

BASIS OF LINKING
BLAWARTHILL PARISH CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
LINKED WITH ST COLUMBA GAELIC CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

The congregation of Blawarthill Parish Church of Scotland, Glasgow (SC006410) and the congregation of St Columba Gaelic Church of Scotland, Glasgow (SC006342) shall be linked as from the 16th day of February 2023 or on a date determined by the Presbytery of Glasgow and that on the following terms and conditions:

1. **Transference of Property and Funds:** The property and funds belonging to or held on behalf of each congregation shall remain the property and funds of each congregation as at present.
2. **Places of Worship:** The church at present used and occupied by the congregation of Blawarthill shall be the place of worship of the linked congregations. Services shall be conducted there for the congregation of Blawarthill at 10.30am and for the congregation of St Columba Gaelic at 12 noon each Sunday. These arrangements may be varied subject to the agreement of the minister and the Kirk Sessions and the approval of the Presbytery.
3. **Territorial Responsibility:** The area to be served by the linked charge shall be (First) the territorial bounds of the present parish of Blawarthill and (Second) Christian witness, worship and service to Gaelic culture and language within the boundaries of the Presbytery, or as the Presbytery shall determine. The provisions of the Parish Ministry Act (Act II 2018) section 4 shall not apply to anything done by a minister in furtherance of the mission of St Columba Gaelic to Gaelic culture and language.
4. **Kirk Session:** The minister of the linked charge shall be the Moderator of each Kirk Session. The Kirk Sessions may meet together, as they deem it desirable.
5. **Congregational Management:** The temporal affairs of each congregation shall be administered as at present. The office-bearers of the congregations shall meet annually to decide on their portion of the contribution to the shared costs of the church premises, stipend and related expenses, listed expenses and maintenance of the manse, as may be agreed from time to time by the office-bearers and subject to the approval of the Presbytery.
6. **Minister:** The Rev Melvyn Wood, the present minister of Blawarthill, shall be the minister of the linked charge in terms of Section 8 of Act VII, 2021.
7. **Manse:** The manse of the congregation of Blawarthill shall be the manse of the linked congregations. The manse of the congregation of St Columba Gaelic shall be sold, let or otherwise disposed of subject to the approval of the Presbytery and, if necessary, of the General Trustees or the General Assembly. The free proceeds of any such sale or let shall: (a) if falling within the scope of Act VII 1995, be credited to the benefit of the congregation in the Consolidated Fabric Fund; or (b) if not falling within the scope of the said Act, be held and applied for fabric purposes in connection with the properties of the congregation of St Columba.
8. **Ministerial Support:** The stipend of the minister shall be payable in terms of the National Stipend Scheme.
9. **Power to Readjust:** While these articles and terms shall form the Basis of Linking for the congregations now linking, the linked congregations shall be free, like other congregations, to adjust arrangements under the authority of Presbytery as need may arise.

Guidance Notes to members of the congregations:

What does our Linkage mean in practical terms?

1. Most things don't change. Each congregation retains its own Kirk Session, its Unitary Constitution, its own elders and its own Scottish Charity number. The congregations continue to keep separate accounts. The ownership of properties does not change. Parish responsibilities remain unchanged; the geographical parish of Blawarthill stays exactly as it is; the demographic outreach of St Columba Gaelic to people of Highland and Gaelic speaking culture is preserved – see Section 3 for details.
2. Blawarthill Church will be the place of worship, witness and outreach for both congregations. This is already the case – the difference after the Linkage is that St Columba Gaelic now has an obligation in Church law to contribute towards the cost of upkeep, as well as other costs relating to the new Charge. See Section 5 for details. These arrangements can be varied in the future.
3. Times of services will change to half an hour earlier than the current times, subject to the agreement of the congregations when they vote, and the Presbytery agreeing the Basis of Linkage. Linked congregations must hold separate services, although they can also have joint services from time to time, as agreed by the Kirk Sessions.
4. Kirk Sessions must continue to meet separately, although they must also meet together as needed to discuss matters of common interest. The minister of the new Charge will be the Moderator of each. Session Clerks of both congregations are currently qualified to moderate meetings of their own Kirk Session, with the permission of the minister, and this will remain.
5. The main change resulting from the Linkage is that St Columba gets a minister, and the ministry vacancy comes to an end.
6. A linked charge can only have one Manse. The Basis provides that the present Manse of Blawarthill will become the Manse of the linked Charge. The present Manse of St Columba loses its Manse status and becomes simply a house, a property in the ownership of the St Columba congregation. The Basis provides that the property may continue to be let, (among other options) after its disposal as a Manse. In terms of Section 7 of the Basis, the property is vested in local trustees, not the General Trustees, and so option (b) applies in this case. Thus funds from the letting (or sale if that should happen at any time in the future) will be retained locally. These funds must be applied for fabric purposes at present, although moves are afoot to relax this requirement across the whole Church.
7. While each Kirk Session remains responsible for the appointment of key office bearers, such office bearers under current rules do not have to be members of the congregation concerned. Thus there is scope for the sharing of key roles, and avoiding unnecessary administrative duplication.
8. Members will be aware that Blawarthill and St Columba Gaelic churches are members of the NW Glasgow Cluster, and the Cluster in turn is faced with the need to rationalise ministries and buildings by order of the General Assembly. We cannot therefore rule out the possibility of further adjustment with other neighbouring congregations in the future.

Melvyn Wood