

The office of Session Clerk requires someone who has a broad range of skills: people and pastoral skills; administrative skills; organisational skills; strategic planning skills. In the past legal skills have also been required. While still important, today the Church of Scotland is able to provide a Kirk Session with excellent legal advice when necessary. In addition, the office holder has to have the confidence of the Kirk Session as a whole, and also has to have the confidence of the minister. Given the nature of the role, the broad range of skills required, and the changing nature of the church and of society it may be difficult to find one person who has all the skills required. Consequently, this paper proposes establishing a Session Clerk Team of two or three people to act as Session Clerk.

SESSION CLERK TEAM

It is increasingly common within congregations not to appoint one person to the role of Session Clerk, but to create a team. The team usually consists of two people, but it is possible to have more. I see many advantages in this approach, in particular:

- The office of clerk can be opened up to people who would otherwise be too busy to take on the role as a whole.
- A Session Clerk Team can include a broader range of skills than might be found in one person alone.
- A Session Clerk Team can be more supportive to the Session and the clerks themselves than one person acting alone can be.
- A Session Clerk Team can cover for absences and holidays.

There are a number of ways of breaking down the duties of Session Clerk so that individual members of the team would have particular responsibilities. For example, Murrayfield Parish Church have a 'Sunday Session Clerk' and an 'Admin Session Clerk'. Carrick Knowe Parish Church has two people with complimentary skills who cover specific aspects of the duties associated with the role.

Proposal: to appoint a Session Clerk Team on the retirement of the current Session Clerk **AGREED**

METHOD OF APPOINTMENT

As I say above, it is important that the Session Clerk has the confidence of the Kirk Session and of the minister. Appointing a team should help with this. I have in mind candidates who I think I could work with, and who would make excellent appointments. However, it is important also that the Kirk Session is able to have a say in whomever is appointed. To that end it would be helpful if elders could nominate, in writing, to me people who you consider to be good appointments, the end of July. Once all the nominations have been made, I will hold conversations with nominees with a view to bringing two (or possibly more) names to the Kirk Session as sole nominees for appointment as a Session Clerk Team. The Kirk Session would then vote to accept or reject each of these sole nominees.

Proposal: elders & members to nominate candidates. **AGREED**

TENURE

In the past Session Clerks have remained in post for many years. However, in the 21st century it is more common for office holders to be appointed for a specific length of time. For example, the Clerk to the Deacons' Court – Anne Bryce – was appointed on a three-year tenure. For Session Clerk, I would imagine a 5 to 7-year tenure would be appropriate with the possibility of re-election once. Within the Session Clerk Team, the tenure could be staggered to ensure continuity during handover periods.

Proposal: in discussion with candidates to make appointments on a time-limited basis. **AGREED**

TIMELINE

May 2021 Kirk Session meeting – agree process to appoint a new Session Clerk/Team.

May to July 2021 – elders and members nominate candidates to the moderator (**Nominations close 30th July 2021**)

September 2021 Kirk Session meeting – moderator proposes nominees for new Session Clerk/Team

November 2021 Kirk Session meeting – new Session Clerk/Team shadows Andrew Gibb

February 2022 Kirk Session meeting – new Session Clerk/Team assume office

AGREED

Rev. James Aitken
Moderator

May 2021