

UPPER BRAES PARISH CHURCH (UBPC) MINUTES



Type of Meeting:	Kirk Session
Date and Time:	Tuesday 25 th November 2025 at 7.15pm
Location:	Brightons Ministry Centre
Sederunt:	Rev S Burton, Moderator and Ruling Elders: J Cowan, J Falconer, J Gilmour, R Gilmour, J Glass, J Hope (Presbytery Elder), H McManus, G Mann, J Meek, R Moore, J Norton (Session Clerk), D Spencer.
Apologies:	F Miller, L McGarry, J Wallace.
Absent:	None

Minute No.	Comment	Action
1. Constitution	1.1 The meeting was opened with readings from 1 Corinthians 13: 8-13 then constituted with prayer. The Moderator noted as we gather as a Kirk Session, we see in part; we don't know all the answers but hold onto faith, hope & love. When making decisions we won't have the full picture; we will make mistakes, but God is with us; He will redeem what we get wrong. The Moderator also noted he was so touched to be served by people seeking to love well, as many have prayed for him recently.	
2. Sederunt	2.1 The sederunt, as above, were noted and the Moderator welcomed our new Elders.	
3. Notification of AOCB	3.1 None	
4. Conflict of Interest (new)	4.1 No new conflicts of interest were declared. New Elders completed the declaration. J Norton to obtain copies of declaration from F Miller. Existing Elders to confirm if any change to Conflict of Interest declaration by email response, if not done so already.	Session Clerk / Elders
5. Minutes	5.1 The KS minutes from 28 th September 2025 (pp 73-74), 30 th September 2025 (pp 75-83), 26th October 2025 (p 84) and 11th November 2025 (pp 85-88), and the Annual Business Meeting of 9th October 2025 (pp 1-3) were approved. Moderator
6. Matters Arising	6.1 Strategic Finance Principles Update – as background for the new Elders the Moderator noted that at the start of the Union that each Team submitted a budget proposal. However, it has been hard to keep track of these as we have not been able to see them in the management accounts. These principles are being brought to enable more informed decision-making by Kirk Session on significant financial matters. As a reminder the limits previously agreed where items for decision had to be brought to KS were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Convenors (TCs) - >£500 in addition to budget • Property Team (G Scott) - >£1000, need 2 quotes ideally, if above this figure • Presbytery approval required if >£5K; > £20k per building. 	



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	<p>J Glass introduced the updated Strategic Finance Principles paper circulated prior to KS. Following discussion Session approved the principles laid out in the paper. Key points to note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Evaluation Team (PET) would consist of Jason, the Moderator, Treasurer and Session Clerk. • Principles will be in place for any 'projects' over £500 (for Team Convenors (TCs)) or £1000 (for Property Team). Note, this is only for 'new' items over and above those agreed in the annual budget. • Process is for TCs to cost any proposal and bring to PET to review and refine. Need for PET to be disciplined and come to KS with strong recommendations. • Budgets will largely cover day-to-day running costs, and projects will cover items/initiatives above £500. <p>Action for J Falconer to produce a decision tree /flow-chart to share with TCs.</p>	
6.2	<p>Church Finance Administrator – J Glass updated this is progressing; he has asked to meet with Louise Collingwood to discuss start dates and what information is needed.</p>	J Glass
6.3	<p>Replacement Treasurer – The Moderator noted once Louise is in post, we can review remaining actions needing to be covered and from there seek a suitable person to take on the role.</p>	Moderator
6.4	<p>Writing of the 2025 Accounts - Jason noted the intention is that S Glass would do the 2025 accounts with Louise.</p>	
	<p>Appointment of New Elders and New Teams Links - Session approved the proposed team-links and roles for Elders.</p> <p>Session Clerk – Judith Norton Depute Clerk – Jean Meek Presbytery Elder – Jim Hope Safeguarding Panel – Rena Moore (member) Pastoral Care Team – Jessie Wallace (member) Discipleship Team – Heather McManus (Convener) Communications Team – James Falconer (Convener) Finance Team – Jason Glass (member) Community Outreach Team – Rachel Gilmour (member) Local Mission Church Leadership Team – Jean Gilmour, Linda McGarry, George Mann (members) Up and Coming Team – Fiona Miller (member) Worship Team – VACANT but several Elders on the team anyway Property Team – Jim Cowan (member)</p> <p>The Moderator noted the intention was for every Elder to be a support, listening within the teams, and each to have something to bring to the table at KS. The Team links will change year on year as Elders rotate off.</p>	



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	<p>Dixcee will join a team in due course, once Triple S duties are delegated. Once clarity on what's needed the Moderator will communicate wider.</p> <p>Action for Judith to provide an extract minute to send to Presbytery, confirming J Hope as Presbytery Elder.</p> <p>6.6 Testimony Box/Online Form – The Moderator noted this was progressing.</p> <p>6.7 Feasibility Study update for Heating Improvements An update was given in the Property Team report and we await feedback from the survey conducted by the General Trustees representative.</p> <p>6.8 Hall Lets Costs Update – covered under 8.6 Property Report</p>	Session Clerk Moderator / N Matheson
7. Discussion Topic	<p>7.1 Conference Feedback - The Moderator noted that feedback was provided in the accompanying document verbatim so as not to have his skew. There is repetition but this allows weight to be seen. Session split into small groups to discuss what good came of the conference; concerns or things to do differently and next steps. Key points shared/noticed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful, positive, good to give time to reflect, share, discuss and learn from the past • Uplifting; a time of togetherness, sense of community, relationships built • Noticed a few attended few were unsettled with change; came into weekend thinking top-down agenda where Minister and KS had the future mapped out. Pleased to see it wasn't the case. • Noticed a holding onto tradition; what familiar with • Noticed lots of off-loading of the past: helpful in journey of change and transformation • Encouraging to see wasn't broad negativity of fear of change • None of the feedback seemed surprising; reassuring to read • Corporate courage, sharing, team spirit in community events - will help us as we move forward together • Very positive - impressed 2/3 congregation participated, invested and took part. • Some new to UBPC were interested to hear of the past. • People felt welcomed into non-threatening environment; heard and noticed – the amount of feedback and detail was testament to this. Related to multiple values; a 'mosaic'. • Note how much change has actually occurred. eg how positive people were about YWAM but might not have been previously. • Elders not at the Conference found it difficult to make sense of some of the comments • Noticed personal preference came out at times • Noticed some were holding on to what was good; not really understanding need change 	



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Odd comments about taking advantage of generosity; stems from something bigger going on? Fear groups will be pruned Concerns- how support Slamannan? What is the next step? All in this together. In a good place now to welcome things in. Goal to be able to 'go out' - we do a lot; how much allows us to 'go out' Looking ahead - in a busy church with lots of change need to make sure people aren't lost. Need a culture of personal ownership but making next step obvious. Want to attract people; we are all responsible to make them feel safe, secure and able to explore their faith. Exciting and challenging! How do we connect with young people - need a different approach Families looking for support with some same sex gender issues Need to raise awareness of what going on for new people., eg what is Kirk Session, Ruling Elders etc. Past disagreement and opportunity to repent; positive to take forward. Challenge how get people into church. <p>In terms of next steps, the Moderator asked what is the congregation expecting? He noted the conference was aimed at the next portion of the congregation who were still to appreciate the need for change, otherwise the process of change could feel "top-down".</p> <p>One Elder stated they agree we don't want to tell people what to stop, but we need to show some strategic leadership if everyone is so busy. How do we decide what God is calling us to? What should we be doing? Jesus knew His mission; it wasn't to serve everyone. As a church we need to be clear on our core identity. Are our systems and structures helping support us as a team to make decisions? Pruning and rest are important.</p> <p>The Moderator noted it's good to have sabbaticals for volunteers, e.g. seasonal rest. How can we best support Teams and volunteers? E.g. Comm Outreach Team have been looking at this and what is realistic to deliver.</p> <p>He asked do we bring Team Conveners together? Some Elders affirmed this, one noting they had taken the collective feedback to their Team.</p> <p>The Moderator noted the next step of Prospectus is 'What needs to change?' An example is the Community Audit where there is not an obvious next step. We can cut areas of ministry, but what for? The audit felt like an invitation; but where's the need? How do we step into mission? How do we "neighbour" better?</p> <p>In response to the question raised 'what were KS expecting from the Conference?', the Moderator noted it was simply a shift in perspective so that change is seen</p>	



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	<p>as needed and therefore welcomed/pursued, which it did seem to do. If it's going to be longer lasting, we have to get the church on board.</p> <p>The following potential next steps were agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide feedback on the conference to the congregation; potentially post-Christmas, signposting now it's in the pipeline. Bring something to the congregation at a strategic level in Jan/Feb, as the Community Audit results are due then. Hold a half-day in March equipping us to discern our 'mission', combined with prayer. <p>Action for all Elders to email the Moderator if any other ideas.</p>	
8. Team Reports	<p>8.1 Finance – report accepted as tabled. J Glass noted the following key points from Appendix 1 - 'FY25 YTD to end October 2025'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gift aid - 2 yrs to claim - on radar for Sharon to do. Jason noted we need to consider how we manage gift aid more effectively within the church. We also need to confirm if asking Ken to continue. Bank signatories - action with Finance committee. Youth Development Worker and Pastoral Assistants – change to salary will apply from 01 Jan 2026. Treasurer role can be vacant for a short period of time. Session approved the Real Living Wage being given to the cleaners from 2026. Income is lower than expected for 2025, mainly due to lower than historic fundraising; expenditure is favourable. Income in last 2 months increased by £14kp.m. (c9%) and will feed through into gift aid. Continue to have a deficit and eat into our reserves. <p>Key points from Appendix 2 – 'FY26 Budget'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget income - givings going up slowly Increasing costs, e.g. salaries Finance Consultant - increased cost but see as an investment; also a project so can draw on our reserves £3k fundraising for Slamannan to be added into budget. The aim is to have fundraisers that are also missional. <p>The Moderator noted a number of points he has emailed Sharon with that could reduce the deficit.</p> <p>Action for Moderator to discuss with Sharon, Jason and P Paterson ahead of January Kirk Session to find of proposed savings and rework the draft budget.</p> <p>The Moderator noted it was good to see a positive trajectory but need to see it sustained. He asked Jason to pass Session's thanks on to Sharon.</p>	Elders S Glass Moderator P Paterson Moderator



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	<p>8.2 Communications Team - report accepted as tabled, which J Falconer noted he signed off as TC. His intention is to step down as Comms Team Convenor when he steps back from being an Elder at October 2026 Kirk Session, to free up time and resource to do what God is calling him to. James noted he recognises the need to take a more strategic view of Comms. The Comms team works very well autonomously as a team and as individuals. Suggestions for the next Team Convenor should be passed to the Moderator or James.</p> <p>The Moderator thanked James and the team.</p> <p>8.3 Up and Coming Team – no report. The Moderator noted there is no obvious replacement or clarity where the team fits in the work of church, given Caroline Whittit's role in the Youth Development Project. There is a need for someone to support Alie Drackford and reach out to the GB/BB. But what else is needed? Elders to share ideas with the Moderator.</p> <p>The Moderator asked Elders to encourage all of the young people's groups.</p> <p>8.4 Pastoral Care Team - report accepted as tabled. The Moderator clarified the split structure ensuring the best use of people's time:</p> <p><u>Pastoral Staff Team (PST)</u> - 3 staff (Moderator and our two Pastoral Assistants) plus PCT Team Convenor (Elspeth McCallum). Cover pastoral updates. The Moderator noted the team are still finding their feet but made good progress.</p> <p><u>Pastoral Care Team (PCT)</u> - consisting of Elspeth, 3 staff, volunteers and visitors. Cover a range of things beyond pastoral care plus ongoing updates on people.</p> <p>The Moderator noted much pastoral care is needed, so is very thankful for the staff and PCT. He also noted Monica's annual review is in December with himself, Judith and another Elder.</p> <p>8.5 Discipleship Team – report accepted as tabled. H McManus noted the team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are losing members and were waiting to see what came out of the conference before making any changes. • Now meet twice yearly. • Are aware of gaps in what the congregation may know, so they have comms to action. <p>Heather noted the level of time, effort and love given by those in the Team.</p> <p>Session approved the replacement of CSW as a charity the Team champions with Thrive Scotland; a charity that supports Christians in the workplace.</p>	Elders



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	<p>Action for Judith to update the previously agreed list of charities that the Teams have strategic level permission to partnership with, then promote this to the congregation.</p> <p>The Moderator noted his thanks to Heather and the Team.</p> <p>8.6 Property Team – report accepted as tabled. Session approved increasing the BMC and SMC hall rental for non-members from £20/hr to £25/hr following updated guidance from 121. It was noted that we have few lets; mainly birthdays and long covid group in BMC and Fire Safety training in SMC.</p> <p>The Moderator noted his thanks to G Scott and the Team.</p>	Session Clerk
9. Standing Updates	<p>9.1 Safeguarding – Session approved the report as tabled.</p> <p>Session approved the following additions to the register: Linda Gillespie (Adults) Annabella Nimmo (Adults)</p> <p>Session noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carolyn McEwan has completed an SG22 to be removed from the PVG register. The Boys' Brigade have nominated Kai Taylor as a new leader and are progressing his PVG application. Kai's nomination was approved by The Moderator on behalf of Kirk Session. <p>Action for the Moderator to speak to BB/GB officers about the need for an officer to be on the door to admit parents waiting in the rear hall vestibule.</p> <p>The Moderator gave thanks to Eileen and the Safeguarding Panel for their work.</p> <p>9.2 Presbytery – J Glass provided the following verbal update from the last meeting on 25th October:</p> <p>Very positive difference made to Presbytery meetings following changes made by the Moderator. Much more business fast-tracked.</p> <p>Planning and Implementation Committee – significant impact felt by ministers from the process, Lower Braes especially to be mindful of in prayer.</p> <p>46 churches not meeting ministry costs; Stewardship roadshows to help address this. P Paterson and W Tomlinson attending tonight from Upper Braes.</p> <p>The Moderator signposted significant change can be expected in 2026:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insolvent churches may face closure More churches without a locum 	Moderator



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following union many churches will be over the threshold are requiring their annual accounts to be independently verified. <p>The Moderator noted this was Jason's last Presbytery meeting and gave thanks for Jason's service.</p> <p>The Moderator noted he is now halfway through the meetings he is to oversee as Presbytery Moderator.</p> <p>9.3 Local Mission Church Leadership Team – no report as Team had not met.</p>	
10. Correspondence	10.1 None	
11. Roll Keeping	<p>11.1 Since the last meeting the death of five members were noted:</p> <p>Mr Tom Grieve (BPC) – 2nd October 2025 Mrs Myra Maden (BPC) – 21st October 2025 Mrs Grace Douglas (Slamannan) – 8th November 2025 Mrs Mabel Munro (BBS) – 8th November 2025 Mrs Margaret Mitchell (Slamannan) – 23rd November 2025</p> <p>The Moderator gave thanks for their fellowship and commended their families to our prayers.</p>	
12. AOCB	<p>12.1 Organ Improvement Proposal - The Moderator introduced the paper that was circulated prior to KS highlighting that the sound from the organ is not carrying enough under the balcony. Putting it through the sound system is creating other issues, hence the proposal to put a speaker under each balcony at a cost of £4,200 (discounted by Church Organ World (COW)).</p> <p>Session discussed the proposal with the following points covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Already paid £20k, but sound isn't adequate. When organ was fitted COW used their experience and said was loud enough. We knew since initial installation the sound wasn't adequate; had thought putting it through sound system would work but it's creating other issues. The cost will come out of the General Account but can draw down on fabric resources. Replacing the current sound system wouldn't help as speakers are for the organ only. We can't get our money back as it was installed in June. We could ask COW to provide a consultant to advise if the new speakers would definitely work. <p>Action: Session agreed the Moderator would ask COW the cost of a survey and email Session for a decision to proceed or not.</p> <p>13.1 The following services were planned:</p> <p>27th November 2025 (11.30am) – half hour service with Communion</p>	Moderator

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	<p>30th November 2025 (6.30pm) – evening service with Communion 7th December 2025 (11am) – Communion services (not all age) 7th December 2025 (6.30pm) – Bereavement Service (SMC) 24th December 2025 (6.30pm) – Family Watchnight Service (BMC) 24th December 2025 (11.30pm) – Watchnight Services (both ministry centres) 25th December 2025 (10.30am) – Christmas Day Service (BMC) 25th January 2026 (11am) – Braes Pulpit Swap (both Ministry Centres) 25th January 2026 (6.30pm) – evening service with Communion</p>	
14. Dates	<p>14.1 Dates of future meetings were noted as 7th January 7.15pm – Kirk Session meeting (discussion topic focus: ministerial well-being survey and year 1 Youth Development Project Report; then prayer) 24th February 7.15pm – Kirk Session meeting (Property, Finance) 24th March 7.15pm – Kirk Session meeting (discussion topic and prayer time) 28th April 7.15pm – Kirk Session meeting (Pastoral Care, Discipleship, Community Outreach and Up & Coming) 26th May 7.15pm – Kirk Session meeting (discussion topic and prayer time) 13th June 9.30am-3.30pm – Kirk Session Away Day 23rd June 7.15pm – Kirk Session meeting (Property, Finance, Communications, Worship) Please note: each month the following items would be standing business, with reports shared where there is business to address, and/or an update given no less than 3 months apart: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding • Presbytery • Local Mission Church Leadership Team Also, under AOCB could come urgent requests via other teams where necessary. Scott is on holiday 26th December 2025 to 4th January 2026 inclusive.</p> <p>15.1 The meeting was closed by saying the Grace together.</p>	<p>..... Moderator Session Clerk</p>