**Currie Kirk Office**

**156 Lanark Road West**

**Currie**

**EH14** **5NY**

**15th March 2022**

Dear Dr Weaver

**Presbytery Mission Plan Consultation (Edinburgh Congregations)**

We have asked the Congregation of Currie Kirk to give their considered response to the Presbytery Plan Consultation by completing a form in the Kirk News Magazine for return to the Kirk Office. The attached summary seeks to give a collation of the responses, using their words to express their thoughts and suggestions for consideration by Presbytery.

We have sought to give the Congregation all the information we in Kirk Session have received about the process, and our responses, via the monthly Kirk News Magazine which is delivered to all members.

We started with the Report from Water of Leith Cluster Group (WOL) in October 2021, then the Consultation Document in December 2021 which we placed on the Kirk website, followed by any update correspondence to and from Presbytery on this matter.

Thus, they have seen the Minister’s initial response of 13 January, also the separate response from Currie Kirk Session on 24 January, which recommended that Currie Kirk be placed in the South West Mission District, being a more logical fit with other local churches on the Water of Leith and Canalside. We had hoped to meet with the Deployment Sub Group at our February Session Meeting to discuss this proposal but we understand that with so many calls on your time we will have to wait for a more suitable time.

The WOL Cluster Group Report was compiled and signed off by all three churches in that cluster of Balerno, Currie and Juniper Green. Although initially Juniper had asked to move to another cluster with closer links to their Minister, their representatives joined in a close agreeable working relationship with WOL Cluster Group representatives. Over months in 2021, three to four representatives from each of these churches met regularly to exchange information relating to their church’s organisation and activities. Discussing and collating this information helped us see where overlaps or gaps could be addressed in the future based on a ‘menu’ system of worship and activities in the event of a reduction from 3 to 2 Ministers in WOL. We looked forward to the prospect of working more closely together to explore different types of worship. It was therefore a surprise to find the WOL cluster broken up in the Draft Consultation Plan, with Juniper Green being placed in SW District. It seems ironic that the very solution proposed by the WOL Cluster Report for Balerno, Currie and Juniper Green has now emerged in the SW District with Juniper, Colinton and Slateford Longstone now allocated 2 Ministers from the existing 3.

We at Currie are still of the opinion that previous relationships stretching over more than twenty-five years should be built upon rather than dismantled. Placing Currie in a new grouping with any church in West Lothian suggests starting over with unfamiliar congregations, with which there is no history of successful resource sharing or ease of transport.

Many in our Congregation are dismayed at the thought of their beloved church closing. However, we do understand there needs to be some change to accommodate the expected decrease in ministry posts and fervently hope for a more workable solution to emerge.

We look forward to a positive dialogue with DSG representatives in the next phase of developing the Draft Plan, through exploring the Congregation’s concerns and suggestions, while appreciating that a great deal of work has already been done by Presbytery in laying the framework for delivery of a new Presbytery Plan for 2022-2025 with the greatly reduced number of Ministry posts. We recognise the difficulties of communicating in such a tight timescale. We are grateful that Presbytery is listening to what the Congregation have to say, many of whom have worshipped in the same sacred place for over 50 years.

We welcome the opportunity to input to the revised Plan proposal due to go forward for consideration in October 2022 through the responses given below, subdivided into the separate sections you have suggested.

We look forward to your response in due course and wish you all well in the very difficult task ahead before the Plan is finalised.

Yours sincerely

Viola MacPhail,

Co-ordinating Currie Kirk Elder for Water of Leith Cluster Group

**PRESBTERY PLAN COMMENTS/QUESTIONS FROM CONGREGATION OF CURRIE KIRK 15 March**

|  |
| --- |
| 1. **Fundamental, strategic or general issues**  * Immediate priority is to resolve the West Lothian Question. * The suggestion put by Currie Kirk Session to the Deployment Sub Group on 24th January 2022 to move Currie Kirk to the South West Mission District is well supported in comments from the congregation, being the sensible and pragmatic approach. Our relationship with the Water of Leith villages has always been strong, not only with churches but also schools, youth organisations, choirs, bowling clubs and other leisure activities where people from all three communities of Balerno, Currie and Juniper Green easily meet up together. A number of comments were made regarding lack of satisfactory transport links to West Lothian * Currie looks eastwards and other than Balerno has no natural connection with the proposed Border Mission District churches. * The A70 and A71 form a natural boundary within which lie Balerno, Currie, Juniper Green, Holy Trinity Wester Hailes, St Nicholas Sighthill, Slateford Longstone and St Michael’s. Colinton, Craiglockhart, St David’s Broomhouse, Carricknowe, Polwarth are all relatively close to these main thoroughfares and therefore easily more able to work together; only Barclay Viewforth might be termed an ‘outlier’. * Several years ago, a Parish Grouping of Balerno, Currie, Juniper Green and Ratho proved to be unsuccessful, there being no appetite for working together other than the occasional poorly attended joint worship services. However, Balerno, Currie and Juniper Green have a history of working together, e.g., on Holy Week Services and, for over 20 years, an annual joint Service, along with intermittent pulpit exchanges. * Currie Kirk and Juniper Green have for the past five years shared a Families Worker, employed 10 hours per week each; she also runs a number of joint children’s projects on Bank holidays and in holiday times for Currie and Juniper Green and invitation to these projects is extended to Balerno. How will these proposed changes affect her employment? Currie Kirk and Juniper Green also share Chaplaincy to Currie High School. Thus, to place these churches in different Mission Districts would be to separate well established working relationships with the younger generation, possibly our future church * Edinburgh City Council’s 20 Minute Neighbourhood initiative recognises even at present that schools, transport links, health services, cultural facilities and communities along the Water of Leith provide an abundance of common threads across Currie, Balerno and Juniper Green which we should build up.  1. **Comments and suggestions relating to Mission Districts**  * We envisage Mission Districts being in a sense mini-Presbyteries. By being part of the South West Mission District, we immediately benefit from economies of scale through a sharing of resources and collaborative working across a wide range of activities. The most obvious is that at a stroke we have variety in worship providing different theological perspectives and the opportunity for people to worship in a setting in which they feel comfortable. Underpinning this should be the fearless proclamation of the Gospel which reaches out to people of all generations. In such a wide setting it should be feasible for individual churches to specialise, say in traditional worship, contemporary worship, all age worship, children’s worship, etc. In addition, we can develop, for example, the following: * Active children, youth work and families’ programmes with Christian teaching at its heart, sharing resources across the Mission District. In regard to the latter there should be a particular focus on the 25- to 40-year-olds and we should work closely with the proposed Presbytery funded post of Outreach Minister to the under 40s. * A co-ordinated Pastoral care programme across the Mission District, maximising resources to provide increased cover for bereavement. * Well attended activities outwith a Sunday morning which encourage fellowship and sharing. Given the size and strength of the South West Mission District it should be entirely possible to hold an event similar to the ‘Heart & Soul’ events held in Princes Street Gardens at the time of previous General Assemblies, say in Kingsknowe Park or Saughton Park. * The South West Mission District should have a sum total of considerable financial strength. Each of the 13 congregations could, for example, contribute £5,000 annually to a South West Mission District fund producing a figure of £65,000 more than sufficient to pay for a full-time Mission worker across the Mission District. Alternatively, two part-timers could be employed.  1. **Inaccuracies and Further Context regarding Currie Kirk**   Comments in the Draft Consultation document appear to have a bias toward Balerno, disregarding Currie Kirk buildings that have been very well maintained in excellent condition, having undergone extensive renovations to the hospitality area. One external let user remarked the Gibson Craig Hall is one of the best halls in Edinburgh. Currie Kirk may not be on the main road but it is literally four minutes’ walk away from the bus and is easily accessible on foot along the Water of Leith Walkway, itself a connecting path from Balerno to Currie, Juniper, Colinton and beyond to Leith.  **4. Concerns Expressed by members of Currie Kirk Congregation**  (i) Our village of Currie has lost its Bank and Post Office; to lose its Church will make it even more a non-community. My family have supported Currie Kirk for over 40 years and will withdraw all financial support if it closes or the Gibson Craig is not used.  (ii) We are people not objects to be tossed aside – if this consultation is about money, 121 is a very prestigious address worth a lot of money  (iii) There has been a church on the Currie Kirk site for over 1000 years, supported by farmers, landowners and villagers, with a wealth of historical significance eg it holds relic Stones dating from the Knights Templar and some of its Communion silverware is on display in the Museum of Scotland. The War Memorial sits just outside Currie Kirk. It is not just for Currie but also Juniper and Balerno. How would this be maintained if the Kirk closes?  (iv) Currie Kirk is very dear to me and my family – as will be the case for many people. With these proposals I feel CofS are shooting themselves in the foot and membership will significantly drop even more. We are moving out of Covid, at a time when our resources are needed to bring people back to our Kirk in unity rather than these divisive cuts.  (v) Where are Currie Kirk’s links to Heriot Watt considered? HW Chaplaincy and the annual Town and Gown Service are well-regarded facets of university life within the large multicultural student population, many of whom live on campus at Riccarton.  (vi) There are many annual activities integrated into our community and Currie Kirk is central to many of these eg Annual Kirkin’ of the Council after the Riding of the Marches; one of those traditions to be upheld at Currie Kirk  (vii) The ageing population needs even more pastoral care; I cannot see how we can sustain adequate Pastoral Care, especially in bereavement without sufficient support, too much for one minister to deliver. Our Kirk has built up such good community support which will be lost  (viii) I totally disagree with the presbytery plan. It has been ill thought out with no consideration for Currie Kirk. If we have to change, we should be joined with the south west mission district, rather than the border mission district with poor transport links, and our church kept open.  (ix) Balerno Church has seating capacity of around 200 in the sanctuary whereas Currie and Juniper Green Churches can seat over 300 so this should be born in mind if there is a revival in numbers, possibly from new housing. I am very unlikely to attend Balerno Church as lack of transport on a Sunday has to be considered  (x) Children from Baberton and Juniper Green attend Currie High School, which is set to continue in the foreseeable future, with the building of a new Currie High. The Family Worker shared by Currie and Juniper Green Churches is already best placed to help the youngsters transition to secondary education.  (xi) Will financial assistance be available to set up a new joint parish?  (xii) It is proposed that Currie and Balerno have one full time minister, voted for by the two congregations – what happens to the remaining existing minister who is not chosen? |