



Letter from the Manse

16th Feb 2024

Dear Congregation,

I want to ensure that we are all informed about the process Newton Mearns New Church will engage in over these coming few weeks.

On the 25th February all members of Newton Mearns New Church will be invited to vote on the elders' recommendation to join the Free Church this May/June. (Details of the voting process can be found in the online magazine)

I want to expand on two related issues:

i. Finance:

I distributed information this week by email and this covered some financial aspects relevant to joining the Free Church.

With twelve weeks of our NMNC life, we are now beginning to see the pattern of monthly congregational giving to our church. We are extremely heartened by this and delighted that we will more than meet the minimum requirements for entry into the Free Church. I thank God for your generous giving to His Kingdom work through NMNC.

Calculating what actual remissions we might have to make to the central Free Church is not straightforward because the levies will depend on:

- i. Our income (which we are just getting a feel for)
- ii. How we will steer our giving to “restricted funds” (which reduces the calculation for the missions levy)
- iii. The period of grace which the Free Church may afford us so that we can become an established congregation.

As a reminder, when we were still part of Maxwell, in our last full year of 2022 we remitted to the Church of Scotland a total of £99,000. If our NMNC offerings approximate the level of Maxwell offerings, we would anticipate remitting far less to the central Free Church than we did to the Church of Scotland.

However, the elders have discussed their sense of contentment about contributing financially to the central work of the Free Church. We have a growing enthusiasm for The Free Church aim to plant new churches, revive established ones, train church workers/ministers through the Edinburgh Theological Seminary, all in the pursuit of having “a healthy gospel church for every community in Scotland”.

I think it important that this coming Sunday after worship, we take the opportunity in our meeting to ask whatever questions are necessary to clarify whatever is still unclear.

I will ask the elders who are most familiar with these matters to make themselves available for questions during the meeting (and after as necessary). We may also want to ask Paul Clarke how the Free Church requirements impact his local congregation in St Andrews.

On that related matter: We are looking forward to having the Rev Paul Clark with us this Sunday. Paul is minister of St Andrew’s Free Church. Paul will not be representing the Free Church in a formal way. However, he has kindly agreed to share his experience of entering the Free Church from the Church of England. Paul will also come with considerable knowledge of the Free Church as he currently serves as Convenor to The Board of Ministry.

Paul has agreed to share in a Q&A session after worship. It would be helpful if you could email me your questions in advance so that Paul has time to reflect on answers. However, questions will be permitted during the conversation and we will also create a system for questions to be asked anonymously at the time.

The second issue I want to highlight relates to the Kirk Session.

ii. **Kirk Session:**

As was made clear when we departed from the Church of Scotland, several of the Maxwell elders would become the elders of Newton Mearns New Church. We listed these elders in our magazine on the 24th November 2023: Alastair McLellan (Session Clerk) Charles Amery Behr, Jack Geddes, Graeme Lipsett, Sandy MacDougall, John McNicol, Murray McNicol, David Merriman and myself as moderator/minister.

If the vote on 25th February concludes that we should indeed enter The Free Church of Scotland, we shall immediately present to the congregation a list of candidates to become our first elders in The Free Church. The congregation will be asked to elect these first elders.

In addition to this election of “ruling elders”, it will be necessary that my name is also placed before you so that you can approve me as your first minister for the Free Church. The Free Church have indicated that should I be acceptable to you, I will be acceptable to them also!

We will say more about this process after the vote on 25th is known.

With warmest regards,
Scott