



Brechin and Farnell Parish Church

Parish Profile

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BRECHIN AND FARNELL PARISH CHURCH

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ONE CONGREGATION WITH TWO PLACES OF WORSHIP

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Section 1: Introduction and Executive Summary

The united charge of Brechin and Farnell Parish Church was created in 2022 as part of the national reconfiguration of the Church of Scotland. Previously Gardner Memorial Church, Brechin and Farnell Parish Church had been linked in 2008. Brechin Cathedral, the other Church of Scotland congregation in Brechin, was dissolved in 2021.

The united charge, therefore, is coping with a number of challenges in addition to the serious issues facing the national church as a whole. The organising principles under which the united charge has chosen to operate is set out in the paper “How it Might Work”. In essence, there is established a single Kirk Session, meeting four times each year, tasked with responsibilities for legal and national church issues, with two devolved committees, at each of the worship centres responsible for the day-to-day affairs of the two centres.

The national reorganisation of the Church with several closures in Brechin and the surrounding rural areas requires a significant reappraisal of the strategic planning in the united charge.

Our previous minister, the Rev Jane Blackley, retired in January 2018, after some nine years in office, during which time the two linked charges of Gardner Memorial Church and Farnell Parish Church prospered and cooperated happily, the process of finding a successor was initially sisted pending the resolution of the future of Brechin Cathedral. The national review of Church buildings and congregational organisation further sisted the process of appointment. Permission to call was granted by Angus Presbytery in January 2023.

As a Congregation we seek to create an ethos that:

- Promotes the National Church Mission Plan
- Maintains the two centres of worship doing together what makes sense together and doing apart what makes sense apart
- Follow the Presbytery Mission Planning of the Church of Scotland
- Recognises that a united congregation has the benefit of sharing ideas and resources.
- Aims for consensus decision making

The Kirk Session has voted to ‘depart’ from the Church’s traditional position in respect of ministers in civil partnerships or same sex marriages. Application from ministers in such relationships will therefore be considered.





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Section 2: History- General

Both Churches have developed strategic plans, which are now being implemented.

We have identified the local schools and their chaplaincy structure as a practical way to engage with children and young people, many of whom have no active church connection. There are 3 schools in the parish: Brechin High School, Andover Primary School, and Maisondieu Primary School.

The key points from the revised Presbytery Plan have already been touched upon. In summary these are working collaboratively as a parish, making the most of the strengths and skills that we already possess and reaching out to the wider community both in the town and our rural areas.

The united charge operates a unitary constitution.

Gardner Memorial –



Towards the end of the 19th century, there was a shortage of church accommodation in Brechin. The Rev Andrew Gardner bequeathed a sum towards the building of a new church. The red sandstone building is not only a memorial to Rev Gardner and the tragic death of his son but a testament to the work of the architect Sir John James Burnett.

Throughout its history, Gardner Memorial Church has been recognised as a church with a warm friendly sociable congregation. A first-time visitor remarked that the “*Gardner Memorial has a comfortable, welcoming feel to it* “. We take pride in living up to this comment through both the friendly people who make up our congregation and our core of hard-working members.



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Farnell -



There has been a Parish Church in Farnell since before the reformation, when the Bishop of Brechin is reported to have used Farnell Castle as his summer residence away from the bustle and heat of the city. There followed a series of links and merges with neighbouring parishes, axing several buildings. The current church building on the site of the old graveyard was begun in 1795, being built to a design by the well-known Edinburgh architect James Playfair and is widely regarded as a fine example of Georgian gothic.

The age profile of the congregation reflects the national picture. There are however six young families whose children attended Sunday School until recently, and who have been approached to seek to create the church experience not based on a Sunday morning service.

Our vision for Brechin and Farnell Parish Church is to establish a church that is an integral part of the local community in Brechin and Farnell. We seek to be a truly forward-thinking community church and hub offering comfortable friendly facilities and a meeting place for all ages and members of our community regardless of whether they are members or not. We aim to be supportive both practically and spiritually. Discipleship is part of being a church member. We want to see a thriving and vibrant Congregation with many more people from all generations involved in its life.



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As with all churches, we face the challenges on all fronts inherent in the modern world. However, we view our self-awareness in recognising our strengths and weaknesses, the challenges as opportunities, along with our commitment to the wider community of all ages and persuasions.

We count our people as our greatest strength, their willingness to help, empathise and support others, try new ideas and adapt in changing times. Our office bearers are both loyal and committed, have a strong faith, and give generously of their time and effort. The total number of Kirk Session members is 27.

Demographically, like many churches, we do face the challenge of having an aging congregation and have a need for fresh blood and younger folk prepared to provide their time and skills, and a wider understanding of the church's relevance in the modern world.

Spiritually, our congregation is seen as strong and healthy, albeit many of our members view spirituality as a private and individual thing.

We communicate with our members and the wider community through a variety of different platforms, for example the Gardner Memorial services are broadcast via YouTube. Our website and Facebook page is kept up to date with forthcoming events and we produce our church newsletter on a regular basis.

Our Elders still call on members with an invitation prior to each communion service and our Pastoral Team visit members as and when required. Historically all denominations have conducted services on a rota basis in Brechin's sheltered housing schemes and at the Dalhousie Day Care Centre, however these are still to be re-established post Covid.

We also seek to build and consolidate our presence in the rural parts of the Parish promoting a sense of belonging and wellbeing to all who live there. Like so many Congregations our members are involved in a wide cross section of community organisations.

Section 3: Community Profile

The charge comprises both town and rural communities. Brechin, one of the seven historic Angus burghs and Farnell, a small rural community, made up of predominantly large farms and the Southesk estate.

Gardner Memorial Church sits right in the middle of the town and prides itself on being inclusive and open to all. Often referred to as the 'City of Brechin' because of its cathedral and pre-reformation status, Brechin is in fact a small town and former royal burgh with a population of around 7,500.

Close to both the Angus Glens and the Coast, the Parish is located just East of the A90 trunk road almost midway between Dundee and Aberdeen, it is less than 10 miles from the main East Coast rail line at Montrose and less than 100 miles from Edinburgh.



Angus Health and Social Care Partnership (Angus HSCP) formally came into existence in April 2016. Angus HSCP is responsible for the delivery of social care and community based health services for all adults in Angus. <https://www.angushscp.scot/>

The local hospital at Stracathro is only five miles outside the town and has an Ambulatory, Diagnostic and Treatment Centre,



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Medicine for the Elderly and in patient mental health units for older people. Minor injury departments are located at Arbroath Infirmary and Whitehills Hospital in Forfar. A&E facilities are in Ninewells Hospital in Dundee, 30 miles away.

Brechin Medical Centre is located in the centre of town with a range of health practitioners including GPs, District and Community Nursing, Allied Health Professions, Pharmacy and Podiatry.

Brechin has 2 primary schools (Maisondieu and Andover) and a Community Campus housing the High School, gym, swimming pool and other community facilities. School chaplaincies have been traditionally shared amongst the ministers in the town with the Gardner's minister providing services to Andover primary and on call support to Brechin High School. Andover Primary School held their end of term services in the Church.



However, since Covid and the Lockdown there has been less contact with the schools. Nevertheless we held a picture display of work in the church from the P3-P5 primary school children over Easter 2023 on the theme "What does Easter mean to you". Both schools enjoyed doing this and have intimated their interest in taking on more projects in the future. We are also keen to rebuild the links with both primaries as well as the High School.

Whilst no longer the major industrial centre it once was, the town still retains an engineering works, a home furnishing factory specialising in window blinds as well as a new business park catering for various other industries. According to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation SIMD, the South & East area of Brechin is amongst the 15% most deprived areas in Scotland, giving plenty of scope for outreach and pastoral work in the farms, businesses, schools, and communities in the Parish.

The Gardner Memorial's halls are used regularly by a variety of Community Groups including Ukrainian refugees, Toddler Group, Guides and Angus Council. We are very keen to support the Town's Food Bank and the Co-op's Communities lead is an Elder in the Congregation

In December 2022 we set up "Warm Spaces" in our Church Hall on a weekly basis where tea, coffee and soup were served until April 2023. Since May 2023 we have been hosting Friendship and Blethers every Thursday morning. The last Saturday of each month we hold our Soup and Sweet Lunch which is attended by approximately 20 people.



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Since 2012 we have arranged and hosted Brechin’s Big Lunch in St Ninian’s Square across the road from the Church. This nationwide community street party, promoted by the Eden Project, regularly attracts over 100 local people sharing their picnic lunch in the sunshine. In 2022 we celebrated the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee with the help of various community groups which proved a great success. In 2023 we celebrated the King’s Coronation. The Gardner Steel Pan Band ensures that the Church and its members are well known throughout the town and surrounding areas.

While Farnell has the Church and the Farnell village hall, public services, Schools, GP practices, Library are accessed in Brechin or Friockheim.

Section 4: Worship Life

Currently there are two services on a Sunday – 9.30am at Farnell and 11.00am at Gardner. Farnell’s attendance is on average 20 while Gardner’s is between 40 and 50 on average. The current format of our services is the traditional “hymn sandwich” of 5 hymns from CH4, 1 reading, 2 short reflections and 2 prayers. However, this format is not set in stone and is open to development.

Sunday morning services are broadcast regularly on our YouTube channel at “Brechin Gardner Memorial Live” which has several regular subscribers. Whilst many gather afterwards for tea or coffee and a chat – and perhaps a bit of cake.



Gardner Memorial



Farnell

Pre-Covid: Communion was celebrated three times annually with the issue of invitations and on other occasions if deemed appropriate. Special services - typically take place at Easter, Harvest, Remembrance and at Christmas. This, too, is open to development, perhaps with more Sunday evening services as opposed to Sunday morning.

The Scout and Guide Association attend Founders/Thinking Day service in February. However, like many churches we struggle to attract young people to Sunday Worship.

Both Churches have a worship group willing to lead services along with elders who recognise the need to be more involved with aspects which at one time would have been the preserve of the parish minister. With the extended parish boundaries, this aspect will become more important.



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There is ongoing discussion on as to how best to engage with young families whose children have competing sporting interests on a Sunday morning. Coffee after the service has proved a valuable opportunity to become acquainted with people recently joining the congregation and for arranging informal church business in what is a scattered congregation who cannot easily meet during the week.

There has been 21 Baptisms in the last 5 years. Both have audio visual equipment. Farnell has a regular organist who is a congregation member, whilst Gardner Memorial have a rota of regular organists. There are joint services at times throughout the year. Holy Communion is celebrated at least twice a year in May and November.

Section 5: Pastoral Care

Gardner: Pre COVID, in many cases, pastoral care was undertaken by the minister, now, in the Vacancy we try to ensure that, where possible, the work is shared with our pastoral care group and Brechin's wider community network. Pre-covid names of members, and others, who would benefit from a home visit are passed on either through the church office or after the Sunday morning service, and this is being reinstated. Three members of the Congregation have participated in local Health Board led Listening Skills Training. Currently the development of Anna Chaplaincy and Parish Nursing is being investigated.

Whilst not wishing to be intrusive, members of the congregation and office bearers care greatly for both their minister and their immediate family whose wishes will always be respected. During difficult times we have always tried to provide the manse family with support and practical help as well as congratulations and encouragement in happier ones.



Members of our pastoral team visit those people in the community (members and others), who are either house bound and/or vulnerable. By continuing this link, the need for support can be fed back to the minister and/or others such as our flower team to ensure that we are as supportive as possible.

During Covid Pastoral Care had to be provided in a different way via regular telephone contact. A small group was set up to maintain contact with members deemed to be vulnerable or housebound. Elders contacted all other members in their districts. A weekly newsletter was emailed to members and posted to those without computer access.



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The Congregation's office also acted as the co-ordinators for Angus Council's housebound support initiative.

Funerals: over the last 5 years we have had the following numbers of funerals: 2019: 10 Congregation, 9 Parish. 2020: 15 Congregation, 8 Parish. 2021: 7 Congregation, 4 Parish. 2022: 6 Congregation, 2 Parish. 2023 to July: 6 Congregation, 16 Parish.

Farnell: Pastoral care in a small rural parish is essentially informal and based on the elder district model. Many members have known one another from childhood, with a network aware of crisis or illness among their peers. This has been particularly evident with numbers who are ageing or suffering declining health. During the long vacancy elders and other members have been particularly active.

Funerals: over the last 5 years we have had the following: 2019: 0 Congregation, 0 Parish. 2020: 1 Congregation, 0 Parish. 2021: 2 Congregation, 0 Parish. 2022: 2 Congregation, 0 Parish, 2023 to July: 4 Congregation, 0 Parish.

Section 6: Christian Education.

The Christian education of both young and old is one of today's great challenges. Until a couple of years ago our 'Sunday's Cool' group met each Sunday during term time, but this eventually proved more and more difficult to sustain. However, we now have a 'Toddler Time' group with about 12 youngsters, although the group is essentially run for their young mothers and carers. The group meets every Tuesday morning for coffee and a chat whilst entertaining their young charges. This has proved popular with both parents and carers and gives the church an opportunity to connect with both members and non-members alike, leading to several blessings and baptisms.



Our previous minister was chaplain at Andover Primary School and padre to the Brechin Air Training Corp.

Messy Church appears to have had its day and our volunteers now have a significant role supporting the Brechin Explorers which is run at St Andrews Episcopal Church during the holidays and often attracts over a hundred youngsters.



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Christian education for adults has also proved difficult to sustain even when combined with a regular Tuesday Soup Lunch. Our Bible study group attracted the same small group of loyal supporters each time but, unfortunately, proved too difficult to expand and develop and was eventually disbanded.

Elsewhere in the town, *'The Attic'* youth drop-in centre attracts high school aged young people. There are also scouting and guiding opportunities for young people.

Currently we are exploring with seven families whose children were recently baptised how best to involve their children in the life of the church.

Section 7: Ecumenical Context

Both the Gardner and Farnell churches are part of the Esk Parish Grouping and the country charges of Edzell, Lethnot & Glenesk linked with Fern, Careston and Menmuir. For a number of years, the group shared the services of a centrally funded Pastoral Assistant.

Both the Gardner and Farnell were members of *'Brechin Churches Together'* along with St. Andrews Episcopal Church, St Ninian's Roman Catholic Church, the Salvation Army and the Brechin Baptist Fellowship. This group met regularly and held a few joint services and events throughout the year. Unfortunately, this group has recently dissolved due to personnel departures. Relationships with the other churches are always amicable despite tensions arising from time to time as with any family. We are involved with the Angel Tree Project which distributes Christmas presents to children of deprived homes in Brechin.

Section 8: World Church

Although we do not have an active partnership with an overseas Mission, World Mission magazine is distributed to the congregation on a regular basis, and we are involved with Christian Aid. We are always open to new ideas and in the past have, sponsored goats and other farm animals through Oxfam Unwrapped as an alternative to the traditional harvest festival.

Both Worship centres participate in the Blythewood Shoe Box Campaign and to international appeals e.g. Ukraine, Pakistan etc. Farnell has also contributed to Angus Presbytery's funding for a nurse at Panahatti in Bangladesh

Section 9: Stewardship and Finance

Whilst copies of both Brechin Gardner Memorial's and Farnell's most recent accounts for 2022 are included with this Parish Profile a few further words of explanation may be helpful.

We are currently in the process of combining the funds and investments previously held separately by Farnell with those held by Gardner Memorial to provide a sound financial basis for the future mission of the united congregation.

Interim accounts showing the latest consolidated financial position of the united congregation can be made available to applicants on request.



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Over the last few years significant sums have been spent on the fabric of both buildings with the aid of legacies in the case of Farnell and grants from the General Trustees, the Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic Environment Scotland as part of the Gardner Memorial's Renewal Project.

To date each individual congregation has always met its financial obligations in respect of Mission and Ministry contributions and there is no reason to see why the united congregation should not continue to do so in respect of the new Giving to Grow allocation.

The congregation is not currently involved in stewardship promotion although members are encouraged to contribute by monthly Standing Order, as well as WFO envelopes and electronically. Members are encouraged to make use of 'easyfundraising' wherever possible and taxpayers to sign Gift Aid declarations to maximise their contributions.

Section 10: Staffing

The Church office was established in Gardner in October 2006. The office is currently open four mornings a week and is manned by a Church Administrator. The Administrator welcomes visitors, maintains the roll, baptismal register, deals with tradesmen and the day to day running of the church and the buildings.

The new united charge is presently integrating the office services with the office becoming the sole point of contact receiving and sending out all information.

We also employ a Church Officer (Beadle) at Gardner Memorial and Cleaners at both locations. Income tax and other payroll matters are handled by our treasurer and finance team.

All Elders have completed the required safeguarding training as required by the Church of Scotland.

Section 11: Church, Manse, and Halls

Manse

The Manse is a modern bungalow purpose built within the last 20 years in accordance with the Church of Scotland's guidelines for such buildings.



It is in a quiet cul-de-sac less than 500m from the Church and has four bedrooms, one with en-suite facilities, family bathroom, fully fitted kitchen, dining room and a large lounge all of which are heated with a modern gas central heating system.



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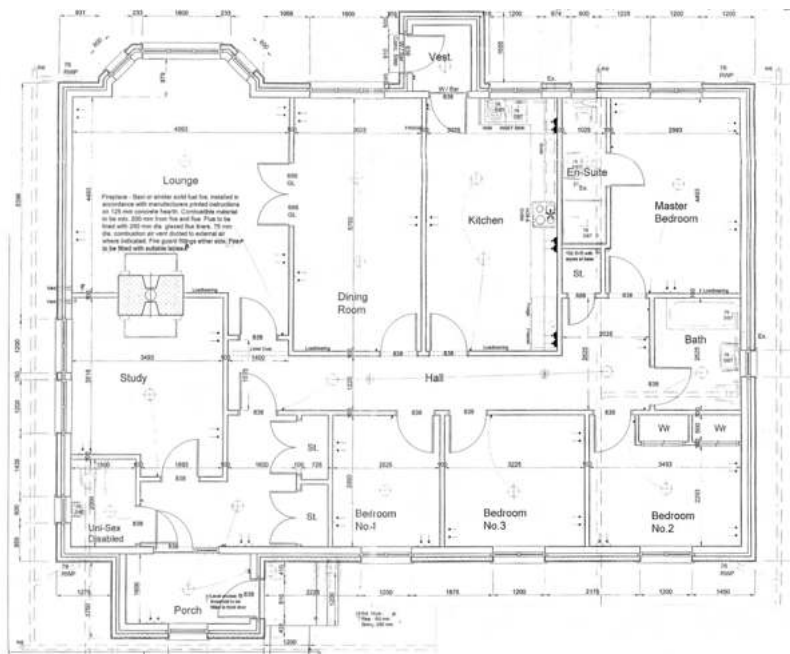


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The Minister's office and visitor's wc are located close to the front door and separate from the rest of the house.

The site includes a pleasant, secluded garden designed for low maintenance and well stocked with small bushes, along with a spacious driveway affording ample off-road parking for several cars and space for a garage.



Gardner Memorial Church and Halls

The Gardner Memorial's Church and Hall are conjoined in an 'L' shaped configuration and were designed and built as a single entity by the renowned Scottish Architect Sir John James Burnet as the leading example of his low friendly style churches. The Church was built between 1896 and 1900, given 'A' listed status in 1971 and stands on the corner of St. Ninian's Square within the Brechin Conservation area. The building has many unique features of interest to both students of architecture and others details of which are highlighted in the visitor's leaflets and paddleboards in English, French and German.

The most recent Quinquennial Fabric Survey was undertaken by conservation architects in June 2016 and formed the basis of our HLF & HES grants and the first phase of our Renewal Project which is now complete.

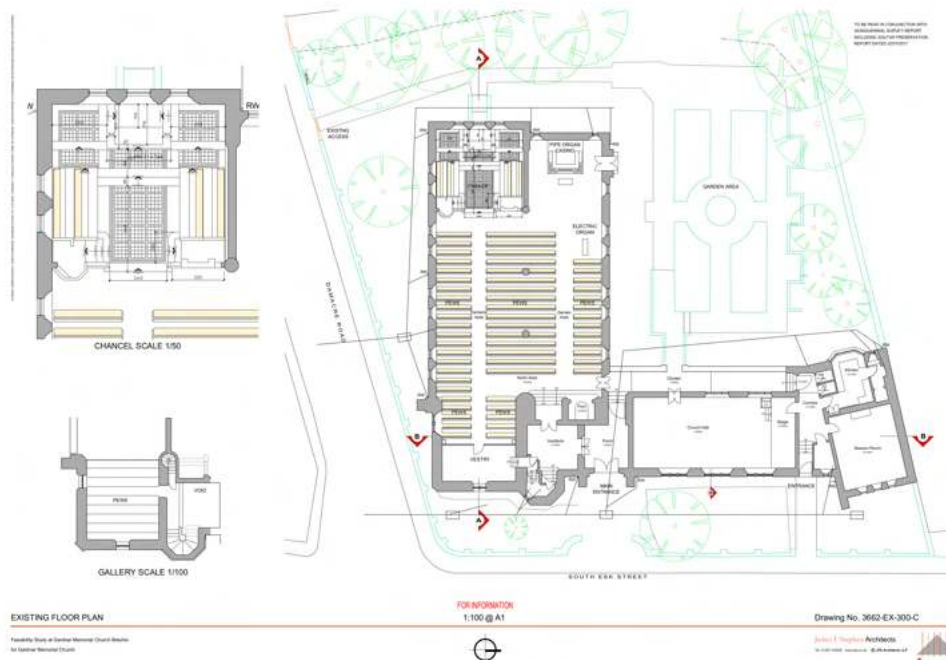


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Both Church and Hall have internet and audio visual facilities.



Farnell Church

Farnell Church buildings are used for Church meetings and for meetings of the Farnell Club and for a number of community groups. In the traditional rural style, Farnell Hall, in the village, is extensively used for community purposes.

Section 12: Web Links

Gardner Memorial and Farnell developed a joint website in 2008 prior to their linkage and the call of our previous minister. Since that time our current website www.gardnermemorialbrechin.org.uk

has been redeveloped several times to keep abreast of changing circumstances. However, this site will shortly be replaced by a new one at www.brechinfarnellchurch.org

reflecting the union of the two previously linked congregations.

Sunday morning services are broadcast regularly on our YouTube channel at Brechin Gardner Memorial Live which has several regular subscribers.

We are also in the process of changing the name of our facebook page to www.facebook.com/brechinfarnellchurch to keep our members and followers in the wider community up to date.

The latest Church of Scotland census details for both former parishes and the former Brechin Cathedral can be found at,

<https://cos.churchofscotland.org.uk/church-finder/data/statistics/parish-profiles/301789.pdf>



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for Brechin Gardner Memorial,

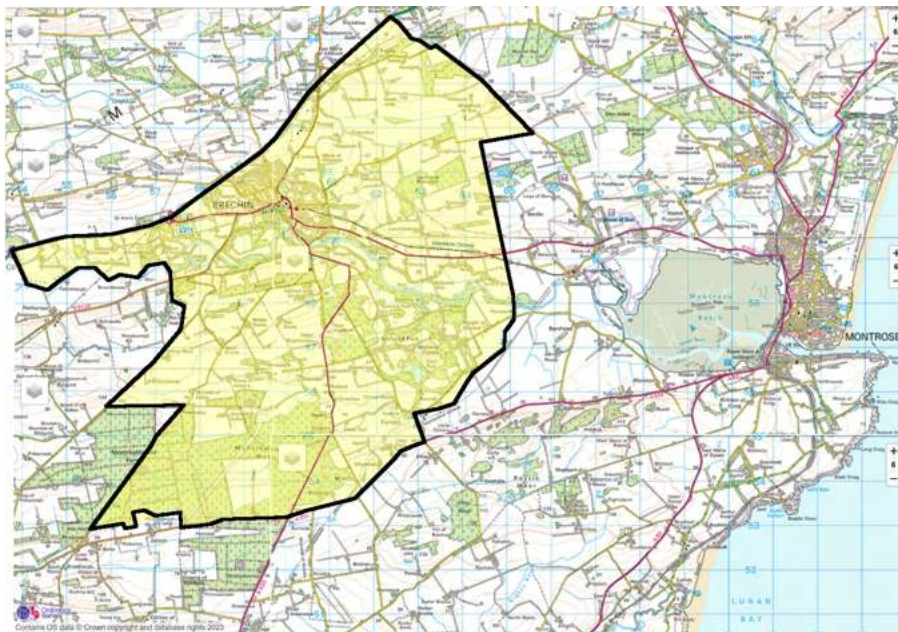
<https://cos.churchofscotland.org.uk/church-finder/data/statistics/parish-profiles/301798.pdf>

for Farnell, and

<https://cos.churchofscotland.org.uk/church-finder/data/statistics/parish-profiles/301804.pdf>

for Brechin Cathedral

The following map shows the boundaries of the new united parish together with a portion of that formerly covered by Brechin Cathedral.



Section 13: Projects

Gardner Memorial

Phase I – Building Conservation & Heritage

Phase 1 involved the repair and conservation work and was jointly financed by a Heritage Lottery Fund / Historic Environment Scotland – Grants for Places of Worship award of £220,000 and a Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme VAT refund of £47,000. The cost of this project was approximately £305,000, the balance of which was funded from our reserves in the General Trustees Consolidated Fabric Fund, local reserves and fund raising. This has enabled us to undertake both repair and improvement work as well as promote both the congregation’s and the building’s heritage through an extensive media and activity programme.

Phase II – Community Facilities



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Redevelopment of Hall, Kitchen and Toilets. As this will require considerable financial expenditure, we are currently looking at suitable grant availability.

Application for Approval of Works has been completed for the removal of pews under the balcony, to promote a supervised play area which will allow families with young children to participate in worship without leaving the sanctuary.

The provision of a new entrance and raised floor in the hall will allow easy wheelchair access to the hall, kitchen, session room and toilets through the main church entrance and enhance the use of the hall making it available to a much wider section of the community

Phase III – Environmental Improvements

Consideration is currently being given to ways in which we might be able to reduce our carbon footprint making use of the Scottish Government's Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES) to fund the installation of solar panels on our south facing roofs enabling the removal of pews and installation of a carbon polymer underfloor central heating system throughout the sanctuary for improved flexibility and use of the space available.

Farnell Church

Farnell's property team has recently completed a programme of repair and restoration of the Farnell building, including replacing lead flashings of the roof, repointing of the sandstone wall, exterior painting, full interior redecorating, update of heating system and fire system, repointing throughout and a replacement kitchen. Routine maintenance is now contemplated, with careful watch of the slated roof.