



Aberdeen NORTH

Parish Church

PARISH PROFILE

August 2022

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Introduction

Aberdeen North Parish Church came in to being in February 2021, formed from the union of Mastrick, Northfield and Summerhill Parish Churches. Initially Rev Susan Sutherland and Rev Michael Shewan, ministers of the former charges of Mastrick and Summerhill, led the congregation. This vacancy has arisen following the retirement of both in March 2022.

The latest draft Presbytery Plan 2021 allocates one Minister of Word and Sacrament, and one MDS post to Aberdeen North.

The current Ministry Team includes a part-time Children and Families Development Worker, Claire van Geete.

An organist is employed, with cover for absence provided by a member of the congregation.

Cleaning is done in the Sanctuary and a commercial company is contracted for the halls.

This is a large urban parish towards the north-west of Aberdeen, in a community with a population of over 22,000.

The vacancy is on the basis of Reviewable Tenure. After prayerful consideration, the Kirk Session has decided not to depart from the historic and current doctrine and practice of the Church of Scotland with regard to human sexuality.



Aberdeen

As Scotland's third largest city, much of which is built from local granite, Aberdeen has a rich cultural history, boasting a recently refurbished art gallery and several museums.

Traditionally a fishing port, the discovery of oil in the 1970s transformed the city into the oil and gas capital of Europe.

Aberdeen International Airport, as a result of offshore exploration and production, is the largest heliport in the world, and offers regular domestic flights linking Aberdeen to other major UK cities, together with various international destinations.

In addition to the airport, Aberdeen also has good rail links to north and south. Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) wraps around the city, and is accessed from various points (including close to the manse) and provides easy travel to the north, south and west.

The move away from fossil fuels is calling for another transformation, with renewable energy high on the agenda. In education, the city boasts two world-renowned universities, together with several colleges and training centres in vocational skills.

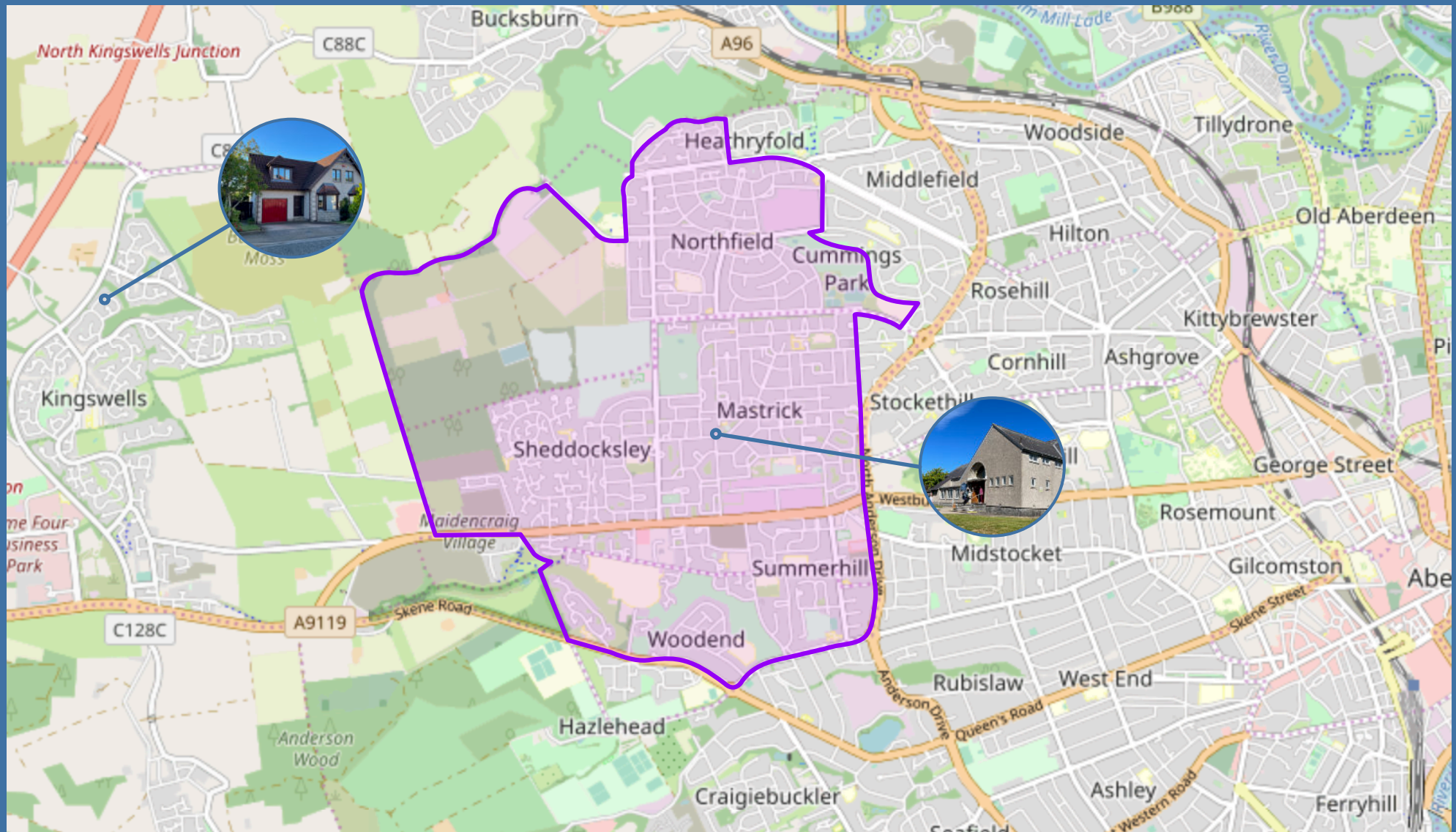
The local football club, Aberdeen FC, plays in the Scottish Premiership and has a committed following within the city and beyond.

Opened in 2019, The Event Complex Aberdeen (TECA) is the largest indoor event arena in Scotland, boasting, world-class conference and exhibition facilities and two on-site hotels.

Although urban, Aberdeen has many parks and nature reserves, and there is easy access to rural areas of Donside and Royal Deeside, which provide opportunities for various outdoor activities, including walking and climbing for all abilities.



Our Parish



Where We Came From

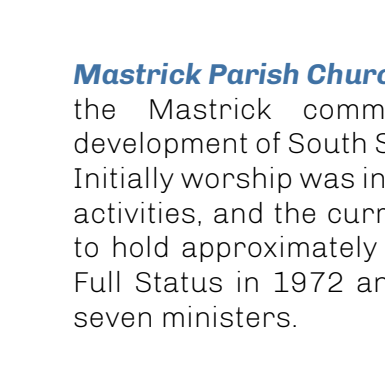
The union of Mastrick, Northfield and Summerhill Parish Churches, took effect while Covid restrictions were in place, and each individual congregation held its final service on Easter Sunday 2021.

The three former charges had much in common, as all were originally established as Extension Charges to serve rapidly growing post-war housing areas with large and increasing populations.

Some members of Aberdeen North have been members of, or "grew up in" one or more of these three since the beginning, and are proud of their long association with their local church.



Northfield Parish Church started life in September 1951 with about 20 people, serving Northfield, Cummings Park and part of Heathryfold; it grew quickly and in 1965 the new Sanctuary opened with a capacity of 500. Over the 70 years until the union in 2021, seven Ministers were welcomed. Full Status was achieved in 1961.



Mastrick Parish Church came in to being in 1954 to serve the Mastrick community, with the new housing development of South Sheddocksley added in the 1970's. Initially worship was in the Hut, as were all other church activities, and the current Sanctuary was built in 1955 to hold approximately 500. The congregation achieved Full Status in 1972 and was served in its 67 years by seven ministers.



Summerhill Parish Church was formed in October 1959 to serve the in the Summerhill area, and the congregation moved from its original home in the Barn to a new-build church in 1964 with a capacity of 400. The Summerhill congregation achieved Full Status in 1988, and over its 63 years, was served by five ministers.



Where We Are ...

18 months on from Union

After a challenging start during Covid restrictions, we are beginning to get to know each other as a congregation, to build relationships, and come together as Aberdeen North. Kirk Session too is beginning to move forward, dealing with the practical aspects of church life, exploring priorities, and finding new ways of working together as Aberdeen North.

From September 2022, a weekly drop-in session will offer people in the community an opportunity to come along for a cuppa and a chat, as a means of counteracting isolation particularly amongst older people and those who live alone and is something which is often requested.

A successful Strawberry Fair took place in late July, bringing people in from across the community, and raising funds; many attending remarked how good it is now to be able to get out locally and socialise with others, which suggests that opportunities like the drop-in sessions or other social gatherings would be welcomed.

Other events have been suggested which will welcome people into the church, whether for fundraising or simply to meet up with others and make new friends and will be planned when capacity allows. Kirk Session is mindful of the need to re-establish some of the social opportunities previously provided in all three former churches pre-Covid, and also to begin to offer other opportunities for local people to connect in a supportive and welcoming environment.



Children & Families Development Worker

Our Children and Families Development Worker took up post in October 2021, bringing enthusiasm and creativity to the role. Claire leads Messy Church weekly which is regularly attended by several families, and Play Sessions for children under 5 with their parents/carers also weekly in school-term time. She has already made valuable connections with ACVO (Aberdeen Council for Voluntary Organisations). Development and growth

of these is in consultation with Kirk Session. In collaboration with other community and statutory agencies, she works with teenagers locally and is very involved in the re-established ecumenical chaplaincy to local schools. Claire has written an interesting article about her ministry in the August 2022 edition of Life & Work



Where We'd Like To Be!

The Kirk Session and congregation now looks forward to

- developing a shared Mission for the church, focussing on sharing God's love in action
- forging an identity for the united congregation, including a new name decided on by the congregation
- exploring what it really means to be "church" in the 21st century serving this north-west corner of Aberdeen
- our new build church on the site of the current Sanctuary and halls, maximising the potential of the whole site and able to welcome everyone

In Aberdeen North we believe that we have the potential to do much with as well as for a range of groups in the community, and it is important that we maintain and develop good relationships with other organisations, both statutory and voluntary, particularly in these times of economic uncertainty, so that we really can serve the whole area.

Our Congregation & Kirk Session

Aberdeen North at the end of December 2021

Roll **337**

Electoral Roll **314 (July 2022)**

The average weekly attendance at worship is around 55, with several members still too anxious to return to church post-Covid. Members of the congregation are mainly retired, with the large majority aged 65+.

The congregation operates under the Unitary Constitution, with a Kirk Session currently of 29, all ordained in the three former congregations; a number of elders are no longer able to be active, and the age profile reflects that of the congregation.

Initially various teams were set up to report to Kirk Session, though it has been difficult to sustain these because of lack of volunteers and capacity; in practice, the tasks and responsibilities of teams are carried out by individuals.

The Guild operates under the oversight of Kirk Session, as do both Messy Church and the Play Sessions which are led by the Children and Families Worker with volunteers from the congregation & externally.

The draft Presbytery Mission Plan has identified Aberdeen North Church as part of a parish grouping with High Hilton Church; each Parish Church will have its staffing allocation, and in addition a part-time MDS post will be allocated to the grouping to be deployed as agreed.



Our Community

The area covered by Aberdeen North Parish is urban, comprising housing estates built mainly in the 1950s, with further expansion in the 1960s and 1970s, and with some more recent developments. Housing was largely built by the local authority, and some by housing associations, with a small number of privately built houses; approximately half of the housing is rented (mainly in the social rented sector with some privately rented) and half owner occupied.

A development of social housing (1, 2 and 3 bedroom homes), currently under construction on the Lang Stracht, will bring an additional 360 homes to the parish.

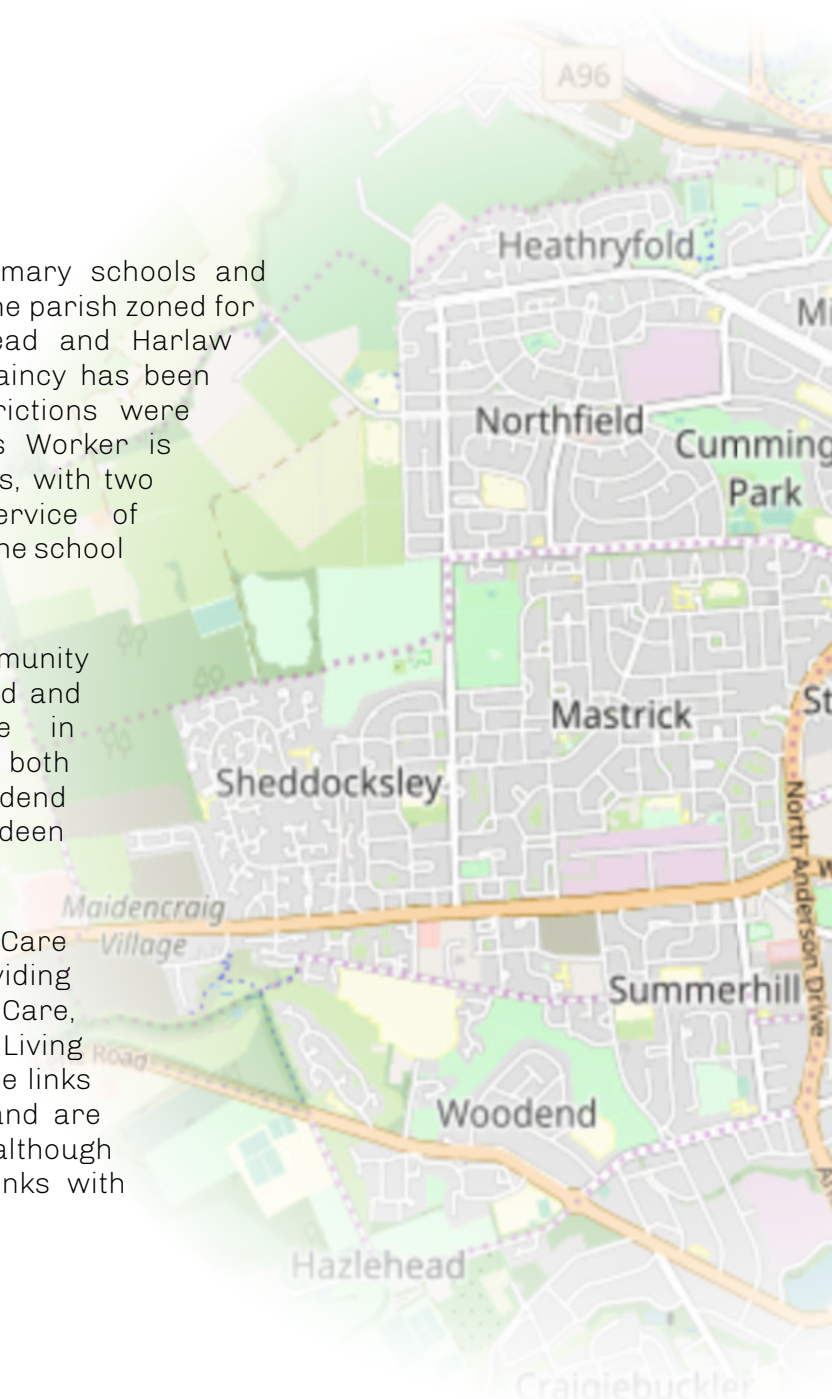
The parish includes a few areas of disadvantage, some of which are within the 10% most deprived in Scotland, and some within the 20% most deprived (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020).

There are small shopping centres with convenience stores dotted around the parish, and a larger supermarket as well as a budget supermarket, a number of pubs with restaurants and two hotels, Indoor Bowling and Curl Aberdeen. Industrial estates are sited in Northfield and Mastrick, mainly comprising small units, with car dealerships on the Mastrick estate, and NHS Grampian's administrative HQ is located in Summerhill.

The area is served by nine primary schools and Northfield Academy, with part of the parish zoned for secondary education in Hazlehead and Harlaw Academies. An ecumenical chaplaincy has been re-established after Covid restrictions were lifted; the Children and Families Worker is heavily involved with local schools, with two coming to church for a service of thanksgiving in June at the end of the school year.

Community services include Community Centres and libraries in Northfield and Mastrick, a medical practice in Northfield and dental centres in both Mastrick and Northfield. Woodend Hospital is in the parish, with Aberdeen Royal Infirmary close by.

Across the parish there are 12 Care settings of varying sizes, providing Nursing / Care home, Respite Care, Sheltered Housing and Supported Living facilities, some of which have close links with our legacy congregations, and are home to some of our members, although there are currently no formal links with these facilities.



Our Worship Life

Worship is currently led by our Locum or Interim Moderator, with one Sunday service taking place at 10.30am. Our aim is to welcome everyone to worship so that they feel comfortable. Attendance at Sunday worship is around 55.

Communion for 2022 will be celebrated on the first Sundays of March, June, September and December, and arrangements for the future will be discussed with our new Minister. Anyone of any age can participate in Communion.

Hymns are currently largely drawn from CH4, although the congregation is open to alternative sources which have previously been used. Words are projected on screen, and available on large print sheets for those who require them. Our organist accompanies hymns, with a member of Aberdeen North available to cover absence; occasionally, hymns on CD may be used.

All three former churches had special services throughout the year, marking particular events such as Remembrance and A Time to Remember, as well as Easter and Christmas, and plans for Aberdeen North are yet to be developed.

The Guild's monthly meetings include prayer and reading as well as the activity.





Our Fellowship

As part of preparation for the initial Union, the Mastrick and Summerhill congregations joined for worship and social events. In April 2019, a weekend trip to Perth and surrounding area was hailed a great success and established friendships which have continued into the united congregation.

Teas and coffees are served in the hall after Sunday worship and the sense of fellowship is evident and much enjoyed. All three congregations had other regular fellowship events and it is hoped that these can become part of the Aberdeen North calendar.



Our Pastoral Care

Over the first year as Aberdeen North, the Roll has been combined, and re-organised so that elders now have districts of approximately 10 households; they visit with North News our quarterly newsletter, and build relationships with the members in their districts, so they can keep the Minister advised of particular needs or circumstance of members

Church flowers are donated by members, and distributed after Sunday worship, and elders and members are encouraged to notify the Flower Team of anyone who might appreciate the flowers; this ministry of flowers is much appreciated by recipients, as a mark that their church is thinking of them.

In such a large parish there are many funerals, and between 1 February and 31 December 2021 there were 38 funerals, in addition to one wedding and one baptism.

In December 2021 the annual service to remember those who have died in the past year offered their loved ones a time for memories and reflection, and recognised the Advent and Christmas season can be a particularly difficult time for those recently bereaved.

Ecumenical Context

In the Aberdeen North area a number of denominations are active including St Joseph's Catholic Church, St Clements Scottish Episcopal Church, United Free Church, Sheddocksley Baptist Church, Fernielea Gospel Hall, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints; in addition the Romanian Orthodox Church, Filipino Church, and Marthoma Prayer Group have rented accommodation in our buildings.

It is hoped that previous links can be restored in time, and new links established; our Children and Families Worker is engaged with colleagues in the school chaplaincy work and already making connections across denominations.

World Church Connections

Over many years, each of the legacy congregations contributed to the work of various Mission Partners in countries throughout the world. Christian Aid week also provided an opportunity for the congregations to demonstrate support for the charity's work abroad. It is intended that this support will be continued in Aberdeen North Parish Church, with fundraising at specific events, and as an outreach priority; plans for fundraising and promotion using the Christian Aid material/DVDs/leaflets will be discussed at Kirk Session.



All three congregations were recognised as generous contributors to several charities, and this ethos has continued into the union. This generosity is aptly demonstrated in the 2021 Blythwood Christmas Shoebox Project, when 169 filled boxes were dispatched, together with over £350 in donations, and in the regular and on-going weekly donations to the Instant Neighbour Foodbank.





Stewardship & Finance

As in most churches, finance is a constant challenge, exacerbated by the restrictions on our activities during the pandemic. Accounts for all three churches are available for 2020, and for Aberdeen North for 2021.

Although there has been no formal participation in National Stewardship Campaigns, occasional Giving Days in all three churches have been worthwhile. The pattern for Aberdeen North has yet to be discussed and decided by Kirk Session.

Aberdeen North supports various charities, with regular donations from the congregation to Instant Neighbour's foodbank which continued throughout the pandemic; various charities locally and abroad are supported at Christmas, and the Harvest appeal gathers donations of food for local foodbanks, and Aberdeen Cyrenians, a local charity supporting homeless people.

Recycling was done in all three congregations and is on the agenda for the next Kirk Session.





Church & Halls

The Sanctuary is a light, sunny and airy building, traditional in layout, and in good decorative condition; disabled access is directly from the car park into the church.

An induction loop is available in the Sanctuary, as well as a sound/projection system which are all in need of upgrading. A small kitchen, toilets with baby-changing facilities, and meeting room all link to the Sanctuary.

The Presbytery of Aberdeen & Shetland currently rents an office on the upper floor.

Adjacent to the Sanctuary is the hall accommodation, with car park and disabled access: this comprises a large hall with stage (currently out-of-bounds as a result of a woodworm infestation), a smaller hall (the James Tyrrell Centre), a room used by the Children and Families Worker, the Minister's office, and another office used by the treasurer. A kitchen, and toilets (one of which has facilities for disabled people and baby-changing, as well as some storage areas complete the accommodation.

Prior to the pandemic, the Halls were well used regularly by a variety of organisations and community groups; post-pandemic some have returned (Rainbows, Brownies, Guides). Occasionally NHS Grampian has used hall accommodation for vaccination clinics.

CCTV was installed as part of a property improvement programme.

Our buildings are in a sound state of repair, with the exception of the Hall, and are well-maintained by the Property Team Leader and volunteers.

Our Manse

The Manse is situated just under 4 miles from the Church, in Kingswells, a neighbouring parish to the west of Mastrick.

It is a modern house with garage, comprising living room, kitchen/conservatory, study and toilet on the lower level, with four bedrooms (one ensuite) and a family bathroom upstairs. There is an established well laid-out garden.

There are many amenities in Kingswells, which is effectively a village community, and is served by a primary school within walking distance, and secondary education is at Bucksburn Academy.

Kingswells is located on the main route west from the city and close to the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route, which provides excellent road links to the north and south. There is a regular bus service into Aberdeen.



Our Strengths

We coped well with the twin challenges of Covid and preparation for the union, which was done primarily on-line, a new experience for most. Since in-person worship has resumed, the congregation has made great efforts to meet and greet and make new friends.

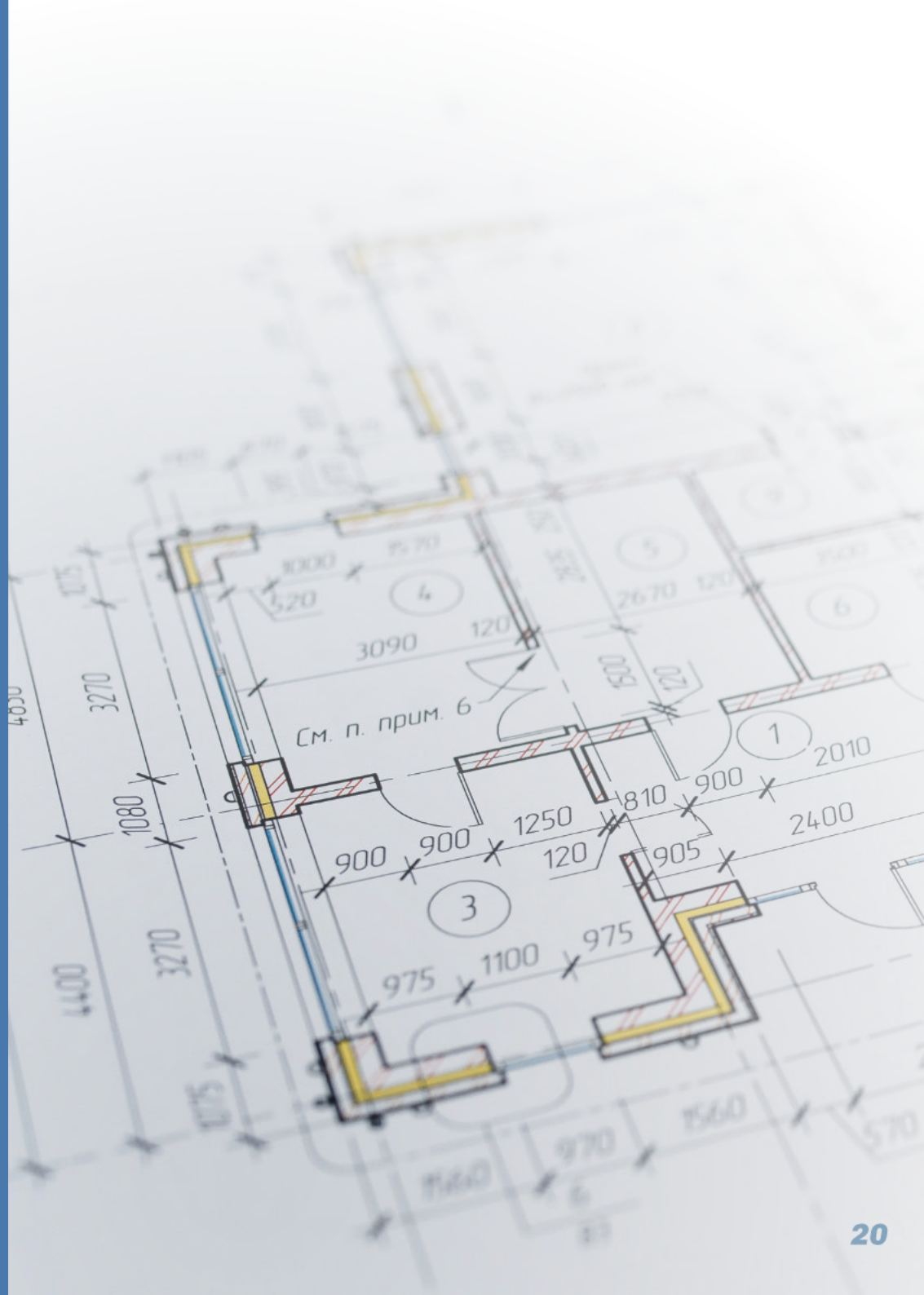
The appointment of our Children and Families Worker has brought a new dimension, enthusiasm, and capacity to re-start some of the pre-Covid activities, and to develop others across the community.

Kirk Session has managed to keep going, with most office bearer roles filled, despite changes and resignations, and the simultaneous retirement of our two Ministers in March 2022; no doubt there will be further challenges ahead as we work together towards our new church.

Conversations have started amongst the congregation with an initial facilitated workshop "Look Forward@Aberdeen North", with time to reflect on our vision and God's for Aberdeen North.



Building Development Project



“You have circled this mountain long enough. Now turn North”

Deuteronomy 2:3

We look forward to welcoming our next Minister.

We are

- ⊕ a congregation that wants to be an integral part of the community that we serve, and so are seeking a minister who can provide pastoral care in the congregation and wider community; this will complement the development work with children and families, already a priority, and so the *raison d'être* of the MDS post.
 - ⊕ seeking a minister able to communicate with all ages and sections of congregation and contextualise Bible teaching to modern life, as our church family wants to be informed, educated, and challenged.
 - ⊕ ready to engage in worship which is varied and involves the congregation, for example in Bible readings, drama and music and, on occasion, involves others in the community to share other examples of service where collaboration might be possible
- ⊕ in the very early stages of an exciting building development project and are looking for a forward-looking Minister, enthusiastic about this project, and with vision to lead and enable the development team.
 - ⊕ looking to our future, led by an outward looking Minister, who is fully involved in the community, Parish Grouping, and Presbytery, believing that engagement in the community provides real and visible opportunities for Christian witness, enabling the Kirk Session and congregation to share mission and ministry in the area.

If you see yourself as our next Minister, please send your CV with covering letter/personal statement, including the names of two referees, to the Clerk to the Nominating Committee. Informal enquiries als welcome.