

The Scottish Episcopal Church

United Diocese of Glasgow & Galloway



Where are we and what are we in 2023?



Prelude

The aim of *Bricks without Straw* is to obtain an honest picture of the reality of the Charges across the diocese in 2023. This snapshot will consider the Spiritual Reality, the Missional Reality, and the Financial Reality of each Charge. The purpose for doing this is to provide some background to the Synod and Diocesan Council in making strategic decisions for the life and mission of Charges around our diocese as they allocate resources in the coming years—it will also help to feed into the necessary preparations of the next Diocesan Profile once we reach an Episcopal Vacancy in the coming years.

Introduction

Each Charge is being asked to consider their Reality. Linked Charges make a submission for each Charge, similarly if you share a priest each Charge Vestry is asked to make a submission. In cases of a single incumbency the single vestry makes a submission—making clear how the comments and materials sent in apply to your various buildings and communities.

The Task

The task is for the Vestry to consider each of the three strands of Reality in your Charge. How you decide to do this is up to your Vestry. Under each question are some further questions to help you in your deliberations. Do add extra material you think pertinent to the question for your setting. Some Charges will want to consult with all their membership on aspects of the Reality investigation, whilst others may choose to have day events, or a series of evenings or daytime sessions. How you work out the pragmatics of pulling together your consideration of the three areas is up to your Vestry.

For your reference, at the end of this document is a list of the Anglican Communion's Five Marks of Mission which may be of help to you. Every Province has its own setting and we know that some Charges have developed, or use, other marks of mission. Please feel free to do so in your considerations and also share any additional marks of mission your vestry uses in its planning.

Similarly, the presentation of your assessment and findings can be offered in the way you feel most appropriate to your materials: text, images, diagrams, charts, videos, etc. You can be as creative as you like in sharing what is going on in your Charge now in 2023.

Please be specific in answering the financial questions and use narrative text to help include your plans, hope and fears for the coming years.

All materials will be seen by the Diocesan Council to help inform their decisions about supporting ministry and mission projects in 2024 and beyond.

Being honest about where you Charge currently is will form the backbone of your submission and an honest appraisal of your life will be valuable for the Bishop and the whole diocese.

Theological Reflection in Light of SEC Practise and Canons

Our Canons 13.1 suggest a quinquennial health check...¹—it is in essence a Reality check!

¹ https://www.scotland.anglican.org/who-we-are/publications/code-of-canons/

When an Incumbency or Joint Incumbency becomes vacant, the right of presentation shall be exercised by the person or persons in whom the said right is vested. If any dispute arise as to the person or persons in whom the right of presentation is vested, the question shall be determined by the Bishop of the diocese, subject to an appeal to the Episcopal Synod, provided that in all cases wherein the Bishop of the diocese is one of the parties in such dispute, the question shall go direct to the Episcopal Synod. On the occasion of a vacancy the Bishop shall be consulted on all names that are proposed, before the patrons proceed to the selection of a Rector. Further, no such Institution or Collation shall take place until the Vestry, with the assistance of the Dean if required, shall have produced for the approval of the Bishop a written plan dealing with proposals for the ministry and mission of the congregation; such written plan shall include the proposed financial arrangements for the maintenance of the Rector and the charge. Such a statement, when approved by the Bishop, shall be reviewed by the Rector, the Vestry and the Dean every five years thereafter.

For those of us in roles of leadership on our Vestries it is important that we are leading our Charges well in each generation and the invitation to reflect on where we are at present is an invitation from the Holy Spirit to periodically assess how and where we are as a Charge. This exercise will enable us to ask difficult questions as we look honestly at the life of our Charges. We are considering the Realities of our Charges—looking for the good, the positive, the optimistic, the potentials, as well as the challenges. Sometimes the pace of life and living passes us by month by month and this *Bricks without Straw* initiative asks you to stop, look and listen to the work of the Spirit in your Charge.

Most importantly, we are calling you to be honest. No Charge can do everything and your local context and demographics will shape the ways in which you engage missionally and spiritually with the people you serve, which in course will affect the financial resources you have available and the means by which you raise finances. Every Charge is different. All we ask is that you are honest and take the opportunity that this *Bricks without Straw* initiative offers you as we seek to gather a snapshot of the Reality of our Charges.

I pray that the Holy Spirit sustains and helps you all, in your very different contexts as you consider these three questions put before us in *Bricks without Straw*.

Yours in Christ

+ Kevin

Bishop of the United Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway

Completing the Form

What to do

Please use the box for each of the three strands to provide your material to answer the question. Use text, diagrams, images, video... whatever you think helps you present your answer to the questions clearly and honestly. Please use specific language e.g. not "X is well supported" but "29 older adults attend X." Helping the Bishop and the Diocesan Council to fully appreciate life in your charge is important.

How to do it

The choice of how you go about answering these questions as a Vestry is yours. Different sized charges will need different approaches. You may also want to enquire of your membership on some of the points as well as asking users of missional activities what their take on being part of the Charge's life is like from their perspective. Throughout this we are asking you to seek honest and realistic answers. This will be much more helpful than attempts at overstating any dimension of the Charge's life and work. As a Vestry you can decide what will work best for your social and Charge setting. The video introductions to the materials will be a help in working together and reflecting on where you are at right now and what is real for you in your Charge. In your response feel free to use creative means of answering the areas of enquiry if it helps present honestly your Charge's Spiritual and Missional Realities.

Where to send it

Once your vestry has put together the answers to the three questions please email the completed form to BricksWithoutStraw@glasgow.anglican.org. All submissions should be sent by email. If you are including links to video materials, please ensure that those videos are viewable from the links included. Your completed document will be filed in the diocesan office under your charge name and may be sent to office bearers in the life of the diocese for consultation.

The Form below can be downloaded from the Diocesan website *Bricks without Straw* page as a Word document for you to include your answers to the three questions.

https://bit.ly/BWSForm2023

Bricks without Straw submission 2023

Charge Name:

Date of Submission:

Signed by Lay Rep: a typed name is fine

Signed by Priest, or interim: a typed name is fine

Question 1

What the Reality of the Spiritual life of your Charge?

Consider these questions...

What is the prayer and worship life of your Charge?

How do you manifest the SEC pub sign "The Scottish Episcopal Church Welcomes you"?

How are relationships nurtured between members and with God?

How does the vestry consider the spiritual life of the Charge?

Please write your answer here making the box as large as necessary however many pages you need.

Question 2

What is the Reality of the Missional life of your Charge?

Consider these questions...

What is your Charge engaged in Missionally at the moment?

What missional opportunities do you perceive in your Charge?

What missional planning is there in your Charge?

Please write your answer here making the box as large as necessary however many pages you need.

Question 3

What is the Reality of your Financial situation?

Please answer these questions and then give further information as you choose.

How much do you have in your bank account(s) today?

How much are your savings/investments worth today?

Do you receive Ministry Support Grant from the Diocese?

Do you pay your priest's expenses in full?

What is your budget for looking after and developing your priest this year?

How much further spending is needed to fulfil your current quinquennial inspection works?

When did you last apply for a Mission Support Grant?

What did you use it for?

Where does your vestry's income come from?

What do you consider your financial state of health to be over the next 5 years?

Please write your answer here making the box as large as necessary however many pages you need.

Send your Bricks without Straw submission by email to <u>BricksWithoutStraw@glasgow.anglican.org</u>

Appendix of Study & Worship materials to enfold our reflections

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Appendix A: Videos to share with your vestry and congregation to introduce the concepts in Bricks without Straw

Introductory Video from Bishop Kevin: https://bit.ly/BWSIntroduction

Missional Reality Section Video: https://bit.ly/BWSMissionalReality

Spiritual Reality Section Video: https://bit.ly/BWSSpiritualReality

Informative video about the ancient process of brickmaking, still in use today, to support your congregation in better understanding the metaphor: https://bit.ly/BWSBrickmaking

*Videos can also be watched or downloaded from the Diocesan Website.

https://bit.ly/BricksWithoutStraw

Appendix B: Prayers to use at your sessions, groups, meetings, or as individuals

Drawn together by the Rev Liz Crumlish

Some prayers as you begin to consider where we are:

God, your story is a story that bears telling again and again.

For time moves on and memory fades and we quickly lose sight of all the wonders of the past.

Yet your story – of faithfulness through all seasons and to all generations keeps hope and faith alive,

In times of dryness and stagnation,

In times of fear and despair,

In times of apathy and indifference.

When it seems like we are being asked to make bricks without straw,

may the ancient stories, passed on to us and through us,

sustain and maintain a flicker of light visible in the darkness.

Your story is a story of love and persistence,

a story of hope that cannot be extinguished.

As part of your story today, rekindle in us a spark that persists ready to be fanned into flame as we discover anew how you call us to live out the gospel in our communities today.

As we gather around a table and tell our stories

of change and challenge, of blessing and breakthrough

GOD WITH US

As we share our hopes and dreams, our hurts and disappointments

GOD WITH US

As we give thanks for companions on the road

and as we mourn those whom we have lost along the way

GOD WITH US

And as we dredge below the surface, reaching depths that we seldom visit we offer our brokenness to the one who brings wholeness

GOD WITH US

The one who was broken for us, who poured himself out for us meets us here offering fresh bread and good wine to nurture and sustain

GOD WITH US

Offering forgiveness, redemption and assurance that God's kingdom breaks in and breaks out in our lives and in the communities we serve today.

GOD WITH US

THANKS BE TO GOD.

Who are the least of these in our community?

Who are the ones you call us to feed and to clothe?

Who are the ones that thirst?

Where are those whom we are to set free from all manner of bondage?

Or those who are estranged from loved ones, and crave our company?

GOD IN YOUR WISDOM SHOW US IN YOUR COMPASSION LEAD US

Lead us to the least of these in our neighbourhoods.

Show us how to get beyond the faces we see,

to strike up conversations and to build relationships

to enable us to set to work:

Feeding the hungry,

Quenching thirst,

Welcoming the stranger,

Clothing the naked,

Visiting the sick,

Bringing freedom for those enslaved,

Serving God in the least of these.

GOD IN YOUR WISDOM SHOW US IN YOUR COMPASSION LEAD US

Lord, open our minds...

Open our minds to understanding

Open our minds to compassion

Open our minds to love and acceptance

Open our minds...

To see with your eyes of love

To care with your loving kindness

To know you at work in all of life

Lord, open our minds

To understand Scripture

as it speaks into everyday life

To know your will

as we travel through each day

your will for us, and for those whom you send,

to be our companions along the way

Show us how to serve

How to be served

And how to discern your Spirit

in all things.

Lord, open our minds...

Some prayers as you prepare to journey on with God:

We give thanks to God that our stories matter

Our stories matter in the sweep of God's story

Stories of things tried, of risks taken

of things that worked - or didn't

Stories of those things that provided great learning

and took us that little bit further along the road of building God's kingdom.

For there are so many opportunities, infinite possibilities

in growing the Kingdom of God.

Our God draws alongside us, honouring humour and pathos, wisdom and insight, those times when we were willing to be vulnerable as we invited others to discover, with us, kingdom values.

And the presence of the Spirit of God brings inspiration,

persistence and courage

guiding us in our efforts and our discernment as we follow Christ, becoming disciples, proclaiming love in our neighbourhoods.

In our stories, contained within the arc of God's story, we discover our common heritage and our shared calling: to love and to serve God today.

Risen, ascended Lord, you called us to be witnesses

"You will be my witnesses" you said -

Not gatekeepers or lawmakers, not judges or jury

Not creed writers or doctrine creators - but witnesses

Witnesses entrusted with good news for all the world

Perhaps that was too vague an ask, too wide a remit

And so the tales of one who walked on water and cooked fish on the beach:

The testimony of one who cleared the temple

and honoured a widow's offering;

The escapades of blessing children and being anointed by women have been cleaned up and toned down -

Like applying Brasso to sanctuary vases, we've tried to apply a sheen instead of allowing the sheer earthiness of everyday encounter

of outrageousness

of audaciousness

and of righteous indignation and anger

to tell its own tale.

And if we've toned Jesus down

we're certainly not going to allow the Spirit free rein, who is even less predictable, even more prone to wreaking havoc,

to turning solemn convention and propriety on its head.

So we've wrapped the Spirit up tightly in doctrine and in creed in form and convention

Move us to loose the wrapping, to remove the shrouds, to stand well back

and allow the Spirit to effect miracles of love in all the world today.

Make us your Witnesses

God you call us to be Prophets, willing to speak truth to power

Willing to call out injustice

Willing to draw attention to the plight of those on the margins

whose voices are not heard and whose cries go unheeded

Accomplices of Poets who describe and prescribe a better way

Who put into words a vision of inclusion

A vision in which nothing is right side up

and where influence is found in the least and the last

Alongside Dreamers who remind us

that transformation is possible for those who believe who reimagine a future

that is not yet but will be.

An unholy Trinity those three

Prophets, Poets, Dreamers,

who mark out the thresholds and stand in gateways

and remind us of the margins where the rejects and the outcasts

and all whom we exclude

gather together in hope and in certainty of the knowledge

that God's favour rests on those who are overlooked

Prophets, Poets and Dreamers

showing us where and how the Kingdom of God is in every place and time.

May we live out our calling here as Prophets, Poets and Dreamers today.

God, you never allow us to stand still but constantly move us on to seek new horizons in proclaiming the good news of your kingdom.

Keep reminding us, O God,

that good news doesn't always look or sound as we might imagine.

Sometimes good news is disguised as harsh words,

delivered with love and integrity.

Sometimes, the winnowing fork of good news gouges our hearts and opens old wounds that we thought were healed.

Sometimes, good news is the unpalatable truth we need to hear and it is in how we respond that gives it the potential to be good news.

Sometimes, our role is as the bearer of good news.

Sometimes, our role is as hearer of good news.

Always, our role is to allow the good news to change lives

- our own and others -

and to carefully handle, with love and compassion,

the brokenness we encounter along the way.

Amen

Appendix C: Group Discernment Materials

Created by the Canon Missioner

Missional Reality

On this page you will find 5 *optional* ways to engage with the task of discerning and naming the Missional Reality of your church at this time. We know that the way you would have answered this question 3 years ago, pre-pandemic, will be different than you answer it today. That is why we are asking! There is no wrong answer, nor is there any specific desired answer. You are reminded, the task at hand is a way for us to get to know who we are as a Diocese at this time. You are enough, just as you are. Engage with the opportunity to take stock of the ground on which you stand just as you would if you were checking in on a loved one. We want to know where everyone is so we can support one another as God calls us to do.

Scripture Study – Matthew 25:31-46 – Invite your group to engage with the scripture using the African Method Bible Study technique.

Move – Walk around the neighbourhood surrounding your church. Try to see the area as if you have never been there before. What stands out to you that you may not have noticed before? Consider how your church interacts with those who live in your community and beyond.

Write – Working together, or individually, create a timeline of the various Mission/Outreach projects your church has engaged in over the years. Include in the timeline when each project began and when it ended. What projects are still going? What is it about your church and the targeted population that has enabled that ministry to continue as a source of light in your community.

Create – Cut strips of paper from colourful A4 sheets. (Or you could use lengths of colourful ribbon.) On each strip of paper or ribbon, write a group, individual, or organization that your church supports through its mission and/or outreach efforts. Next, on white strips of ribbon or paper, write your prayers for those to whom your missional outreach extends. Finally, weave the strips together into the shape of a cross.

Sing – Hymns which your group could sing for reflection or centring to support this section include:

- (The Servant Song) Won't you let me be your servant
- In Christ there is no East or West
- Take my life
- Here I am, Lord
- All people that on Earth do dwell
- Christ be our light
- Tell Out my Soul
- Seek ye first the Kingdom of God

Spiritual Reality

On this page you will find 5 *optional* ways to engage with the task of discerning and naming the Spiritual Reality of your church at this time. This is, in many ways, the most difficult of the three "Realities" you are being asked to consider and report. The Spiritual Reality of your church is a very subjective question. We are, absolutely, asking where you meet God in your church – and we are also asking what a newcomer or visitor may experience if they were to join you at a service or group meeting for the first time. Think broadly about the Spiritual Reality of your church today. Again, there is no right or wrong answer – this is an exercise for us all to come to know one another more fully.

Scripture Study - Psalm 139 - Invite your group to engage with the scripture using the African Method Bible Study technique.

Move – If your church has a labyrinth, this would be a perfect activity to engage in as you consider the *current* Spiritual Reality of your church. If not, you could invite your group to walk slowly and deliberately around your nave. Stop to consider statues, icons, pictures, windows, etc... as they prayerfully consider what they see as the current Spiritual Reality of your church.

Write – Invite each participant to write a prayer or a Psalm about the ways they do, or do not, feel the Spirit moving in their church at this time. Is it a prayer/Psalm of Thanksgiving? Petition? Praise? Once everyone has written their prayer, invite them to share their writing as they feel called (either out loud or by placing each prayer/petition in a central location for others to read – they could be anonymous or named.)

Create – Using Roger Hutchinson's <u>Painting Table</u> method, cover a table with craft paper and gift each individual a sheet of heavy painting paper. Put a variety of paints, brushes, found objects, etc... on the table and invite the group to paint a picture that represents for them the spirituality they encounter as part of their membership in your church. (Hutchinson's method encourages finger painting as a means of connecting fully with the experience, but if your group is reticent offering brushes and other objects to use instead may increase participation.) Play instrumental music in the background or set the scene by reading the suggested scripture during the activity. After the paintings are complete, members can share about the choices in colour, texture, materials, etc... and what they represent.

Sing – Hymns which your group could sing for reflection or centring to support this section include:

- Come, Thou Fount
- Spirit of the Living God
- O Holy Spirit, Come to Bless
- Veni Sancte Spiritus
- Come Holy Ghost our Souls Inspire
- Love Divine, All Love Excelling
- God is in the Holy Temple
- Peace of God which knows no measure

Financial Reality

On this page you will find 5 optional ways to engage with the task of discerning and naming the Financial Reality of your church at this time. This is the most logical and straight forward task that Bricks without Straw lays before you. The Financial Reality of your church can be found in the balance sheets, bills to pay, and investment profiles overseen by your treasurer. And while the specific numbers should be simple to determine, a greater reality can be found when reading between the lines. It is sometimes said that you can clearly see the priorities of an organisation by reading their budget sheet. In these current financial times, it can be difficult to look beyond the day to day expenses to see where God is calling us to invest our treasure for the good of the community. When we are struggling to heat our buildings, using funds to reach outside of our walls is a tall ask. As you consider the financial reality of your church, we hope you will use this exercise as a spring board into broader conversation about how God is calling you to be stewards of the wealth you've been granted.

Scripture Study - Mark 12:41-44 - Invite your group to engage with the scripture using the African Method Bible Study technique.

Move – If your church has a labyrinth, this would be a perfect activity to engage in as you consider the *current* Spiritual Reality of your church. If not, you could invite your group to walk slowly and deliberately around your nave. Stop to consider statues, icons, pictures, windows, etc... as they prayerfully consider what they see as the current Spiritual Reality of your church.

Write – Invite each participant to finish the sentence: I donate to my church because... Once all have finished writing, facilitate a short conversation about the importance of stewardship – both personal and as a congregation.

Create – Put a branch of a tree in a vase in the nave of your church. Cut out leaves from colourful paper and attach a loop of string to each leaf. Invite members of the congregation to write on one side of the leaf why they contribute their time, talent, or treasure to the church. On the other side of the leaf, invite the congregants to write what they see as the most important ways the church can use its financial resources for the glory of God.

Sing – Hymns which your group could sing for reflection or centring to support this section include:

- Come, ye thankful people, come
- We give thee but thine own
- Make me a blessing
- This is my desire (Lord, I give you my heart)
- Thou who wast rich beyond all splendour
- All I once held dear

- Take my life and let it be
- All that I am, all that I do
- I will offer up my life
- I'm giving you my heart
- All people that on Earth do dwell
- God, whose giving knows no ending
- Come thou fount of every blessing
- What gift can we bring

Concluding Prayer

When you have completed your submissions for the three sections in Bricks without Straw we invite you to share these with your congregations in whatever form is most appropriate. Perhaps you will share the artwork you've created that led to the documents you intend to submit. Perhaps you will share photos from the work your group did together and talk about it during the service one Sunday. Maybe you will invite feedback on the completed documents. Whichever way you chose to share this endeavour we hope that blessing it as a congregation before sending it forward will be an important part. To aid in this, we offer the prayer below from our siblings in the American Episcopal Church as a means of thanking God for all of the blessings of this life, and specifically for the ways God blesses this time creating bricks together.

A General Thanksgiving

American Book of Common Prayer, 1979 (pg 836)

Accept, O Lord, our thanks and praise

for all that you have done for us.

We thank you for the splendour of the whole creation,

for the beauty of this world,

for the wonder of life.

and for the mystery of love.

We thank you for the blessing of family and friends,

and for the loving care which surrounds us on every side.

We thank you for setting us at tasks

which demand our best efforts,

and for leading us to accomplishments

which satisfy and delight us.

We thank you also for those disappointments and failures

that lead us to acknowledge our dependence on you alone.

Above all, we thank you for your Son Jesus Christ;

for the truth of his Word and the example of his life;

for his steadfast obedience,

by which he overcame temptation;

for his dying, through which he overcame death;

and for his rising to life again,

in which we are raised to the life of your kingdom.

Grant us the gift of your Spirit,

that we may know him and make him known;

and through him, at all times and in all places,

may give thanks to you in all things. Amen.

African Method Bible Study

This Bible Study method was introduced by the African Delegation to the Lambeth Conference in 1998. It is known by both names: "Lambeth" and "African." It is rooted in the ancient method of praying the scriptures, known as Lectio Divina, or "Holy Reading."

Opening Prayer:

O Blessed Lord, who caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ, **Amen**.

- One person reads passage to the group, slowly and deliberately. As the passage is read, everyone is
 listening for a word or phrase that catches their attention or stands out to them. After the reading is
 complete, give the group a minute to consider what stood out to them and then they are invited to
 share the word or phrase with the group. (Just the word or phrase, no explanation and no cross
 discussion.)
- 2. After everyone who wishes to share their word or phrase has had the opportunity, another person reads the same passage slowly (from a different translation, if possible.) During this reading, each person identifies where this passage touches their life today. As with the last reading, give participants a moment to inwardly consider where the passage touches their lives today and then invite those who wish to share to do so. (Again, sharing briefly without lengthy explanations or cross questioning/conversation.)
- 3. Finally, the passage is read a third time (another reader and translation, if possible.) During this final reading everyone considers, "From what I've heard and shared, what do I believe God wants me/our church to do or be? Is God inviting me/our community to change in any way?"
- 4. Close in prayer using the words of the Lord's Prayer.

Appendix D: The Anglican Communion's Five Marks of Mission

The Five Marks of Mission as recognized within the Anglican Communion are set out below. We are mindful of the need to contextualize the life and work of the Scottish Episcopal Church and they are listed here as a guide to helping you focus upon and reflect together upon this *Bricks without Straw* initiative. Some Charges will have developed 6th, 7thmarks of Mission based upon the context in which we find ourselves ministering here in the Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway. Do use your additional Marks to assist you in completing the *Bricks without Straw* task. It would be valuable to state any further Marks of Mission you use in your Vestry planning for the work of your Charge.

Marks of Mission from https://www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/marks-of-mission.aspx

"The Five Marks of Mission are an important statement on mission. They express the Anglican Communion's common commitment to, and understanding of, God's holistic and integral mission. The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ.

The Five Marks of Mission:

The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ

- 1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- 2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- 3. To respond to human need by loving service
- 4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
- 5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth"

Marks of Mission Bookmarks - click the link to open the PDF of the bookmark

Bookmark highlighting the Word

Bookmark highlighting baptism

Bookmark highlighting human need

Bookmark highlighting justice

Bookmark highlighting the environment