



DUNFERMLINE TOWNHILL & KINGSEAT PARISH CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

Scottish Charity Reg. No. SC008085
(www.townhillandkingseatchurchofscotland.org)
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September 2023

Dear fellow worshippers,

As we approach the meeting to vote on the Basis of Union with St Andrew's Erskine Church, the Kirk Session thought it appropriate to let you know the reasons behind the proposal. We can only apologise for not communicating sooner.

As you may remember we had been instructed by Fife Presbytery to work toward a Union with St Andrew's Erskine and in that Union we had to close at least one of our buildings. We had met with representatives of Presbytery to make the case for keeping both our village churches open, but ultimately without success.

We next met in January 2023 to discuss the way ahead and several pieces of information, listed below, led to our final decision.

- **The General Trustees Property Report:** This indicated the condition of our properties and the work to be done urgently and within the next 12 months. It was clear that extensive work was required. In Townhill this included removal of the water from the basement to prevent accelerated deterioration and timber decay; repair of boundary walls; balcony stairs decaying; replacing internal door glazing; inspection and repair of the church windows; recommendations for full inspections by structural engineers, timber specialists and many more. In Kingseat the need for specialist drainage and timber inspections and again much more. The situation is not as a result of us not taking care of our properties but a reflection of their age and design. It was clear to us that the cost of all this work and the likely continued need to do more work would remain a burden on the congregation.
- **Financial Report:** We looked back over the last 6 years at our income and expenditure. Income had fallen from over £68,000 to below £60,000 – partly sustained recently by renting out our vacant manse in Kingseat, but offerings over the period had fallen by a third. Expenditure had varied; in Kingseat there was a yearly deficit and in Townhill 3 out of the 6 years showed a deficit. We recognised that our fabric fund would allow us to cover many of the required tasks but that this was not sustainable.
- **Congregational Numbers and Age:** Statistically our numbers have been dropping, recently from 190 in 2019 to 155 in 2022. We are all aware of how Covid and age have affected our attendance. We are all too aware of the lack of young people in our congregation – likewise among our leadership/elders (these demographics are not sustainable – the burden is falling on too few to carry on).

Therefore, after much discussion and with heavy hearts we came to the decision that both church buildings should close, provided we were able to continue our outreach activities and provide mission within both our villages. We were determined that there **must remain** a Christian presence in both villages.

The next challenge is how we can achieve this outcome.

We already support many activities in our churches – the Breakfast Club, the Dorcas Group, the Friendship Group, Messy Church, Chattabox, Hobbies and Crafts, Coffee and Cake. These offer support and fellowship as well as opportunities to spread the 'Message about Jesus.' The opportunity for all these to continue must be supported, but other venues within the villages must be sought.

Groups have been set up in both Kingseat and Townhill to look at how we continue with the above and to explore what else we can do to further mission. This is not to say that what we have already done has failed – remember our task is to pass on the message and leave the rest to God. The good attendance at Chattabox and Messy Church shows that there is a desire within our communities to know more and so our challenge is to see what more we can do.

Already suggestions about advertising, having occasional praise nights, using Community Halls, employing a 'family worker' have been noted. The local groups planning the way ahead will meet after the 8th October – come along, get involved, help us spread the 'Word.'

Interim Moderator: Rev. Arthur Christie, 194 Foulford Road, Cowdenbeath KY4 9AN Tel. 01383 511326
Session Clerks: Forbes M. Stuart, 23 Keirsbeath Court, Kingseat, Dunfermline KY12 0UE Tel. 01383 735092
David W. Henderson, 1 Norway Gardens, Dunfermline, KY11 8JW Tel. 01383 737679
Treasurer: Lesley Henderson, 1 Norway Gardens, Dunfermline, KY11 8JW Tel. 01383 737679