

Item 1 – BUSINESS BOARD – Supplementary Report

Membership of Church Courts

1. Code Par 226(a) allows the General Assembly, on the proposal of the relevant Presbytery, to decide to allow a minister who has voluntarily resigned the pastoral charge of a congregation to have his name enrolled as Minister-Emeritus of the congregation and as such be a member of the superior courts of the Church. The Rev JRI Harbinson resigned the charge of Moneydig on 31 December 2011, and the Coleraine and Limavady Presbytery now asks that his name be enrolled as Minister-Emeritus of Moneydig. An appropriate resolution is appended.

Business Board Membership

2. The full Business Board for the year 2012-13, together with the associated Arrangements Committee is as follows:-

The Clerk, Convener

(a) The Moderator, Clerk, Deputy Clerk of Assembly, Moderator-Designate, former Clerks, preceding three Moderators, Conveners and Secretaries of Commissions and Boards.

(b) Rev WT Cordner; Mrs EJ Mann – Rev CUR Bradley; WK Belshaw – Rev Desmond Knowles; John Suitters – Rev GF McKeown; George Crooks – Rev MS Gault; David McCleery – Rev PP Campbell; DC Cowan – Rev AE Tolland; Roy Kennedy – Rev JA McCaughan; Joseph Cassells – Rev Dr RL Craig; William Watson – Rev SA Woodburn; William Reid – Rev DB Knox; Gordon Lindsay – Rev Stephen Lockington; Stuart Ferguson – Rev MG McClelland; J Barton – Rev GJ Mackarel; Ronnie Gillanders – Rev DB Murpy; J Copeland – Rev RN Orr; Isaac Crilly – Rev RW Gaston; Bryce Gilmore – Rev WJ Murdock; JH McClurg – Rev Dr AR Rodgers; EM Carroll.

A. ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE

Rev GE Best, Convener

(a) The Moderator and Clerk of Assembly, the Moderator-Designate, Deputy Clerk, Communications and Press Secretary, Hospitality Secretary, Buildings Manager; Committee Convener.

(x) Rev Dr RL Craig; Mrs Fiona Watts, Mrs Joyce Anderson, Gary Nesbitt.

- (y) Revs WT Cordner, AE Tolland, RN Orr, WJ Murdock, JA McCaughan, MG McClelland; DC Cowan, David McCleery.

The Church of Ireland General Synod (2012)

The Very Rev Dr T Norman Hamilton reports:

1. It was a great delight for both Mrs Cherry Poynton and myself to represent our Church at the General Synod of the Church of Ireland in Dublin from 10-12 May 2012. Both of us had been active in the Christian Union in Trinity College Dublin (more years ago than we care to remember!) together with four of the current Bishops of the Church of Ireland and a number of other reps to the Synod, one of whom I had never met again since those days in TCD!

2. The Synod opened with a lengthy and very thoughtful address by its President, the Most Rev Alan Harper, Archbishop of Armagh. In it he explored how the Church discerns the voice of God especially in matters that are contentious. He was quite clear that the Church would not subscribe to *‘the ancient Latin tag, ‘Vox populi, vox dei’ – ‘the voice of the people is the voice of God.’ The Church is not a democracy in that sense... We recall the formula employed by the Church of the Book of the Acts which declared at a momentous time of division and decision, ‘It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us.’ [Acts 15.28]*

The Archbishop ended his address with these words: *‘Calvin advocated for every Christian ‘the exercise of charity’. The exercise of charity is appropriate to all situations of debate and in all circumstances of deeply held but disputed conviction within the body of Christ. I commend to this Synod ‘the exercise of charity’.*

3. The exercise of charity soon became a major issue as the Synod sought to handle on its opening day a series of three motions on human sexuality brought by the Archbishop of Dublin, Michael Jackson, and the Bishop of Down and Dromore, Harold Miller. The motions had received wide media coverage beforehand, and followed on from a special two-day General Synod Conference on human sexuality held in mid March. Following some debate on the matter, the Archbishop expressed his concern with *“the avoidance of doubt”*, and ruled that the first of the three motions could not be taken. The other two were then withdrawn. There was further behind the scenes discussion which eventually led to a single motion being tabled later in the Synod, and which was passed on the final day. It affirmed the Church’s traditional teaching on marriage and repeated its welcome to all people as members of the Church by a two to one majority.

The Synod also asked its Standing Committee to progress work on the issue of human sexuality in the context of Christian belief, and to bring proposals to next year's General Synod for the formation of a select committee with terms of reference and to include reporting procedures.

4. Whilst the discussion on sexuality received the greatest coverage, I found the most fascinating discussion to be one on the importance of the Single Farm Payment in sustaining the rural economy and rural farming. It seemed to me that there is much to be learned from the Synod in its attention to rural matters, and the level of both expertise and concern brought into the public domain.

5. This was the first Synod in which visiting delegates were enabled and encouraged to take part in debates, and I was privileged to be able to do so. Whatever the differences of structure and governance, there is no doubt that the Churches in Ireland face very similar issues and have very similar concerns, and that we would do well to listen to what is happening in other Christian assemblies and learn from them. In particular, the report on the Church 21 parish development programme presented by the Bishop of Kilmore, the Rt Rev Ken 'Fanta' Clarke was an especially heart warming contribution. This is, and I quote, a *'journey of change, a process of transformation. It is more about: process than package; people than programme; values than inventiveness; planning than patch up; God's ideas than good ideas.'* I suggest that we as an Assembly might gain much from a structured conversation with our Anglican colleagues on how the Lord has led them to the place where Church 21 *'offers a clear framework for growth, but also allows flexibility. It is not a one-size fits-all venture'*.

6. As Presbyterians we value light from any quarter, and there was plenty of it at this year's General Synod!

The Church of Scotland General Assembly (2012)

The Right Rev Dr Ivan J Patterson reports:

The Church of Scotland General Assembly met from Saturday May 19th to Friday May 25th and was attended by some 800 Commissioners and around 100 delegates and visitors. I was accompanied by one of my chaplains the Rev Neil Bingham, Mr Brownlow McClean an elder in Newcastle Congregation along with our respective wives.

At the opening session on Saturday morning the Rt Rev Albert Bogle was installed as the new Moderator. A letter of greeting was read from Her Majesty

the Queen and her representative, His Grace, The Lord High Commissioner, Baron Selkirk of Douglas, addressed the Assembly.

On Saturday evening the Assembly again met in session and the outgoing Moderator, the Very Rev David Arnott gave an account of his year of office. His address included experiences he and his wife Rosemary had on home and overseas visits. He gave a moving report of his visit to Afghanistan.

The Assembly service in St Giles on Sunday morning was one of real pomp with representatives from various aspects of civic life being present in their colourful regalia. The Moderator gave an inspiring address, on what was Ascension Sunday, on the sacrifice and joy of the ascended Christ.

In the afternoon Princess Street Gardens were packed to capacity for “Heart and Soul”, a celebration of the life of the Church of Scotland. Individual Congregations and organisations occupied the tents that lined the gardens and the whole event concluded with a Songs of Praise service. Robin Mark and band led the worship. This was a marvellous opportunity for the Church to meet the community and something PCI could consider emulating.

Inter-faith matters reoccurred in various forms during the Assembly, including the place of non-Christian faiths using sanctuaries for worship; the question of how the Church of Scotland should relate to other faith groups and the place of Christian mission in a multi-faith society.

The Church and Society Report was wide ranging and took into account issues on poverty, domestic abuse, human trafficking, Scottish independence, literacy and neuroethics. The Report on neuroethics noted that the recent understanding in neuroscience appears to challenge the Christian understanding of free-will and moral responsibility.

During the Mission and Discipleship Council Report it was pointed out that up to 90% of the Scottish population were untouched by the Church. Presbyteries, with the Council’s support, were encouraged to engage with the challenges of mission and ministry which the 21st century presents.

The Report of the World Mission Council focused on Asia with a specific emphasis on China. This is “the year of China” for the Council and had already been highlighted by visits from the Council Convenor and Secretary and the first extensive Moderatorial visit to the country in two decades. The Report noted the great historic links between the Church of Scotland and China, through missionaries such as Eric Liddell.

The General Assembly congratulated the Guild on its 125th anniversary and commended its work. The development of the Guild's "Golden Age Project" was welcomed and its findings commended to the whole Church.

The Archbishop of Canterbury was welcomed and asked to address the Assembly. He spoke of what the Church is called to be in the here and now and reflected on the words from Revelations "I have set before you an open door that no one can shut".

On Thursday morning Chaplains to the Forces were welcomed and several commissioners and the Moderator spoke appreciatively about their sacrificial service and commended them in prayer.

A new electronic voting system was introduced this year to the Assembly. This enabled an almost immediate result of voting to be given. It also recorded individual attendance at each session of the Assembly and commissioners had to attend at least ten sessions to qualify for payment of expenses. Another interesting innovation we might want to try in PCI!

Additional Resolutions

- 1a. That the recommended Order of Business be adopted.
- 1.b That the Rev JRI Harbinson be enrolled as Minister-Emeritus of Moneydig with immediate effect.

DONALD J. WATTS

Item 2 – Reports of Presbyteries – Supplementary Report

The Dublin and Munster Presbytery reports that the voting on the Overtures anent Code Par 204 and 210(1) was 28 for, 0 against.

The Templepatrick Presbytery reports that the voting on the Overtures anent Code Par 204 and 210(1) was 17 for, 0 against.

Item 5 – BOARD OF CHRISTIAN TRAINING – Supplementary Report

Length of Assistantships

1. As indicated in the Board's main report, consideration has been on-going regarding the appropriate length for Licentiate Assistantships (2012 Reports, p 187, par 13).
2. At a meeting on Friday, 11 May 2012, the Board of Christian Training received a report from the sub-committee which had been set up to look at the matter and unanimously agreed to accept and implement the following recommendations:
 - (a) That the length of the Licentiate Assistantship should be standardized irrespective of age.
 - (b) That Licentiate Assistantships should be deemed to run from 1 July and last for two years and two months, giving a date of eligibility 1 September. (This to take effect from the next assignment round i.e. for those beginning their Student Assistantship in October 2013 and therefore their Licentiate Assistantship in July 2014.)
 - (c) That Ministers and Kirk Sessions, especially of larger Congregations, should be encouraged to consider seriously the significant contribution they could make to the training of potential Ministers by offering the opportunity for an assistant to be assigned to their Congregation.
 - (d) That the existing formula should be retained for arriving at the level of the Students' Bursary Fund grant and the amounts paid to Licentiate Assistants.

Additional Resolution

- 5a. That the General Assembly approve the recommendations in the Supplementary Report of the Board of Christian Training.

JNI McNEELY

Item 8 – UNION COMMISSION

Amended Resolution

5. That the Congregation of Nelson Memorial be amalgamated with the Congregation of Immanuel, the date of amalgamation to be no later than 31 May 2014, (as agreed by the Presbytery of North Belfast in consultation with the Union Commission), on terms set by the Union Commission.

SAMUEL MATTHEWS

Item 10 – BOARD OF MISSION IN IRELAND

Additional Resolution

6a. That the General Assembly welcome the SPUD contribution to the Awake 2012 material and encourage congregations to make use of it, so that all generations may be intentional in moving forward together while confronting the challenges of change. (*SPUD*)

DJ BRUCE

Item 12 – TRUSTEES – Supplementary Report

Death of a Trustee

It is with great regret that the Trustees record the sudden death of one of their esteemed members, Mr David Bell CB, on 22 May 2012. Mr Bell was appointed a Trustee in 1993 and was immediately invited to serve on the Executive Committee. He willingly offered his wisdom and years of experience in property valuation to serve the needs of the whole Church.

Amended Resolution

8. That in accordance with the Will of the late John Getty the following be constituted as the Committee for the “direction and management of the application” of the income from the Getty Bequest:

Very Revs Dr S Hutchinson, Dr David Clarke, Revs Dr DJ Watts, WJ Orr, OBE; Mr AT Ross, Mr John Millar, OBE.

DONALD J. WATTS

Item 17 – GENERAL BOARD – Supplementary Report

Memorial Record

The Very Rev Dr W Donald Patton reports:

The Rev Richard Samuel Ross MA, Minister Emeritus of Carnlough and Cushendall Congregations in the Presbytery of Ballymena, Co Antrim, died on 11 April 2012 in the 90th year of his age and the 58th year of his ministry. He was born on 16 February 1923 at Annalong, County Down, to William Ross, an Officer in the newly formed Royal Ulster Constabulary, and his wife Annie

May, née Hazlett. In 1925 his father was transferred to Belfast with the RUC. Mr Ross attended Stranmillis and Fane Street Primary Schools, then Ardmore College. On leaving school he worked in a series of employments including Short and Harland and the RUC for four years. Raised in a loving Christian family he was brought up in association with Windsor Congregation and attended both Windsor and Fisherwick Sunday Schools. As a boy of ten years he committed his life to Christ during a Church mission and in his early twenties felt called to the ordained ministry while attending meetings of the Portstewart Convention. He proceeded to Magee College, Londonderry, in 1946, and then Trinity College, Dublin, graduating MA in 1950, and received his theological training in the Assembly's College, Belfast. Licensed by the Presbytery of Belfast 22 June 1952, he served as Assistant to the Very Rev Dr Gordon Erskine in the Congregation of Rosemary 1950 to 1955. There he met his future wife, Eileen Margaret Wadmore. They were married on 11 May 1955, and in the ensuing years they had three children, Richard, Jennifer and Andrew. On receiving a call from the Congregation of Harryville he was ordained and installed there by the Presbytery of Ballymena 14 February 1955. In these early years the economy of the parish was dominated by the Braid Water Spinning Co. and the Phoenix Weaving Co. Many of the local people lived in the streets of mill houses near the Church. The following years saw growth in population and housing, increasing the numerical strength of the Congregation to over 700 families, though with the founding of the Congregations of Ballykeel and Ballee, in subsequent years the numbers fell back. New halls were built to accommodate the thriving youth work and were opened in 1975. Mr Ross was a diligent pastor and conscientious preacher who was also involved in the life of the local community through school boards and community organisations such as the NSPCC and as an army chaplain to junior soldiers at St Patrick's barracks and a deputy hospital chaplain at the Waveney and Braid Valley hospitals. Sadly, Mrs Ross died 4 April 1979 and Mr Ross resigned from Harryville in 1981. Resuming ministry in 1985 Mr Ross served as stated supply in the Congregations of Carnlough and Cushendall and was installed there in 1989 continuing until his retirement 31 March 1994. He served the wider Church as Convener of the Christian Healing Committee 1978-1980 using his pastoral gifts to lead this caring ministry. He was Moderator of the Synod of Ballymena and Coleraine 1977-1978. Mr Ross married Maureen Bingham on 28 August 1986 who predeceased him 19 May 2009. His love of English language and literature bore fruit in his published book of poems entitled *Life with a Capital L* the proceeds of which were donated to Cancer Research, and he contributed to the Park Author Symposium *Faith for today*. We extend our sympathy and prayers to his family circle and with them give thanks to God for his witness to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour during a long lifetime.

The Rev Robert Raymond (Ray) Davey, OBE, BA, DLitt, LLD, DPhil, DD, died on 16 April 2012 in the 98th year of his age and the 67th year of his ministry. The third son and fourth child of the Rev Robert Davey and his wife Charlotte Davey, nee Higginson, he was born on 10 January 1915. He was brought up in connection with the Congregation of Dunmurry, where his father was Minister for over forty years, and attended Miss Gamble's School (in the local Orange Hall), Dunmurry Public Elementary School (in the Church Hall) and the Royal Belfast Academical Institution, 1926-33. A keen rugby player, he was a member of the Inst Schools Cup winning team in 1933 and later played for Ulster. He proceeded to Queen's University, Belfast, 1933-36, graduating BA, and received his theological education at the Assembly's College, Belfast, 1936-37 and 1938-39, and New College, Edinburgh, 1937-38. He was licensed by the Belfast Presbytery on 24 May 1939 and served as Assistant Minister in First Bangor, 1939-40, preaching his first sermon in that role on 3 September 1939, having listened to the declaration of war by the then Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. In 1940 he volunteered as a YMCA Field Secretary with the forces and was posted to Tobruk in North Africa. When Tobruk fell in 1942 he was taken prisoner and spent the rest of the war in various camps run first by the Italians who later handed him over to the Germans. He was eventually transferred to a camp near Dresden in January 1944, where he was able to exercise a wide ranging ministry and met many ordinary Germans. The destruction of that city in the raids of February 1945 deeply affected him and remained with him for the rest of his life. He wrote, "I walked for a long time without seeing a house fit for habitation. I had never seen such absolute devastation on so wide a scale." He later wrote several books in which he described his experiences. On returning to Belfast after the end of the war he was ordained by the Presbytery of Belfast for overseas service with the YMCA on 16 September 1945, was awarded the MBE for his wartime service with the YMCA, and married Kathleen Burrows, daughter of the Rev Edwin Burrows, Minister of Knock Presbyterian Church, on 2 January 1946. Interestingly, he told his family many years later that when he was in North Africa arrangements were being made for his ordination in Jerusalem, but his capture at Tobruk intervened. He served as Assistant Minister in McCracken Memorial for part of 1946 before taking up his appointment as the first full-time chaplain to Queen's University later that year on 1 October. He had learned the value of community in his childhood and during the war, so he set about creating a strong community for the students based at 7 College Park Avenue, and later at the 'Centre' built on the same site. In this he was very successful and the pursuit of community at a wider level led to the formation of the Corrymeela Community, a community promoting reconciliation and peace-building, outside Ballycastle in 1965. Ray Davey is widely acknowledged as its founder. Though Corrymeela began its work before the start of the 'troubles', by the time he was inducted as its first Director on 31 October 1971, those 'troubles' were raging in an increasingly frightening manner. The leadership given during the seventies

by him and his wife was both hands-on and courageous. He retired on 31 December 1979 and was awarded the OBE for his work in 1980. The high regard in which he and his work were held can also be seen in the four diverse honorary doctorates which were awarded to him from the University of Ulster; Queen's University, Belfast; the National University of Ireland Maynooth; and the Presbyterian Theological Faculty of Ireland. Warm and fulsome tributes were paid to him and his work at the time of his death including from the Moderator of the General Assembly, Dr Ivan Patterson, who said, "Ray Davey was a man of total commitment whether to his faith, his family, his sport and, what he will be best remembered for, to the building of peace and reconciliation in communities engaged in conflict."

He was predeceased by his wife Kathleen in 2008 and is survived by his daughter, Alison, sons Rob and Ian, and nine grandchildren, to whom we extend our sympathy and prayers as we give thanks for the life and service of our esteemed colleague.

Priorities Committee

At the request of the General Board, the Priorities Committee considered "holding a PCI Residential Conference in 2015" (G.A. Minutes 2011, p 25, res 2). It is recognised that as the five Assembly themes are developed various initiatives may be used to explore them as a Church, but the most obvious theme for a Residential Conference similar to previous events is "A community of global concern". Various ideas were discussed but the recommendation is to consider a Conference to develop that theme during 2016-2017. This would also be towards the end of the five-year cycle. If this report is accepted the Committee will bring a more definite proposal for the shape and timing of such a Conference to the next Assembly, with the possible membership of a Steering Committee.

The Priorities Committee were encouraged by the response to the call to prayer on 17 April 2012 and are following this up in a number of ways, including the opportunity for prayer in the Chapel of Assembly Buildings each Friday at 1.15 p.m.

DONALD J WATTS

Doctrine Committee

The Doctrine Committee met no less than ten times during the year since the last General Assembly. Its work was mainly to produce what it hopes will be a

final report on the particular aspect of marriage first referred to it by the General Assembly in 2009 (Reports pp.38-49).

In addition to their major work of the year, the Doctrine Committee was asked to address two other issues. First, was a letter from the Presbytery of Route concerning the appropriateness of having a facility in a church building for full immersion baptism. The Committee responded by saying that it saw no absolute theological impediment to having such a facility and, indeed, it might have some missional benefits. However, the Committee also stressed that it is important that our architecture expresses our theology accurately. Care must be taken that a missionally well intentioned facility should not tacitly diminish the covenantal understanding of baptism that is central to PCI's understanding of the sacrament and that baptism as a public proclamation should not displace baptism as a sign of admission to the Christian Church.

The second issue was a request from the General Board to comment on the report of the Tyrone Memorial Review Panel (2011). The response was as follows: *The Doctrine Committee was asked to report on the Tyrone Memorial Review Panel's report (2011), 'on Biblical grounds'. Having considered the report of the Tyrone Memorial Review Panel, the Committee has not identified any obvious Biblical or theological difficulties, within the terms set out for the Committee.*

J PATTON TAYLOR

Church and Society Committee

Panel on Social Issues

1. The Social Issues Panel exists to be a link body between the Church and Society Committee and the Board of Social Witness on issues of common interest. It is the task of the Panel to enhance communication between the two groupings and to assign a lead role and avoid unnecessary duplication of work. It is hoped that the Panel will become redundant when the new structures are in place.

2. The Panel is headed by the Director for Social Witness and Northern Convener of Church and Society and brings together people relevant to the task. On the matter of prisons Lindsay Conway and Lesley Carroll are joined by Ronnie Orr and Valerie Newell.

3. The Panel has met to consider the report of the team reviewing the Northern Ireland Prison Service published in October 2011 (Ann Owers Report). A process of consultation has been planned so that the group can take

account of the views of chaplains, the oversight group etc. Following this process the Panel will bring some recommendations about how to proceed.

4. The Review brings other issues to light which need to be addressed by those in power and also across society. At this post-conflict stage in our history changes are likely to be needed in how society cares for and resettles offenders; in how offenders are dealt with while they are in prison, particularly in terms of offering opportunities for transformation; and in how society manages some of the most challenging offenders who are largely rejected by local communities. So it is likely that some new thinking needs to come from the Church on the broader aspects of prisons, prisoners and resettling prisoners in society. The Chaplains too are being reviewed and so across the board there is change and challenge.

5. The Panel is mindful of the uncertainty that can abound in a time of change. No matter where change is happening there are common reactions – some embrace change warmly; some feel that change is a commentary, and not a good commentary, on the work they have done in the past; some believe change is not needed. The Panel is mindful too of the service that many have given as prison officers, chaplains, visitors, hostel managers and workers, and in so many other aspects of the care and resettlement of prisoners. Change, in the Panel's view, is not a commentary on what they have failed to do but it is commentary on the fact that our society has moved to a new place and that there is new skill and learning to be applied to enhance good practice.

6. As the Welfare Reform debate continues there is a rising consciousness of the impact proposed changes may have on people. While it remains unclear precisely what changes are proposed it is clear that there will be a shift in how benefits are decided. A close eye must be kept to the debate so that the vulnerable are not penalised while those who have enough do not bear any of the burden. A watching brief will be kept through the Panel on Social Issues and appropriate response made. A brief overview of the implications of welfare reform is attached at Appendix 1.

7. A further challenge on the matter of Welfare Reform comes in the shape of how the people of Northern Ireland view themselves in relation to Great Britain and how legislation written at Westminster should or should not be rewritten for the Northern Irish context. This is a matter which the Executive has yet to resolve but clearly there are post-conflict issues to be considered in any legislation from Stormont.

8. It is not helpful for decisions about Northern Ireland to be driven by a 'special status' mentality but rather by a sense of being a 'normal' society. Equally society has to take care to attend to the legacy of the past, particularly in

the areas of health and well-being, ability to work, skills for work and the care of children and young people.

9. It is the view of both the Panel and the Church and Society Committee that the implementation of reform in the Health Service will be as thorny and perhaps even more emotive than the implementation of Welfare Reform. It will take some considerable effort on the part of PCI to engage in the debate in a manner that is informed, strategic and effective.

10. The report of the review *Transforming your care: A Review of Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland December 2011* can be found at <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/transforming-your-care-review-of-hsc-ni-final-report.pdf>. As implementation progresses decisions will have to be made as to who will take the lead for PCI. In the first instance the Panel on Social Issues will consider what needs to be done.

Consultations

11. A consultation on EU funding was responded to and that response is attached at Appendix 2.

The Possibility of Reconciliation

12. Since Easter Sunday there has been a notable shift in tone to the public statements from Sinn Fein regarding the possibilities of reconciliation. A number of senior Republicans made significant speeches pointing towards a new time and a new opportunity for reconciliation. While the term 'reconciliation' is clearly not being used in a theological sense it is a matter of interest to the Church when such terms are used in the political domain. This is also an opportunity for the Church to interface with public debate and to open up new content and meaning to the terminology that is being used and therefore to the relationships that might possibly be formed. What Republicans actually mean is still a matter for debate but it is the view of the Committee that an opportunity exists for new interaction, for straight talking and for hope building through conversations with old enemies with whom we have settled ourselves into co-existence which is, at times, far from comfortable. The question is whether or not it is possible for society to move on from such co-existence to more reconciled relationships.

13. Across society there is a general complaint that there is not enough being achieved by the Executive. It is worth noting, therefore, that public overtures have been made by Republicans with regard to reconciliation and worth exploring what possibilities this might hold for community relationships and for how politics is done.

Citizenship, Covenant and Christ Conference

14. The Conference *Citizenship, Covenant and Christ* was held at Belfast City Hall on 19 April 2012. About one hundred and twenty delegates gathered over the day to listen to the speakers and to question and debate with one another. The Committee wishes to publicly record its thanks to Belfast City Hall for the facility that was provided to us and for the helpful way in which staff assisted us in preparation for the event and on the day. The Committee also wishes to record thanks to the speakers – The Most Reverent and Right Honourable Dr John Sentamu, Archbishop of York; Deputy Jimmy Deenihan TD, Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht; Professor Laurence Kirkpatrick; Deputy Dara Calleary TD; Mr Tom Hartley, Belfast City Councillor; Mr Philip Orr; Nelson McCausland, Minister for the Department of Social Development; and Hugo Swire MP, Minister of State.

15. The Committee appreciated the participation of representatives from across the political spectrum and representing a wide range of groups for civil society. Relationships begun on the day have the potential to bear fruit and are warmly welcomed, especially in the Republic. The model used for the day is one that the Committee believes could be used to address other significant subjects, among them some of the other significant anniversaries that will be faced during the decade which has just begun.

16. Thanks are also due to staff in Assembly Buildings who facilitated booking, payment and the distribution of information for the Conference.

17. Material from the conference will be made available electronically through the PCI website and Mr Stephen Lynas is to be thanked for his hard work on this and indeed for the considerable effort he put in assisting the Committee in preparation for the conference and also on the day.

Appendix 1

Overview of the Impact of Welfare Reform

The on-going process of Welfare Reform is the biggest change in the Welfare System in sixty years, a process that will impact on the majority of households in the Northern Ireland. Few would argue that a reform of our benefits system was not long overdue, that the existing system is no longer fit for purpose and is open to abuse. In launching the Review Government has returned to a previous age and language in calling the process, “Welfare Reform”. Beveridge, the architect of the Welfare State in 1947, had set out a plan to put an end to the “five giants” of “Poverty, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness.”

As a Church we had connected with the whole process of Poor Law Reform. The General Assembly of 1921 received a report “A Programme for Social Reform”, which advocated raising the school sponsored employment schemes, child welfare centres and a drastic change in the Poor Law – concepts and principles that were ahead of their time and progressive. At the General Assembly of 2011 the Board of Social Witness advised that – “The voluntary/community/faith sector continues to supplement the statutory sector and government knows that the Board will reluctantly close its doors or refuse admission to anyone. Challenges and opportunities will arise during this period of recession both at Board and local levels. Ministers and Elders will experience a higher demand on their time as they respond to more and more pastoral needs as a result of local services being cut”.

The Moderator Dr Patterson, together with the other Church Leaders have connected with the process, and have continually challenged the impact of the review and the speed of its implementation. The Church Leaders have met with Lord Frued (Welfare Reform Minister), the Secretary of State Owen Patterson and Social Security Minister Nelson McCausland. They also hosted an event in the Assembly Buildings, which was addressed by both the Secretary of State and Minister McCausland. The Secretary of State opened the event by stating – “In Northern Ireland I want to create the conditions for a dynamic, private sector led, economy. To achieve that we must promote enterprise and reform our broken welfare system so that work pays.” The Welfare Reform Act has now achieved Royal Assent. There is total parity within the benefits system in the United Kingdom, not permitting any changes within the main principles of the benefits system, although there can be flexibility within the locally administered allowances. The biggest change will be the introduction of the “Universal Credit” – an attempt to make one payment and to cap the maximum that individual claimants can be paid. It is essential that we as a Church remain connected to this process, as it rolls out over the next few years.

The aim of the Act

- creating the right incentives to get more people into work by ensuring work always pays;
- protecting the most vulnerable in our society;
- delivering fairness to those claiming benefit and to the taxpayer.

The main elements of the Act

The main elements of the Act are:

- the introduction of Universal Credit to provide a single streamlined benefit that will ensure work always pays;

- a stronger approach to reducing fraud and error with tougher penalties for the most serious offences;
- a new claimant commitment showing clearly what is expected of claimants while giving protection to those with the greatest needs;
- reforms to Disability Living Allowance, through the introduction of the Personal Independence Payment to meet the needs of disabled people today;
- creating a fairer approach to Housing Benefit to bring stability to the market and improve incentives to work;
- driving out abuse of the Social Fund system by giving greater power to local authorities;
- reforming Employment and Support Allowance to make the benefit fairer and to ensure that help goes to those with the greatest need;
- a new system of child support which puts the interest of the child first.

Which benefits will go?

- The following benefits will be abolished:
- income support;
- income-based jobseeker's allowance;
- income-related employment and support allowance;
- housing benefit;
- child tax credit and working tax credit;
- crisis loans and community care grants – responsibility for an equivalent will be passed to DSD probably in a new scheme;
- budgeting loans – to be replaced by payments on account (an advance of universal credit) in cases of need.

Which benefits will stay?

- Contribution based jobseeker's allowance. The earnings rules will be aligned with universal credit;
- Contributory employment and support allowance. The earnings rules will be aligned with universal credit;
- Child benefit;
- Carer's allowance;
- Bereavement allowance, bereavement payment and widowed parent's allowance;
- Maternity allowance;
- Industrial injuries disablement benefit;
- Statutory sick pay;

- Maternity grants and cold weather payments – to be paid automatically when the qualifying criteria are met. Funeral payments will remain, according to the information available.

Who will be able to claim universal credit?

Universal credit will replace means-tested benefits and tax credits for working-age people up to pension credit age. It will be paid to people in or out of work.

Appendix 2

Summary of response to the consultation on EU funding

Capital projects should require a substantial capital input from the sponsors of any project themselves. The emphasis must lead to on-the-ground support for BOTH the individuals and groups delivering social inclusion programmes and dealing with hardship. Any expectation that volunteering can be enhanced without resource input is seriously misplaced. This is of special importance to the faith sector whose volunteering capacity is very significant, but which cannot simply be widened and/or embedded more deeply in community life without suitable infra-structural support being made available within the faith sector itself.

There is a strong link between promoting employment and supporting labour mobility and promoting social inclusion and combating poverty. They are crucial to the ending of paramilitarism and the rise of criminality in many of our most vulnerable communities.

Social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas. This is often overlooked because of the very nature of rural life, where family life is central to the continued existence of farming itself. Single Farm Payments have been very significant over the years and any changes to the scheme in favour of more 'efficient' farming is not self evidently beneficial if it contributes to the dismantling of the very fabric of rural life.

If greater participation is sought from the faith communities, then there needs to be an *explicit* opening of the door for those communities to funding. The current arrangements often effectively preclude contributions from the faith community in those areas where they seek to focus on community benefit and welfare.

Neighbourhood Renewal programmes have been seriously hampered by lack of dedicated funds – and will fail unless dedicated funds are made available. This

has already led to a sense of disillusionment in many NR communities, and by extension this makes them vulnerable to continued paramilitarism and deepening criminality – especially in drugs.

The paperwork associated with SEUPB is often a complete nightmare. There is little incentive to show interest in any Peace IV programme if its bureaucracy is comparable to that of Peace III.

Unless this issue is resolved the question is rather academic. If it were solved, the emphasis should be on localised programmes perhaps delivered through local councils under RPA.

LESLEY E CARROLL, ALAN J BOAL

Ad-Hoc Committee on Eldership

The Committee met on two occasions to discuss the remit of the General Assembly :

‘to consider the possibility of Ruling Elders serving on a Kirk Session for a set period of time.’ (Minutes 2010,p.44, resolution 8)

1. Arising out of its deliberations several issues became clear.
 - a. Any consideration of election to Kirk Session being for a fixed term needs to be viewed within the wider context of the Session’s essential role within a Congregation and an understanding of what a Ruling Elder’s main function ought to be.
 - b. Much of the ground work relating to this issue has already been done by the Panel on Leadership of the Board of Christian Training and is contained in its Report to the General Assembly in 2010. Anything this present Committee might consider would be complementary to and a continuation of that report.
 - c. The Committee would only be able to bring an interim report to this Assembly with a view to there being a full Report in 2013.
2. The Committee strongly believes that Kirk Session ideally ought to be a manageable unit who, in conjunction with the Minister, would be able to think strategically, determine spiritual direction and make leadership decisions on behalf of the Congregation. In order to fulfil this requirement a greater emphasis needs to be placed on the Kirk Session being responsible for the oversight of the Congregation and not simply a body whose main function is pastoral. The Committee fears that Kirk Sessions often hesitate to be proactive

in their leadership and the reason for electing new Elders usually arises out of a need to service Elders' districts.

3. The Committee considers it important to emphasize that any discussion on these matters would only concern the role of the Kirk Session and that of a Ruling Elder. The office of the Eldership and the Elder's pastoral responsibilities should remain as presently constituted.

4. In the pursuit of this ideal fixed term membership of Kirk Session might be considered. There are advantages and disadvantages in any such change and implementation would be more beneficial in some Congregations than others.

5. The perceived advantages would be:

a. It might be more likely to create leadership which would be visionary and dynamic.

b. Opportunity in leadership might be given to those whose gifting is more in the sphere of strategic thinking and implementation than in pastoral visitation.

c. There are those who might be willing to accept responsibility were that to be for a set time rather than as a long term commitment as at present.

6. The most obvious disadvantage of any such scheme would be that while it would be practical, and even necessary, in larger Congregations it would be particularly difficult to service and sustain in smaller ones.

7. Were fixed term membership of Kirk Session to be considered in any form training in the management of change would be a key component and this is again where reference needs to be made to the 2010 report by the Panel on Leadership.

8. The Committee's work in this first year has been preparatory but in order to continue its work the Committee believes that the addition of other members, particularly Elders, will be helpful.

JOHN M FINLAY

Ad-Hoc Committee on Judicial Appeals

Having consulted with the Judicial Commission the Judicial Appeals Committee has agreed the following guidelines to assist in the relationship between a superior and inferior court:

In any cases of appeal or reference or any other matters which may be referred to it under or by virtue of The Code a superior court should be guided by the following principles.

- 1. A superior court, when reviewing the actions and decisions of an inferior court, should limit itself to the issues raised by the parties to the case in the original (inferior) court.*
- 2. A superior court should have due regard for the finding of an inferior court regarding those factual matters which the inferior court is more competent to determine, because of its proximity to the events in question, and because of its personal knowledge and observations of the parties and witnesses involved. However, a superior court should reverse a factual finding of an inferior court, if there is clear error on the part of the inferior court.*
- 3. A superior court should have due regard for the finding of an inferior court regarding those matters of discretion and judgment which can best be addressed by a court with familiar acquaintance of the events and parties. However, a superior court should reverse such a judgment by an inferior court if there is clear error on the part of the lower court.*
- 4. However, any superior court does still retain the power and responsibility for the hearing of appeals, and references, and other matters, and that important responsibility cannot always be satisfied by deferring to the findings of an inferior court.*

The Committee also recommends that leaflets be prepared:

- (a) to guide a Presbytery in carrying out a judicial process;
- (b) to guide an individual who is considering an appeal against a decision of a Church Court.

DONALD J WATTS

Amended Resolution

10.	Irish Council of Churches	£19,300
	Irish Inter-Church Meeting	£10,700
	Conference of European Churches	£5,500
	Community of Protestant Churches in Europe	£1,500
	Church and Society Commission, Brussels	£2,000
	World Communion of Reformed Churches	£16,000

DONALD J WATTS

Additional Resolutions

12a. That the General Assembly encourage the work done through the Panel on Social Issues and the direction the Panel is giving to the process of public engagement.

12b. That the General Assembly believe genuine efforts to facilitate the process of reconciliation between old enemies should be prayerfully encouraged and supported.

12c. That the General Assembly affirm the view of the Church and Society Committee that the model used for the Citizenship, Covenant and Christ Conference is a good model for engagement in the public square.

LESLEY E CARROLL

22a That the General Assembly approve the guidelines recommended by the ad-hoc Committee on Judicial Appeals.

22b. That the General Assembly ask the Clerk of the General Assembly in consultation with the Judicial Commission to provide Presbytery Clerks with a guide to carrying out judicial processes.

22c. That the General Assembly instruct the Clerk of the General Assembly, in consultation with the Judicial Commission, to make available a clear guide to anyone considering a judicial appeal.

22d. That the ad-hoc Committee on Judicial Appeals be thanked and discharged.

DONALD J WATTS

Item 23 – BOARD OF YOUTH AND CHILDREN’S MINISTRY – Supplementary Report

1. During the past year, the Board of Youth and Children’s Ministry have been seeking to lease the Guysmere Youth Centre as an interim measure to secure some income from the Centre while waiting for developments in the Sheltered Accommodation application at the Lucan Youth Centre.

2. In the spring of 2011 a number of applications were made to lease the Guysmere Centre, from which a suitable applicant was selected. Following a lengthy process with this client in late November of 2011 the client withdrew their application. The centre was re-advertised in January 2012. However, the Board were not happy to proceed with any of the applicants.

3. At the meeting of the General Board in March of 2012, the Board of Youth and Children’s Ministry brought an up-date on the Guysmere Centre, requesting permission to adjourn the leasing process and invite an Architect to prepare a report outlining a number of routes for renovation, refurbishment or indeed re-build of the Guysmere Centre. Mr Mark Finlay of, Kennedy FitzGerald and Associates, Architects, were invited to produce this report, which has now been forwarded to the Board of Youth and Children’s Ministry. This report will be tabled at a special meeting of the Board in June.

4. Appreciation is expressed to O’Connor Kennedy Turtle Estate Agents for their positive assistance with the leasing process during the past eighteen months.

ROZ STIRLING

Item 24 – BOARD OF FINANCE AND PERSONNEL – Supplementary Report

Overview of Risk Assessment Review

1. In 2006 the General Assembly passed the following resolution “*That the General Assembly encourage all Boards and Agencies to have Risk Assessment as a recurring item on Board Agendas, that once a year Boards and Agencies should submit a report to the Board of Finance and Personnel confirming that they are not aware of any factors which would cause one of the identified risks to materialise, that in addition they should report on possible new risks or risks which have ceased during the year.*”

2. In the report of the Board to the General Assembly that year 8 Key Risk Areas were identified i.e. reputational, duty of care, financial, missional, use of people, taking of professional advice, contingency plans re loss of data, and issues which could be divisive to the Church. Since then an additional risk has been added regarding compliance with laws and regulations. All Boards were asked and have completed a Risk Assessment Review covering these 9 areas. With regard to each risk area Boards were asked to comment on whether the likelihood of the risk materialising and its potential impact were regarded as low, medium or high.

3. Boards have identified a number of risks within each of the 9 areas and the Board of Finance and Personnel expects Boards to be taking steps to mitigate the possibility of these risks materialising.

4. Reputational risks have been identified within the areas of education, theological training, and the communication of congregational issues e.g. in relation to child protection matters. Most of the debates at the General Assembly are in public and there is always the potential for an adverse news headline. Lessons should clearly be learned from the past and there is the need for clear governance arrangements and an understanding of what falls and what does not fall under the authority of the General Assembly.

5. There are risks associated with the management of investment funds and fraud must be recognised as a possibility in any organisation. Many of the capital assets of the Church have been eroded in the current financial climate and much of the work of the General Assembly depends on continued support from Congregations and their declining membership base. Given reduced investment returns there is on-going concern about the financial challenge of maintaining a defined benefit pension scheme.

6. Missional risks have been identified due to changing attitudes to organised religion, membership continues to decline and reaching out to young people remains a challenge as many see the Church as irrelevant.

7. Many Boards identified issues relating to same sex relationships as a major challenge.

8. While no Board reported major concerns in relation to compliance with laws and regulations, it is recognised that the requirements of data protection legislation constitute a substantial risk area across not only Boards but also the wider Church.

Expenses for Board/Committee Members

9. In response to a request from a Board/Committee member during the year it was agreed that where a member attends a Board/Committee meeting on two

subsequent days that a claim for costs incurred up to the cost of the combined travel could be submitted. This would permit members travelling long distances to claim for overnight accommodation up to the cost of the combined travel allowance. The Board is not proposing that this arrangement be extended to attendance at the General Assembly. The Board encourages members staying overnight for meetings to avail of the many generous offers from ministers, colleagues etc. who may be able to provide accommodation for the evening.

Statistical Returns from Presbytery

10. A summary of returns received for the year ended 31 December 2011 is attached. One Presbytery did not submit a return.

Retirements

11. Notification has been forwarded to the Pensions and Assessments Committee by Presbytery that permission has been granted to the Rev CI McKnight, a Minister without Charge, to retire on 30 June 2012.

Rates of Assessment – Pension Fund

An actuarial valuation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Pension Scheme (2009) is required as at 31 December 2011. The valuation has to be completed and a schedule of contributions agreed by the Scheme Trustees and Scheme Employer (i.e. the Board of Finance and Personnel) by 31 March 2013.

The Board of Finance and Personnel await the results of the valuation from the Scheme Trustees. The Board understands that the Trustees are taking advice from the Actuary in relation to recent guidance from the Pension Regulator. This guidance outlines how Trustees should approach valuations in the current financial climate of very low gilt yields. The application of low gilt yield will have the impact of increasing the schemes liabilities and deficit position. The Pension Regulator's guidance appears to suggest that there is sufficient flexibility within the funding framework to cover funding issues arising in the current financial climate.

As the valuations need to be agreed before the next meeting of the General Assembly the Board seeks the permission of the Assembly to refer any decision relating to the actuarial valuation to the General Board, if necessary.

Auditors

The present auditors of the accounts of the General Assembly are Ernst & Young, LLP. Mr Keith Jess has been the audit partner for the last 10 years but

due to auditing regulation cannot continue as audit partner beyond this term. The Board would like to express appreciation to Mr Jess for his advice and encouragement as the Board has sought to improve its financial reporting and accounts presentation. Mr Ian Gibson will be taking over as audit partner.

JOHN HUNTER

Additional Resolution

10a. That the General Assembly authorise the General Board to act for the General Assembly in connection with any matters relating to finalising the actuarial valuation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Pension Scheme (2009) as at 31 December 2011.

JOHN HUNTER

SUMMARY OF PRESBYTERY RETURNS FOR YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2011

<i>Estg unless indicated</i>		[----- INCOME -----]			[----- EXPENDITURE -----]							
		OPENING	Assessment	Other	TOTAL	Presbytery	Other	Insurance	Other	TOTAL	SURPLUS	CLOSING
		BALANCE	Congregations		INCOME	Clerk	Staff			EXPENDITURE	(DEFICIT)	BALANCE
1	Ards	13,686	16,521	10,313	26,834	(9,823)	(6,464)	(214)	(1,462)	(17,963)	8,871	22,557
2	Armagh	4,256	9,796	4	9,800	(8,183)	(638)	(207)	(1,234)	(10,262)	(462)	3,794
3	Ballymena	22,767	15,490	12,836	28,326	(10,625)	(2,000)	(207)	(21,132)	(33,964)	(5,638)	17,129
4	* Belfast North	5,336	17,358	11,354	28,712	(10,161)	(7,442)	(817)	(4,553)	(22,973)	5,739	11,075
5	Belfast South	1,183	14,659	7,028	21,687	(7,970)	(340)	(207)	(4,100)	(12,617)	9,070	10,253
6	Belfast East	4,730	19,162	154,800	173,962	(8,443)	(3,038)	(207)	(21,335)	(33,023)	140,939	145,669
7	Carrickfergus	6,302	10,306	4,984	15,290	(6,388)	(2,077)	(127)	(997)	(9,589)	5,701	12,003
8	** Coleraine & Limavady	35,017									0	35,017
9	Derry & Donegal	34,694	15,823	25,589	41,412	(10,962)	(1,175)	(207)	(37,185)	(49,529)	(8,117)	26,577
10	Down	5,328	7,585	26,173	33,758	(6,507)	(1,000)	(206)	(991)	(8,704)	25,054	30,382
11	Dromore	1,241	12,751	360	13,111	(10,193)	(1,600)	(207)	(310)	(12,310)	801	2,042
12	€ Dublin & Munster	64,965	22,888	21,658	44,546	(10,142)	(26,363)	(617)	(16,976)	(54,098)	(9,552)	55,413
13	Iveagh	9,776	13,212	78	13,290	(10,913)	(620)	(207)	(1,242)	(12,982)	308	10,084
14	€ Monaghan	62,898	5,535	8,189	13,724	(2,050)	(2,215)	(395)	(11,287)	(15,947)	(2,223)	60,675
15	Newry	1,792	7,902	981	8,883	(6,889)	(300)	(127)	(972)	(8,288)	595	2,387
16	Omagh	12,663	10,548	374	10,922	(7,048)	(1,300)	(127)	(1,984)	(10,459)	463	13,126
17	Route	64,297	11,466	104,752	116,218	(8,807)	0	(207)	(3,707)	(12,721)	103,497	167,794
18	Templepatrick	9,617	17,951	3,682	21,633	(7,938)	(5,170)	(207)	(8,256)	(21,571)	62	9,679
19	Tyrone	2,784	8,630	1,445	10,075	(7,450)	(1,000)	(445)	(2,342)	(11,237)	(1,162)	1,622
	Sterling	<u>235,469</u>	<u>209,160</u>	<u>364,753</u>	<u>573,913</u>	<u>(138,300)</u>	<u>(34,164)</u>	<u>(3,926)</u>	<u>(111,802)</u>	<u>(288,192)</u>	<u>285,721</u>	<u>521,190</u>
	Euro	<u>127,863</u>	<u>28,423</u>	<u>29,847</u>	<u>58,270</u>	<u>-12,192</u>	<u>-28,578</u>	<u>-1,012</u>	<u>-28,263</u>	<u>-70,045</u>	<u>-11,775</u>	<u>116,088</u>

* for the year ended 28 February 2012

** no return received

Item 26 – SPECIAL COMMISSION – Supplementary Report

1. Having received the report referred to from the Board of Christian Training (Reports page 87, par 3) the Special Commission noted that, with regard to the nomination process for the Ordained Ministry and the Accredited Preacher and Auxiliary Ministry schemes, the Board of Christian Training had in place an appropriate review procedure. Through this procedure a nominating Presbytery could seek a review of a decision of the Board of Christian Training not to nominate an individual to the General Assembly (in the case of the Ordained Ministry) or not to accept an individual (in the case of the Accredited Preacher and Auxiliary Ministry schemes).

2. The Special Commission however noted that an applicant for one of the three areas under consideration has a right to formally appeal against the decision of a Presbytery not to nominate him or her to the Board of Christian Training in the first instance.

3. The Special Commission concurs with the view of the Board of Christian Training that a Special Standing Commission should be appointed by the General Assembly to deal with such formal appeals. (It should be noted that historically the number of appeals that have required attention by an Assembly Commission has been exceptionally few and a significant increase is not anticipated.) It is recommended that appropriate training should be provided for members of such a Special Standing Commission to enable them to be familiar with the guidelines adopted by the Board of Christian Training for use when interviewing applicants for the Ordained Ministry and the Accredited Preacher and Auxiliary Ministry Schemes.

Additional Resolutions

2. That the following Special Nomination Commission be appointed to deal with formal appeals relating to applications for the Ordained Ministry and the Accredited Preacher and Auxiliary Ministry Schemes:
Moderator and Clerk (Convener); three members nominated by the Judicial Commission; and three members nominated by the Board of Christian Training.

3. That, when required, suitable training be provided for members of the Special Nomination Commission to enable them to be familiar with the guidelines, adopted by the Board of Christian Training for use when interviewing applicants for the Ordained Ministry and the Accredited Preacher and Auxiliary Ministry Schemes.

DONALD J WATTS