

Presbytery of Argyll: Roles of Presbytery Elders, Jan 2014

The main roles of Presbytery Elders are as follows:

- 1. To attend Presbytery meetings, and to take part in its deliberations and decisions.**
Presbytery Elders are full members of Presbytery, and are entitled to speak (when invited to do so by the Moderator) and to vote. Presbytery meets on the first Tuesday of March, June, September and December, usually in Tarbert village Hall. At the September meeting Presbytery meets in the home church of the new Moderator and Holy Communion is celebrated. Presbytery also meets to induct new Ministers and set apart new Readers; Elders are invited to attend these inductions, and are encouraged to attend as many as possible.
- 2. To take part in detailed planning and decision-making in one area of Presbytery life, as a member of one of the Presbytery committee.** Each Committee is composed of Presbyters (both Ministers and Elders), with the Clerk also a member *ex officio*. The Committees and their remits are as follows:
 - **Business Committee**: Administers the business of Presbytery, elects the Moderator of Presbytery each year, and appoints members of all the Committees.
 - **Superintendence Committee**: Carries out quinquennial visitations to congregations; inspects congregational records and accounts; supervises implementation of Safeguarding legislation.
 - **Stewardship and Finance Committee** (including Accounts Inspection): Manages Presbytery's finances and line-manages the Treasurer.
 - **Augusta Lamont Bequest Committee**: Considers applications for grants and loans from the Augusta Lamont Bequest, and submits advice to Council of Assembly, who are the Trustees of the Bequest. The Bequest was given "to further the schemes of the Church of Scotland in Cowal".
 - **Property Committee**: Supervises the repair, maintenance and insurance of all congregational property and glebes, and submits recommendations to the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland.
 - **Ministry Committee**: Supports the Ministers, Readers, and others in ministry roles.
 - **Vacancy Procedure Committee (VPC)** (including Vacancy Advisory Committee(VAC)): VPC acts in name of Presbytery in all vacancy matters. VACs tender advice and assistance to Nominating Committees.
 - **Mission Committee**: Supports all aspects of Mission in the Presbytery, including those aspects supported nationally by the Church and Society Council, Mission and Discipleship Council, Social Care Council, World Mission Council and Ecumenical Relations Committee.
 - **Trusts Committee**: Administers Presbytery's Bursary Fund and the Gillian Maclaine Bequest. Both of these are for the financial support of those training for the ordained ministry of the Church of Scotland.

Each Committee generally meets every three months, though it may consult between meetings by email or phone. The Committees submit “Deliverances” to Presbytery, which may approve, modify or (occasionally) reject them.

3. **To act as a link between your congregation and Presbytery.** This includes both representing the views and circumstances of the congregation at Presbytery meetings and to Presbytery officers, and passing on information from Presbytery to your Kirk Session and to members of your congregation.
4. **To attend the General Assembly, if commissioned to do so by your Kirk Session.** Each congregation is invited to send an Elder to General Assembly approximately once every six years. Presbytery is represented at General Assembly by an equal number of Ministers and Elders, currently 10 of each, on a rota basis.

To help understand these roles, it may be useful to consider the main roles of Presbytery. These can also be summarised under three headings.

1. Support for Ministry

To support and encourage all those involved in the ministry of the Church within the Presbytery. This includes those in leadership roles, such as Ministers, Session Clerks and Kirk Sessions, others involved in ministry roles such as Readers, worship leaders, youth and children’s workers, and those providing pastoral support. It also includes those helping with practical work, for instance in looking after finances and buildings.

2. Support for Mission

To support and encourage congregations in engaging with their local communities, discerning the needs of individuals, families and groups and helping to meet these needs. To promote initiatives which will help individuals, families and communities to understand the Christian faith and its relevance to their lives.

3. Promoting good practice

To help congregations, ministers and church members to act within the principles and practices of the Church of Scotland, and to act to correct any major deviation from them. These principles and practices are established by the General Assembly and based on Biblical principles. In this role, Presbytery sometimes acts as a Court of Church Law, as part of a system of Courts which includes also the General Assembly and the Kirk Sessions. From time to time Presbytery plays a role in the process of making new Church Law, usually in response to initiatives from the General Assembly.

Chris Brett, Presbytery Clerk
5th February 2014