

BASIS OF PARISH GROUPING

The charge of:

Berwick and District comprising [St Andrew's Wallace Green and Lowick Church of Scotland, Berwick-upon-Tweed (SC000867) linked with Ayton and District Churches (Church of Scotland) (SC001208), linked with Fogo Parish Church (Church of Scotland) (SC002789)],

and the charge of Coldstream and District Parishes (Church of Scotland) (SC001456) linked with Eccles and Leitholm Parish Church (Church of Scotland) (SC000031),

and the charge of Duns and District Parishes (Church of Scotland) (SC005161),

and the charge of Earlston and District comprising [Earlston Parish Church of Scotland (SC003895) linked with Gordon St Michael's Church of Scotland (SC022349) linked with Greenlaw Parish, Church of Scotland (SC013136) linked with Legerwood Parish, Church of Scotland (SC004582)],

and the charge of The Church of Scotland, Eyemouth Parish Church (SC006499), linked with The Parish Church of Coldingham & St Abbs [Church of Scotland] (SC009185),

shall form a Parish Grouping until such time as Presbytery terminate the grouping, from the first day of January 2025, and that on the following terms and conditions:

1. **Name:** The name of the Parish Grouping shall be **Berwick and Berwickshire Churches Area Grouping**.
2. **Territorial Responsibility:** The bounds to be served by the Parish Grouping shall comprise the existing bounds of the respective charges of Berwick and District, Coldstream and District, Duns and District, Earlston and District, and Eyemouth and District or as the Presbytery may determine.
3. **Property and Funds:** The property and funds belonging to or held on behalf of each congregation within each charge shall remain the property and funds of each congregation as at present.
4. **Kirk Sessions:** The Moderator of each Kirk Session will be the minister inducted to the relevant charge. Each Kirk Session will have an additional allocated elder-Moderator (see sections 3 and 9 below) to assist with the workload of the minister of their charge.

The constituent Kirk Sessions of Berwick and District, Coldstream and District, Duns and District, Earlston and District and Eyemouth and District will each continue to meet separately until such time as each shall have resolved that in future, meetings shall be joint and shall have agreed the frequency, purpose, structure and formalities of joint meetings. It shall be open to the constituent Kirk Sessions of each congregation to have joint meetings either at the level of Charge or Parish Grouping, as the majority determine subject to the requirements of church law that each Kirk Session remains responsible for its own decision making.

5. **Congregational Management:** The temporal affairs of each constituent congregation within the charges shall be administered as at present. The office-bearers of the congregations shall meet together annually, with representatives from Presbytery, to decide on their portion of related expenses, listed expenses and maintenance of the manse(s) and the salaries and related expenses of other team members not covered by national payment levels or awards.

6. Ministry Team: The Ministry team will consist of the inducted minister of Berwick and District, the inducted Minister of Coldstream and District, the inducted Minister of Duns and District, the inducted Minister of Earlston and District and the inducted Minister of Eyemouth and District, alongside any additional appointments approved by Presbytery.

7. Ministry Team Support: The stipend of the minister(s) shall be payable in terms of the National Stipend Scheme. The Salary of other recognised national ministry team members shall be paid at the respective level set by the national church. Any team member not in a recognised national ministry shall be paid no less than the level set in the national living wage.

8. Manses: The manse of Berwick and District, occupied by its incumbent Minister, will be within the Parish of Berwick St Andrew's Wallace Green and Lowick. The manse of Coldstream and District, occupied by the incumbent Minister, will be within the Parish of Coldstream. The manse of Duns and District, occupied by the incumbent Minister, will be within the Parish of Duns and District. The manse of Earlston and District, occupied by the incumbent Minister, will be within the Parish of Earlston. The manse of Eyemouth and District, occupied by the incumbent Minister, will be within the Parish of Eyemouth.

All other manses shall be 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 5 2024, 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. Areas of Co-operation:

The legacy Duns Presbytery Mission Plan has at its heart the following:

The current Plan is based on five full time ministers of word and sacrament, working together as a team across the whole area of the Parish Grouping, equipping congregations to be the Church. Any time this Basis of Parish Grouping refers to 'team' it will be referring to the 5 FTMWS working together.

Each congregation will have appointed an Elder-Moderator, appropriately trained and in many cases drawn from the eldership, and in every case being someone who has demonstrated that they can provide inspirational leadership grounded on good practical theology and guided by the Holy Spirit. This allows Kirk Sessions in charges with several linkages to be moderated by someone other than the inducted minister to facilitate the model of ministerial work outlined below.

The five full time ministers of word and sacrament will work together across every congregation. Each team member will take the lead in one aspect of congregational life – responsible for ensuring, through training, assessment, encouragement and on-going guidance, that each congregation is able to deliver these aspects of congregational life for themselves and that, as a result, instead of having five ministers in the presbytery we shall have a whole team of inspirational leaders growing in faith and working out that faith, in action, throughout the area. The five aspects, one of which will be adopted by each of the five ministers in the team, are worship, pastoral care, mission, Christian education and youth.

Each minister will work one day a week in one of the larger congregations, namely Berwick, Coldstream, Duns, Earlston and Eyemouth, and four days a week for the Berwick and Berwickshire

Area Grouping, as members of the team of full-time appointments within the parish grouping, each with their own particular area of expertise. The online platform ABVCOS (Across Berwick & Berwickshire, for all, Church of Scotland – where it all adds up) should become the focal point for the Team to access and coordinate information, resources, diaries and contacts. It is hoped to have a resource centre for the team.

9.1 TEAM ROLES

The Ministry Team will comprise five Full Time Ministers of Word and Sacrament (FTMWS) and any additional ministry posts as may be employed by the Parish Grouping. Each of the 5 FTMWS ministers shall have a particular specialism as per this extract from the approved Presbytery Mission Plan.

9.1.1 The minister with the worshipping brief will seek to reshape how and where we worship, with approaches that impact and engage on young and old alike. This minister will be responsible for ensuring that each congregation is able to provide good local worship within their congregation on a week-to-week basis. Sometimes this may be by using scripts provided, sometimes as a result of group training, sometimes it may include a visit from the worship team of a neighbouring congregation, a visiting minister or one of the ministerial team. As we have an online facility through ABVCOS, the housebound, ill or those unable to attend are able to share in worship. This programme will revitalise our worship, the experience and opportunity to be actively involved will deepen involvement of existing members and be attractive to new members.

9.1.2 The minister with the pastoral care brief will train congregations to be able to care for each other and those around them. It will encourage congregations to seek out those who need a listening ear or practical support. The third of the five marks of mission is to be part of a serving community and the role of this team member will be to enable every congregation to respond to human need through loving service. Initially there will be a team of retired ministers to assist in such matters as funerals, but part of the remit of this team member will be to train appropriate congregational members to take on these tasks in future.

9.1.3 The minister with the mission brief will seek to support every congregation to be a witnessing community with mission at its heart. The remit will seek to equip congregational members to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom with enthusiasm in their daily lives which is where mission is at its most effective, and through special activities designed to enable congregations both to listen to and to share with their communities. The Mission brief will include assisting congregations to seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind, and pursue peace and reconciliation.

9.1.4 The minister with the Christian education brief will seek to support congregations to learn more about their faith as well as to work with new believers, providing appropriate learning and nurturing support. The remit will include empowering congregational members to work in schools and with youth organisations throughout the area, as well as providing appropriate learning opportunities for all congregational members, and those who have an interest in discovering more about the faith. The remit will include supporting congregations as they strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of earth.

9.1.5 Subsequent to the original Duns plan initial approval the congregation of Earlston have joined the Parish Grouping. Earlston have requested the additional post now allocated to the Parish Grouping should have a specialism in youth. This brief will seek to support every congregation in engaging with young people, helping existing congregations see things from a young person's

perspective, create and support young people in service and create networks for young people across the whole parish grouping.

All of the roles together constitute the team and each person is a team member. It shall be the duty of all team members to work collaboratively to further the mission of the Church, sharing or covering for each other's duties where necessary and permissible in terms of Church law. It will be open to Presbytery to investigate and take appropriate action where a team member is found not to be meaningfully engaging with the team element of their post.

Each Team member will be expected to spend 1 day a week (20% time commitment) in the congregation designated at the time of their call. The other 80% will be spent fulfilling their remit amongst all congregations in the parish grouping.

Each Charge within the grouping shall have a particular specialism associated with it. On occasion of a vacancy it will be the responsibility of that charge to seek a minister with both an expertise and passion in the allocated specialism. Presbytery shall only sustain a call where recruitment to the allocated specialism is evident.

The Christian Education specialism shall be based out of the charge of Berwick and District. The Mission specialism shall be based out of the charge of Duns and District. The Pastoral Care specialism shall be based out of the charge of Earlston and District. The Worship specialism shall be based out of the charge of Coldstream and District. The Youth specialism shall be based out of the charge of Eyemouth and District.

9.2 TEAM MEMBERS

All new appointments will be on a basis of reviewable charge of 5 years duration.

Each charge not appointing a minister shall have the right to appoint 1 non-voting member from each congregation to the nominating committee of the charge that is appointing a minister.

At the time of implementing this Parish Grouping, if an already inducted minister chooses not to take up one of the team roles in the Parish Grouping, Presbytery shall enter into conversation with the remaining congregations assigned to the charge where the above minister is inducted to determine their next steps.

Options include but are not limited to, proceeding to call on the basis of their assigned specialism provided all requirements for sustaining a FTMWS post are fulfilled, or some other form of adjustment as may be agreed between the congregations, Presbytery and national church bodies.

The charge of the sitting minister will be expected to enter with them into a deferred linkage or union to be enacted on the demission of the sitting minister.

In situations where a sitting minister faces a congregational vote to take them on and the vote goes against or that minister exerts their rights of tenure to remain outside the parish grouping, their congregation shall enter either a deferred union or deferred linkage with the remaining members of the charge who shall enter into conversations with Presbytery and national bodies to determine their next steps

All members of the Team, must be approved by Presbytery prior to appointment.

Team Members will be expected to work 1 day per week in the parish where their manse is situated. Recognising that will look different in each charge, it will be the responsibility of the Minister of that charge in conjunction with the Kirk Session in the parish where the 20% shall be exercised to annually submit for Presbytery approval, by 31st May of each year, how they agree the 20% working. In situations where no agreement can be found, Presbytery shall function as arbiters until such time as a solution is achieved.

Four days per week Team members shall pursue their specialism across the Parish Group. Again what this looks like shall be different depending on the needs of the specialism. It will be the responsibility of the Minister in conjunction with Kirk Sessions across the Parish Grouping to annually submit for Presbytery approval, by 31st May of each year, how they agree the 80% working. In situations where no agreement can be found, Presbytery shall function as arbiters until such time as a solution is achieved.

All members of the Team are allowed to function as FTMWS across all charges of the Parish Grouping in relation to the exercise of their specialism, each minister shall give consent via signed letter either at the time of appointment or when entering the Parish Grouping in terms of section 4 of the Parish Ministry Act 2018 to the other team members entering the bounds of their charge for the purposes of fulfilling the terms of the Basis of Parish Grouping.

9.3 MODERATOR OF KIRK SESSIONS

The approved Presbytery Mission Plan states:

Each congregation will be led locally by a Moderator, appropriately trained and in many cases drawn from the eldership, and in every case being someone who has demonstrated that they can provide inspirational leadership grounded on good practical theology and guided by the Holy Spirit.

It is not the intention of the Berwick and Berwickshire Churches Area Grouping that the inducted minister should moderate every Kirk Session meeting in their charge. Each Kirk Session will be required to put forward at least one Elder who shall be trained prior to undertaking the role and shall serve for a period of one year, renewable with the permission of Presbytery. Ideally a number of individuals from the Kirk Session will be trained for this role, thus freeing the inducted minister to concentrate on their defined role.

9.4 MINISTRY TEAM MEETINGS AND CO-ORDINATION

The members of the ministry team (including any additional ministry posts) shall meet regularly [and at least monthly] in order to co-ordinate and carry out the work of the team as effectively as possible and discuss matters of common interest. Meetings may take place in person or via videoconference or a hybrid of the two and shall be chaired by an agreed team member. If no agreement is reached on who the chair will be, it shall rotate alphabetically on surname. The Chair will be responsible for circulating an agenda, where possible, at least three days prior to each meeting. Any team member may request that an item is added to the agenda. Matters requiring a decision by the team shall be decided by a simple majority. If a member is unhappy with a decision, he or she may invoke the dispute resolution procedure set out below.

10 DISPUTE RESOLUTION

- 10.1 If a dispute arises out of or in connection with this Parish Grouping which cannot be resolved within the team, then (subject to section 5.7 below) the procedure set out in this clause shall be followed.
- 10.2 Any member of the team shall be entitled to give to all or some other members of the team ("the relevant team members") written notice of the dispute, setting out its nature and full particulars, together with any relevant supporting documents. The relevant team members shall attempt in good faith to resolve the dispute at this stage.
- 10.3 If the relevant team members are unable to resolve the dispute within 30 days of such written notice having been given, the dispute shall be referred to the Presbytery Clerk, who shall attempt in good faith to resolve it.
- 10.4 If the Presbytery Clerk is for any reason unable to resolve the dispute within 30 days of it being referred to him or her, the relevant team members agree to enter into mediation in good faith to settle the dispute. The mediator will be nominated by the Presbytery Clerk having consulted with the Principal Clerk. To initiate the mediation, one of the relevant team members must give written notice to the other relevant team members, referring the dispute to mediation.
- 10.5 If there is any point in relation to the logistical arrangements for the mediation on which the relevant team members cannot agree, the Presbytery Clerk will be entitled to decide that point, having first consulted with the relevant team members.
- 10.6 If the dispute is not resolved within 30 days of commencement of the mediation, the matter shall be referred by the Presbytery Clerk to the Presbytery's Complaints Committee, or other equivalent Presbytery Committee, subject to any issues of discipline which arise and any other matters which may require to be resolved in terms of the employment contract(s) of the relevant team members. Except in relation to matters which properly fall to be dealt with in terms of the employment contract(s) of one or more relevant team members, there shall be no appeal against the decision of the Committee.
- 10.7 Where the relevant team members include one or more employees, this dispute resolution procedure is without prejudice to the grievance and discipline procedures set out in their contract(s) of employment. For the avoidance of doubt, any team member who is serving under a contract of employment shall be entitled to raise with their employer any matter which they wish to have treated as a grievance, and the employer shall be entitled to raise with the employee any matter which it considers to be disciplinary in nature.

11. FURTHER PROVISIONS

The Parish Grouping will be able to adjust arrangements relating to the Parish Grouping, with the agreement of the Kirk Sessions and Presbytery. While the articles and terms above shall form the Basis of Parish Grouping for the congregations now agreeing, the congregations shall be free, like any other congregation, to adjust arrangements under the authority of the Presbytery as need may arise.

12. PRESBYTERY'S POWER TO ADJUST PARISH GROUPING

The Presbytery shall be free to adjust arrangements relating to the Parish Grouping, subject to matters of tenure, as Presbytery may determine from time to time. Any material change to this Basis shall require to be agreed by all members of the ministry team.