Presbyterian Church in Ireland

## Consultation Document B

Presbytery Consultations

INSERT NAME OF CONGREGATION AND YEAR

**Kirk Session**

# 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

The Consultation Convener 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.

The answers 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 this 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*.

The Minister and Associate Minister (if applicable) will also receive questions to be completed separately and returned to the Consultation Team.

During this time it is strongly recommended that some or all of the Consultation Team also visit a service in the congregation.

## Discussion with Congregational Representatives

Kirk Session will appoint a group of Congregational Representatives which is broadly representative of the congregation, its organisations and its ministries. It 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),

**•** a balance of genders.

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

One of the ruling elders should be appointed as Chairperson for the Congregational Representatives and be responsible for coordinating with the Consultation Convener to arrange meetings and exchange information. The Clerk of Session should send the Chairperson’s contact details to the Consultation Convener.

Prior to the meeting between the Consultation Team and the Congregational Representatives, in order to help with preparation, the Consultation Convener must send the Chairperson:

**•** a copy of the Kirk Session’s answers,

**•** a list of the two or three area of congregational life to be discussed,

**•** any specific questions that the Team intend to ask and have already prepared.

### 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 its 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 needs 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, tit is free to do so.

## Final outcome

After Presbytery has approved the Consultation Report, the Clerk of Presbytery will send a copy to the Clerk of Session and 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 Presbytery has concerns about the congregation, further action may be taken in a separate process, making 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 Kirk Session

**These questions should be discussed by the Kirk Session and the Clerk of Session should then complete the questionnaire and return it to the Consultation Convener within six weeks.**

Kirk Session should also ensure that the *Review of Resources, Records and Policies* is filled in with the assistance of the Congregational Committee and returned within six weeks.

### A. Outreach

1. Give a brief description of the community which you are seeking to reach and areas of encouragement and challenge.

2. What is Kirk Session’s vision for outreach to the local community?

3. How is that vision demonstrated by Kirk Session and the congregation?

4. Please detail recent evangelistic initiatives undertaken. What has gone well and what has not?

### B. Discipleship

1. Please give details of the Congregation’s strategy for making disciples among people of all ages.

2. What have been the most helpful programmes/resources used recently to encourage people to grow in their faith?

3. How are people enabled to identify and exercise their gifts?

## C. Leadership

1. What strategies are being used to develop leadership skills in the congregation?

2. Is there a good supply of leaders coming through for the various organisations and ministries or are there areas where this is a struggle?

3. What has Session done to help improve its own leadership skills recently?

### D. Worship

1. Realising that the conduct of services is the Minister’s responsibility, do you believe that services are encouraging, vibrant and helpful to the congregation and how is this demonstrated?

2. Who else beside the Minister would be regularly involved in helping lead services of worship?

3. What opportunities are there for corporate prayer in the life of the church and how well are those supported?

4. How do you make visitors and potential new members feel more welcome?

### E. Pastoral Care

1. Has Session considered the Three Models of Pastoral Care booklet and discerned the best way forward?

2. What are the arrangements for delivery of pastoral care in the congregation?

3. Are individual ruling elders comfortable with the pastoral care element of their role and how does this work in practice?

4. How does the Kirk Session care for the minister and his/her family?

F. Mission

1. How important is the congregation’s involvement in global mission and how is this demonstrated?

2. How is interest in mission in the whole of Ireland demonstrated?

### G. The Sacraments

1. How are individuals admitted to the Lord’s Table and how are new members followed up?

2. When was the Communion Roll last revised?

3. How does the Session deal with requests for baptism?

4. How does the Session seek to exercise loving discipline on an ongoing basis?

## H. Relationships

1. How would you rank relationships within Kirk Session:

Excellent Satisfactory Poor

2. How would you rank relationships between the Kirk Session and the Minister:

Excellent Satisfactory Poor

3. Is the congregation united in purpose and vision and how is this demonstrated?

## I. Staffing

1. Do you have any paid staff in addition to the Minister? If yes, please list them.

2. Have you considered whether you need additional staff and in which areas?

Any other comments for the Consultation Team’s consideration: