

Duffus, Spynie and Hopeman Church Newsletter 21 June 2022



Dear friends,

We have not had time or capacity to create a summer magazine this year. *(If anyone wants to edit future editions of the church magazine, please get in touch with me.)* This newsletter comes with a calendar for church life for the coming months and an update on the discussions about mission and buildings. *If you'd like to receive future magazines/newsletters by email, please let me know.*

In April Moray Presbytery shared a Draft Mission Plan for the next five years, encouraging amendments as Presbytery discerns God's will for the Church of Scotland in the area.

The priority has to be the mission of the church, which is the mission of Christ:

- 1) To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- 2) To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- 3) To respond to human need by loving service
- 4) To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
- 5) To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

The mission for the Lossiemouth Area recognizes that we share mission with many denominations and fellowships in Lossiemouth and with Hopeman Baptist Church. Key aspects of mission locally are: hospitality; pilgrimage; creation care and social justice; and children's and youth work.

It is proposed that the congregation of Duffus, Spynie & Hopeman go into a union with Lossiemouth St. Gerardine's High and Lossiemouth St. James'. That new united congregation would serve the whole area together, with one Full Time Minister of Word and Sacrament and one half-time parish assistant to help with pastoral and funeral work. In addition, local leadership will be trained and equipped, and it's hoped there might be an Ordained Local Minister (a part-time unpaid calling).

In order to retain local identity and leadership, there's a new model called Local Mission Church which is proposed within the union for the villages of Duffus and Hopeman. A local leadership team can develop worship and witness without burdens of governance or office-bearers.

The Board & Session met on 6 June to discuss four options relating to our church buildings:

- A) Dispose of all church buildings, use community halls
- B) Retain Hopeman Kirk, dispose of Duffus & Spynie Kirks (as per draft Mission Plan)
- C) Retain Duffus Kirk, dispose of Hopeman and Spynie Kirks
- D) Retain Spynie Kirk, dispose of Hopeman and Duffus Kirks

Four excellent presentations were shared, making the case for each option in terms of mission and sustainability and with creative ideas for the future. Everyone listened to each other with respect and there were opportunities to ask questions and make comments. There were three rounds of voting, giving time for reflection and acknowledging the range of preferences. The whole meeting was grounded in prayer, as we sought to discern God's will.

In the end a clear majority of the Board and Session voted for option C, to retain Duffus Kirk building and dispose of Hopeman and Spynie Kirk buildings.

While all our church buildings have lots to offer, the case was made that Duffus Kirk is well placed to offer hospitality, including its digital and musical capability; it is visible by the road and cycle route for missional and pilgrimage possibilities; its size allows significant numbers to be welcomed while being easier to heat and maintain (for financial and ecological sustainability). It offers a rural presence, complementing the coastal in Lossiemouth (and neighbouring the cemetery).

For any building, "disposal" does not mean that we stop using them in the short-term. While we are negotiating sale, lease or other options, we will continue to use them, and will celebrate the stories and memories associated with these special places as we prepare for transitions.

Mission needs us to meet people where they are. Mission across Duffus, Spynie and Hopeman is not undertaken solely through Sunday worship and will continue to develop beyond church buildings. This already includes Forest Church on the beach and in the woods, Café Church and Messy Church in our community halls, and chaplaincy with Hopeman Primary and Lossie High Schools. Mission will develop across all our communities in creative ways in the years to come.

This preference of the Board & Session will require Duffus, Spynie and Hopeman to propose an amendment to Moray Presbytery's draft Mission Plan to change the categorisations of Duffus and Hopeman Kirk buildings. That amendment will be debated by Moray Presbytery at its meeting on 6 September.

This means this is not yet confirmed. Moray Presbytery will consider our amendment against the original draft Mission Plan proposals. At the September Presbytery meeting, one representative of our congregation will be invited to present the case for retaining Duffus Kirk building instead of Hopeman Kirk building. Because the decision was not unanimous, that presentation will also acknowledge the other cases made, allowing Presbytery to make an informed decision.

These are times of change, loss and hope. May we know God with us as we journey together.

With love and prayers,

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