# Presbyterian Church in Ireland

## Consultation Document D

# Presbytery Consultations

INSERT NAME OF CONGREGATION AND YEAR

Ministers and

Associate Ministers

**Consultation Questions and Guidance Notes**

Version: October 2017

# Overview of Consultations

## The purpose of Consultations

A Consultation is a process by which Presbytery enquires into the life of a congregation in order to discover:

• **encouragements** to celebrate, for the edification of the congregation and to inspire the rest of Presbytery;

• **challenges** faced by the congregation, so that Kirk Session can be directed and equipped to deal with the most pressing issues;

• any **concerns** that Kirk Session may be struggling to deal with, requiring the intervention of Presbytery.

## The Consultation process

The process consists of a number of stages:

1. Presbytery should notify Kirk Session twelve weeks before a Consultation is due to take place. In preparation for the Consultation, Presbytery appoints a Consultation Team and the Kirk Session appoints a group of Congregational Representatives.

2. When the Consultation commences questionnaires are sent to the Kirk Session, Minister and Associate Minister (if applicable) and written replies returned to the Consultation Team within six weeks.

3. The Consultation Team meets with Congregational Representatives and, separately, with the Minister and Associate Minister (if applicable) for more focused discussions. This should take place within one month of the questionnaires being returned.

4. Based on this, the Consultation Team produces a Consultation Report for Presbytery summarising aspects of congregational life which can be celebrated, challenges faced by the congregation and, if necessary, any concerns for Presbytery to deal with. The report will recommend some issues for the Kirk Session to work on over the course of the next year.

5. Kirk Session then has one year in which to implement the recommendations of the Consultation Report. After this year, the Consultation Team will present a Follow-up Report to Presbytery and be discharged.

# Guidance Notes

## Being informed of a Consultation

Presbytery will inform the Kirk Session that a Consultation is to take place at least twelve weeks in advance.

## Written questionnaires for Kirk Sessions

The Consultation Team will send two documents to the Kirk Session:

• *Kirk Session Consultation Questions and Guidance Notes*

• *Review of Resources, Records and Policies*

These should be completed and returned within six weeks. This will help the Consultation Team to select two or three areas of congregational life for further discussion, in order to learn more about encouragements in congregational life to be celebrated, challenges that the Kirk Session will have to deal with to help the congregation be more fruitful, and potential concerns that may require intervention by Presbytery.

The Kirk Session should meet to discuss the *Questions for the Kirk Session* in the *Kirk Session Consultation Questions and Guidance Notes* booklet and prepare answers. The Clerk of Session will then be responsible for completing the questionnaire and returning it. It may be appropriate to split the Kirk Session into small groups to consider individual sections of

the questionnaire or there may already be existing committees within Kirk Session that have responsibility for some of these areas.

The *Review of Resources, Records and Policies* largely concerns the work of the Congregational Committee. The Kirk Session is responsible for it being completed correctly and returned, but it may be appropriate to have the bulk of the work carried out by the Congregational Committee or its officers. In addition to filling in answers, the *Review* also asks for copies of several documents and policies to be returned. A checklist is included at the end of the *Review*.

During this time, some or all of the Consultation Team will also visit a service in the congregation.

## Written questionnaires for Ministers

At the end of this document is a questionnaire for the Minister. If there is an Associate Minister then they will also receive a copy. Each Minister should individually complete their own questionnaire and return it to the Consultation Team.

## Discussion with Congregational Representatives

Kirk Session will appoint a group of Congregational Representatives who are broadly representative of the congregation, its organisations, and its ministries. They will meet with the Consultation Team to discuss the answers provided by Kirk Session. The reason for meeting with this group is to get a more detailed picture of the area of particular interest from a wider range

of voices than just the Kirk Session.

This will be a group of eight-twelve people consisting of:

•up to four ruling elders,

•at least two young people (no older than 25),

•at least two women,

•at least two men.

The Minister should not be a part of the Congregational Representatives and will not be present during its discussion with the Consultation Team.

## Discussion with Ministers

Ministers will each have an individual informal discussion with the Consultation Team. The order and timing of the discussions are at the discretion of the Consultation Team. The aim of this discussion is primarily pastoral, with the intention of supporting and encouraging ministers.

## The Consultation Report

Following their discussions, the Consultation Team will prepare a Consultation Report for Presbytery containing encouragements to celebrate, challenges for Kirk Session to deal with, concerns for Presbytery to consider looking at in a separate process and recommended action for Kirk Session to take in the coming year. The recommendations could, for instance, relate to an encouraging aspect of congregational life which has the potential to be developed further, or to a challenge which the Kirk Session need to address.

The Consultation Team or Consultation Convener must meet with the Minister and Clerk of Session to verbally inform them of the content of the Report prior to it being reported to Presbytery, while making it clear that the recommendations will still have to be agreed by Presbytery.

The Consultation Team will not present the Consultation Report to the congregation (or the Follow-up Report), nor is the Kirk Session required to do so. However, if the Kirk Session wish to share any of the contents or a summary, it is free to do so.

## Final outcome

After Presbytery has received the Consultation Report the Kirk Session will then have one year in which to implement any recommendations.

At the end of this year, the Consultation Team will consult with the Kirk Session to hear about progress regarding the recommendations of the Consultation Report and present a Follow-up Report to Presbytery.

If Presbytery is satisfied with progress, this will conclude the Consultation process.

If the process has uncovered concerns about the congregation which have not been dealt with satisfactorily in the year since the Consultation Report, or fresh problems have arisen during this time, further action may be taken in a separate process. This may make use of information from the Consultation.

**Example timelines**

**These are examples to help visualise the timing of the process, but are not intended to restrict when a Consultation should start or finish.**

**Starting in September**

May Presbytery meeting: Congregation chosen and Kirk Session informed of timeline.

September Presbytery meeting: Consultation Team established and Consultation officially commences.

October: Questionnaires returned.

Consultation Team discusses questionnaires and chooses areas to focus on for discussion.

November: Consultation Team meets with the Congregational Representatives, Minister and Associate Minister (if applicable).

Consultation Team draws up its conclusions and the Convener writes the Consultation Report, then shows it to the Minister and Clerk of Presbytery.

December Presbytery meeting: Consultation Report presented to Presbytery.

The Kirk Session then has one year to implement the recommendations of the Consultation

Report. The results of this would be reported at the February Presbytery meeting.

**Starting in February**

November Presbytery meeting: Congregation chosen and Kirk Session informed of timeline.

February Presbytery meeting: Consultation Team established and Consultation officially commences.

March: Questionnaires returned.

Consultation Team discusses questionnaires and chooses areas to focus on for discussion.

April: Consultation Team meets with the Congregational Representatives, Minister and Associate Minister (if applicable).

Consultation Team draws up its conclusions and the Convener writes the Consultation Report, then shows it to the Minister and Clerk of Presbytery.

May Presbytery meeting: Consultation Report presented to Presbytery.

The Kirk Session then has one year to implement the recommendations of the Consultation

Report. The results of this would be reported at the September Presbytery meeting.

# Questions for the Minister

**These questions should be answered by the Minister alone and returned to the**

**Consultation Convener within six weeks.**

**Name**:

**Congregation**:

**Position** (delete one): Minister Associate Minister

1. What have been your priorities and emphases regarding leading the church over the past few years?
2. What has been the emphasis of your preaching/teaching and conduct of worship over the past year?
3. Do you feel part of Kirk Session and does Kirk Session work well as a team?
4. How do you divide your time between teaching, visitation, meetings, responsibilities outside the congregation and family life?
5. What sort of pastoral care do you and your family receive:

a. Within the congregation?

b. From the Presbytery?

1. How do you ensure your own walk with God is good?
2. How do you look after your physical and emotional health?
3. In order to further develop your ministerial skills and be spiritually refreshed, it is helpful to undertake in-service training and make use of sabbatical time.

a. Please list in-service training then you have undertaken in the last five years, including the dates.

b. Please provide the dates of your last sabbatical and details of what it involved.

1. What has been your biggest encouragement recently?
2. What is your biggest concern at the moment?
3. Which areas of church life would you especially like to see develop or change over the next few years?

Any other comments for the Consultation Team’s consideration: