenditure; there would therefore need to be a proper system of control and regulation set in place.

Among the aims which might be achieved in moving to a unitary constitution are:

- Creation of a better system to further the church’s primary aim, which is mission and outreach
- Better use of time
- A less top-down system of government with more responsibility being allowed to more people
- More involvement by more members of the congregation (and possibly others)
- Better awareness among more people about how the church works

How such a system might work – a skeleton outline

The Kirk Session would meet less frequently than at present.

Conveners of the new committees would meet separately from the Session to discuss matters of detail or conflict or to make recommendations on major changes to Session.
Committees would meet whenever they needed to but not necessarily frequently. They would be allowed to authorise expenditure in designated areas up to an agreed amount. (A system of reporting and accounting would have to be devised). Each committee would report to Session at least once a year, but not necessarily more frequently. Matters of detail would not be brought to Session.

*Meetings (possible timetable)*
Kirk Session – meets September, November, February, April, June

Conveners’ group – meets late August, October, January, March, May [or less frequently; or perhaps immediately before Session meetings?]

Committees – meet as necessary

Minister and Session Clerk to be ex officio on all committees, but not expected to attend all of them all the time]

**Church manager**
In addition to a new structure such as that described below, the Session might like to consider formalising many of the various tasks that a number of people, particularly Margaret Tindall and Joan Thomson, undertake at present. There would be something to be said for having a single individual who is known to be the first contact for anything to do with the day-to-day running of the church and who could be formally responsible, for example, for dealing with the church officer and the cleaner, liaising with tradesmen, etc. as well as a multitude of other jobs. She (or he) need not necessarily be responsible for doing everything herself, but would be known to be the person to turn to when something needed to be done. The alternative would be to continue as we are, and the Session may find that more acceptable.

**Questions**
The structure suggested here is for discussion; there may be something or much about it which does not recommend itself and other people may have better ideas about how we might organise ourselves; or we might prefer to leave the current structure unchanged but attempt to improve its operation. We might ask ourselves:

- Does what is suggested sound too bureaucratic?
- Would it succeed in producing a more effective way of working?
- Would it allow more people to participate in church activity?
- Is it likely to upset people who currently do some of the things described?
- Would it (or something like it) be better than what we have at present?
- Is there something entirely different we might do?
- Do we want to stay as we are?

**Proposed committees, with suggested membership and remits**

**Mission**

*Composition*
Convener: Minister
Stewardship leader
Representative of Alpha
4 other members
Campsie Parish Church Kirk Session

Remit

- To develop and deliver a strategy for mission to the church membership and to the wider community, including but not confined to the parish
- To identify other areas for mission not encompassed by the above; these may include local (non-parochial), regional, national or international
- To oversee the church’s existing outreach activities* and adult study groups and to respond to other possibilities as they may arise

*For example, Operation Christmas Child and MAF

Worship
Composition
Convener: Minister
Reader or other licenced members of the congregation
Prayer Secretary
Representative(s) of musicians
4 other members

Remit

- To support the Minister in the development of worship, in particular the use of various worship styles
- To encourage members of the congregation to participate actively in worship
- To encourage the practice of prayer
- To develop a wide variety of musical activity and participation in worship

Pastoral
Composition
Convener: Pastoral Care Convener
4 other members, at least one of whom should be part of the Pastoral Visiting Team

Remit

- To develop and support all pastoral activity in the church
- To ensure that all members of the congregation with pastoral needs are identified and nurtured
- To increase the number of congregational members actively involved in visiting and other pastoral activity

Education
Composition
Convener: to be decided
JAM Club leader (ex of Youth group leader
Representative of young people [?]
4 other members

**Remit**

- To oversee and develop all educational activities taking place throughout the church (other than those deemed to be the responsibility of the Mission Committee) and aimed specifically at young people. These may include the JAM Club, Youth Clubs, the Holiday Club, and other similar activities – but not the uniformed organisations which will remain the responsibility of the Kirk Session
- To advise the Minister on those areas which are legally her responsibility

**Finance**

*Composition*
Convener: to be decided

Treasurer

Freewill offering co-ordinator

Gift Aid coordinator

4 other members

**Remit**

- To exercise oversight of the church’s finances
- To prepare an annual budget and to allocate devolved spending limits to other committees (subject to the overall approval of the Kirk Session)
- To ensure that all legal financial responsibilities (towards Trustees, the Presbytery, the Church of Scotland and OSCR) are met
- To recommend to the Kirk Session the proper use of existing reserves and of any legacies or other capital sums received
- To liaise with other committees and individuals about fund-raising

**Property**

*Composition*
Convener: Property Convener

[Church manager : see above]

Health and Safety Officer

4 other members

**Remit**

- To be responsible for the repair and maintenance of the church building and of the manse
- To present an annual budget to the Finance Committee and to carry out planned maintenance within that budget
- To arrange for and carry out the commissioning of necessary repairs below an agreed amount, to be decided from time to time by the Kirk Session
- To advise the Kirk Session on value for money in major repair and development
- To liaise with the Presbytery Buildings Officer as required and particularly over the quinquennial fabric inspection
• To be generally responsible for hall management and for the supervision of the church officer and the cleaner
• To be responsible for the provision of cleaning materials and other material needed for the day-to-day running of the church
• To determine and administer Church Lets

**Communication**

*Composition*
Convener: to be decided

Website manager
Local press representative
Magazine editor
3 other members

*Remit*

• To ensure that all activities taking place in or supported by the church are publicised appropriately
• To oversee the operation of the website, the notice boards and press releases
• To develop and keep under review a communications strategy.

**Events**

*Composition*
Convener: to be decided

Catering manager
Rainbow Café organiser
5 other members

*Remit*

• To provide catering facilities as appropriate for church functions
• To deliver existing fund-raising activities and to devise and deliver new ones, either one-off or continuing
• To maintain and develop a range of social activities for church members and their families
• To oversee the working and development of the Rainbow Café