

THE GREYFRIARS STORY OF GROWTH

God is still active in the world, whatever the state of the church. That's where mission starts –where the Spirit is doing its work, alongside people who are hurting. Our task is to join in.

Over the past 25 years, Greyfriars has been expanding its missional activities. Its story is one of substantial growth, not contraction. Other city centre congregations will have similar stories and we look forward to hearing them and sharing our visions.

We propose that Presbytery creates a larger union in the city centre, comprising 4 or 5 of the present congregations, to benefit from the joint learning and shared resources which that will make possible.

Greyfriars congregation has set up three social enterprises:

- the **Grassmarket Community Project (GCP)** is literally transforming lives through training, mentoring and social enterprise, bringing back into society people suffering from mental health difficulties and deep social exclusion of which homelessness is often a symptom
- Working through partner organisations **Greyfriars Charteris Centre (GCC)** promotes wellbeing, enterprise and communities – of faith, need, interest, aspiration and many more
- **Greyfriars Outreach** opens up the kirk itself and offers a ministry to visitors, tourists and the arts, and to our many volunteers.

These activities are large in the context of Edinburgh city centre church life. GCP has a turnover of £1m and engages actively with some 300 vulnerable members, - activity equivalent to two or three city centre congregations. We have raised and invested £2.3m in GCC which is just reopening after its conversion from the former Kirk o' Field church, by far the largest such investment in the city in recent years.

The Edinburgh city centre churches face long-standing structural challenges of expensive buildings and declining congregational activity. The current Presbytery plan for unions is a strategy for managing, not arresting or reversing that decline. By contrast Greyfriars has demonstrated a successful growth strategy through the theological imperative of meeting people where they are, reimagining the role of the church – truly missional activity.

As organisations our Greyfriars social enterprises represent assets available to the whole group of city centre churches and there is huge scope to do more. But to make best use of these pioneering assets needs the engagement and support of a wide group of city centre churches also contributing their missionary activities, insights and experience.

We therefore urge on Presbytery a more ambitious and wider form of union – Greyfriars, St Cuthbert's, St Giles, Canongate, Broughton St Mary, St Andrew and St George's West, and Greenside. Only together we can head off the structural challenges and turn them into growth opportunities.

8 February 2022