

Freeland and St Machar's Ranfurly Proposed Union

Question & Answer Sheet

This Q & A sheet should be read in conjunction with the attached Basis of Union document and also the detailed article on the union published in the church magazines in December by the Session Clerks.

Why is the Basis of Union so important?

The Basis of Union document is a formal part of Church of Scotland Union procedure used nationally in all proposed unions. It covers ten areas, and all churches have to conform to using this proforma. The areas covered are considered to be the key areas where decisions have to be made and agreed before a union can take place. When the congregations come to vote on the union at the end of February they will be voting on the union as described in our amended Basis of Union.

Have there been any developments since the Session Clerks' article was published in December?

Yes. Rev. Hanneke Marshall has been successful in obtaining a permanent position as an interim minister providing support for Church of Scotland congregations in the west of Scotland. She commences this position on 3rd March 2025.

What are the implications of this for the proposed union?

The proposed date of the Union is 1st April 2025, subject to Presbytery permission.

What will the new united church be called?

Bridge of Weir Parish Church of Scotland. This was the most popular choice.

What will happen to the St Machar's Ranfurly church building?

In the first year or so of the union it is possible that it will still be utilised for halls accommodation or for an alternative church sanctuary if the Freeland building site requires temporary closure for renovation. In the longer term it is likely that the building will be sold and developed for residential property akin to the old Ranfurly church site on Prieston Road. However no final decisions on outcome have yet been made.

What will happen to the Freeland church building?

The Freeland building housing the sanctuary and halls accommodation will become the property of the Bridge of Weir Parish Church. The Kirk Session of Bridge of Weir Parish Church will consider the maintenance and development needs of the building and agree a plan for renovation. The extent of this has yet to be decided.

Who will form the Kirk Session of the Bridge of Weir Parish Church?

All elders who currently sit on the Kirk Sessions of Freeland and St Machar's Ranfurly churches will join together in the united Kirk Session except for any individuals who choose to retire from active service upon the union.

What will happen to the manses?

The St Machar's Ranfurly manse will be sold in due course. The Freeland manse will be retained for the continuing accommodation needs of Rev Kenneth Gray and his family.

What will happen to the financial proceeds of the sales of the St Machar's Ranfurly building and manse?

The majority of the proceeds would be used as a property fund by Bridge of Weir Parish Church. The General Trustees of the Church of Scotland have claim on 10% of the proceeds. (If St Machar's Ranfurly were to have any outstanding debts at the time of the union, then some of the proceeds would be used to address these.)

I greatly value having an area of service in my church-will I lose this when the churches merge?

Some people may see the time of the union as an opportunity to step down from their area of service. However, we hope many will wish to continue use their energy and talents in the service of their church, and indeed in the service of their Lord. We recognise that being able to continue to fulfil a serving role is important for many and we would trust that the great majority of members will be able to continue in either their current roles or very similar roles.

What would happen if there were a "No" vote re the union in either church, or a "No" vote re Rev Gray as minister in St Machar's Ranfurly church on 23rd February?

In the first instance a team from the Presbytery would visit the relevant congregation and explore the reasoning behind the "No" vote and likely seek to address any concerns. If this did not resolve matters, then it would be for the Presbytery to adjudicate an outcome and we cannot predict what that would be with any certainty.

What happens to the current employees?

All employees from both Churches will transfer to the new church under TUPE regulations. (These regulations protect employees' rights when they transfer to a new employer.)

It will be for the new Kirk Session of Bridge of Weir Parish Church to decide on what staff requirements they have.