

## **Item 1 – BUSINESS BOARD – Supplementary Report**

### **The General Synod of the Church of Ireland (2010)**

#### ***The Very Rev Dr W Donald Patton reports:***

The Synod met in the beautiful and historic setting of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, from Thursday 6 to Saturday 8 May, 2010. It is proposed that Synod will meet here every other year. The Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Rev Alan Harper, chaired the proceedings flanked by the Archbishop of Dublin, the Most Rev Dr John Neill, and the Diocesan Bishops. Archbishop Harper presided over the debates with efficiency and humour. I had expected that the Synod would be rather formal but was pleasantly surprised by the atmosphere of ordered informality. I was accompanied by Mr Denis Poynton, an elder in St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Blackrock. Along with other visiting delegates we were warmly welcomed and received generous hospitality.

Mirroring the concerns of wider society, much of the Synod's schedule was taken up with the economic challenges of the times. The Archbishop gave a masterly opening address reflecting on the issues facing church and society. He challenged the Church to be vigorous in its evangelism, to make a difference in lives and to relate the gospel to green issues, justice and pastoral work. He said "The role of the Church, in good times and in bad, is to stand alongside those who are finding it hardest to cope, whatever their circumstances; to exhibit in practical and personal ways the loving concern of God for all people, but especially for the vulnerable; and to be a beacon of hope to the living, for nothing is more spiritually, socially and physically restorative than love and hope.

He made some hard hitting comments about the banks and their pursuit of profit which has blighted many citizens' lives. He called for new structures with inbuilt social responsibility and subject to effective regulation. The Representative Church Body (being the central administration of the Church) reported that in 2006 the Church had net assets of £750 million, reducing to £448 million by 2009. There was a call for efficiency savings and for reductions in allocation of resources. Staff salaries have been frozen since 2008. Bishop Harold Miller spoke of the Church being in a 'constricted place', but that in adversity we should think positively and see the opportunity to give sacrificially for the sake of the mission of the Church. Pension Funds have been hit hard leaving a deficit of £43 million. The Synod has opted to keep the defined pension scheme which will have subvention from the RCB until 2015 to maintain solvency. It is not proposed to raise the pensionable age though increases in contributions will be needed.

The new Institute of Theology is up and running. As an outworking of the covenant between the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland students will be educated here in line with the convergence in philosophy of ministry and training with a strong emphasis on training for leadership.

Canon John McKeagney spoke to the Education report for Northern Ireland and outlined our shared concerns about the threat to the role of transferors representation in State education under the proposed ESA structure, and the need to fight this in order to protect and promote Christian values in our schools. With reference to the South one speaker referred to disproportionate discrimination in the case of some central government grants between Protestant and Roman Catholic schools.

On Thursday evening a Service of Sung Eucharist was held in St Patrick's Cathedral. This was led by the two Archbishops at which the Most Rev Richard Clarke, Bishop of Meath and Kildare, preached.

While there were some printed reports about youth work, and mission overseas, these did not have the prominence they are given in our own annual Assembly since much of this work is dealt with at Diocesan level. Acts of worship were of shorter duration and there was no comparable gathering to the Moderator's Rally or the 'Presbyterians Talk' evenings.

I came away with an impression of the Synod's realistic assessment of the challenges facing the Churches and an awareness that Presbyterians are not alone in seeking ways to meet the challenge of communicating the Gospel to the modern day. In this we can learn from each other and promote co-operative fellowship strengthening the mission of Christ in twenty first century Ireland.

## **The Church of Scotland General Assembly (2010)**

### ***The Right Rev Dr J Stafford Carson reports:***

The Church of Scotland General Assembly met this past week (20-26 May) at the Assembly Hall on The Mound in Edinburgh. It was a busy yet fascinating week for me and my two fellow representatives from PCI. I was accompanied by one of my chaplains, the Rev Philip McConnell, and by Mr George Russell, Session Clerk of First Portadown.

Regular attenders at the General Assembly considered this year's meeting to be down-beat, even a bit boring, after the controversy of last year. The 2011 Assembly will undoubtedly result in some more heated debate and

discussion when it returns to the vexed and controversial issue of homosexuals in ministry.

One of the main items of business for this year's Assembly, and the one which led to the best debate, was the Kirk's discussion of the Third Article Declaratory. It reads:

“As a national Church representative of the Christian Faith of the Scottish people it acknowledges its distinctive call and duty to bring the ordinances of religion to the people in every parish of Scotland through a territorial ministry.”

The Church of Scotland is constitutionally committed to providing a ministry of Word and Sacrament in every part of Scotland without exception. The Assembly affirmed this Third Article Declaratory, and accepted the commitment, as an integral part of its calling, to maintain worshipping, witnessing and serving congregations throughout Scotland.

In practice this means that congregations must be maintained, irrespective of their ability to support themselves, and that in turn means that other stronger congregations must take on the burden of support. In reality, 35% of the kirk's congregations support the other 65%. The Assembly rejected what was described as a “supermarket” model of ministry which means that the Church only maintains a presence where there is a “customer base” which makes it economically viable to do so.

That debate was closely linked to another report from the Ministries Council of the Church concerning the Church's resources to carry out such a calling. The Church of Scotland is facing a deficit budget of £5.7 million, and hard decisions need to be taken to prune the amount of money spent on paid ministries. In the next four years, it is planned to cut the current 1,234 ministry posts to 1,000, and Presbyteries face the harrowing task of making reductions in ministry positions and in re-aligning their work. It is envisaged that new patterns of ministry will emerge, and that there will be many more part-time ministries, with both non-stipendary and bi-vocational positions. Each Presbytery will be allocated a ministries budget which will allow it to determine the patterns of ministry which are best suited to serve all the communities for which it is responsible.

Allied to this shift is a major review of theological education and training so as to foster patterns of emerging ministries. The current proposals involve the development of three strands of training, at certificate, diploma and degree levels, which will train people to serve at local and national levels, in part-time and full-time positions. These proposals are being developed at a time when the number of ministry students at New College, following this year's

graduation, will have dropped to single figures. Currently only 6.4% of ministers in the Church of Scotland are under the age of 40, while 25% are over sixty.

The strong ecumenical emphasis of the Church of Scotland was seen in the report of the Ecumenical Relations Committee which urged congregations to celebrate their common baptism with Roman Catholics for the first time by using a special joint liturgy for the reaffirmation of baptismal vows. The Church's press release stated that theologically both Churches believe baptism involves conversion, pardoning and cleansing and marks the beginning of a new life in Christ, characterised by growth.

On Sunday afternoon, the Assembly had a special two-hour session in which it reflected on the 450th anniversary of the Scottish reformation. This involved some inspirational unaccompanied psalm singing, dramatised readings, and reflections on the Reformation. Significantly, one Scripture reading in this session was read by the Right Reverend Joseph Toal, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Argyll and the Isles.

Some of the "fringe" events of the Assembly were very helpful. In one event, arranged primarily for those from the Highlands, Reverend Tommy MacNeill from Stornaway gave a wonderful account of the development of youth ministry in his congregation, and how the number of teenagers in his congregation had grown from three to almost fifty through a focused effort to address their needs, but not without the full support of the Kirk Session. Like our own denomination, the Church of Scotland is an aging denomination, a point made very eloquently and passionately by the outgoing moderator, the Very Reverend Bill Hewitt, as he reviewed his year, and called attention to the fact that young people were conspicuous by their absence in many congregations.

In another meeting, the Scottish Bible Society launched "Biblefresh", an initiative aimed at encouraging greater use of the Bible by individuals and Churches, designed to coordinate with the 400th anniversary of publication of the King James Version. Elaine Storkey gave an insightful analysis of current culture and why the Bible continues to be an important factor in our lives and society.

The General Assembly had its own experience of cutbacks in that the traditional garden party at Holyrood Palace was cancelled this year due to financial constraints in the Royal budget. Ironically, after enduring many wet and cold afternoons on that occasion, Edinburgh enjoyed the warmest day of the year on the Saturday when the garden party would normally be held.

Clearly our brothers and sisters in the Church of Scotland are undertaking some major reforms in the way they “do Church”, and their insights and experience in these areas will be useful to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. If this year’s Assembly had an internal focus, then next year’s meeting will capture the attention of the wider community as it wrestles with one of the major issues to afflict Christian Churches, namely, the place of homosexuals in the leadership and ministry of the Church. It is anticipated that whatever the external weather conditions, the temperature may rise in the Assembly during that debate.

### **Business Board – Corrected Resolution**

3. That the General Assembly accept the outline of Opening Night in the Arrangements Committee report (Par 3) and ask the Business Board to trial these arrangements in 2011.

### **Item 2 – Reports of Presbyteries – Addition**

#### **DROMORE PRESBYTERY**

Minister without Charge: Rev Kiran Wimberly

### **Item 3 – REPORT OF CORRESPONDING MEMBERS AND DELEGATES – Supplementary Report**

#### **Add**

Eglise Réformée de France – The Rev. Didier Crouzet

DJ WATTS

### **Item 4 – REPORT OF COMMUNICATIONS BOARD – Supplementary Report**

During the year the Communications Board decided that their work should largely be the responsibility of working groups and that therefore the Communications Development Committee is not necessary. An appropriate resolution is appended.

## **Additional Resolution**

3a. That the Communications Development Committee be thanked for its work and discharged.

RA RUSSELL

## **Item 6 – BOARD OF CHRISTIAN TRAINING – Supplementary Report**

### **Qualifications Committee**

#### ***The Convener, the Rev George Moore, reports:***

1. The Qualifications Committee met once during the year to deal with enquiries from a small number of Ministers regarding formal recognition of certain qualifications. The Committee had before it the agreed General Assembly Guidelines (Reports 2006, pp 223-224).

2. The Committee confirmed its policy, as reported to the 2009 General Assembly, that in all such queries the onus is on the Minister concerned to demonstrate to the Committee's satisfaction that any qualification gained has met the criteria for recognition approved by the General Assembly.

GEORGE MOORE

## **Item 8 – BOARD OF MISSION IN IRELAND – Supplementary Report**

### **Research and Resources Committee –**

The BMI Research and Resources Committee considered a request for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to become involved in Biblefresh. A multi-agency initiative, Biblefresh aims to encourage and inspire Churches to make the most of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of the Authorised Version of the Bible in 2011. The specific purpose of the initiative is to empower Christians to a deeper level of engagement with Scripture. It seeks to enable Churches in this task through the provision of ideas and resources to engage members with the Bible around four tracks

- Bible reading
- Bible training
- Bible translation
- Bible experiences

The Biblefresh Handbook, due for publication in summer 2010, will give further details of the initiative. A resolution to commend this initiative to Presbyteries and Congregations is appended.

The Committee further considered a continuation of the Awake initiative, run successfully in the last two years. A resolution is appended.

CWP KENNEDY

### **Board of Mission in Ireland – Additional Resolutions**

6a. That the General Assembly commend the Biblefresh initiative which, in 2011, marks the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of the Authorised Version of the Bible, and during the year encourage Presbyteries and Congregations to initiate or support mission projects and activities which promote Bible engagement at home and abroad.

6b. That the General Assembly ask the BMI Research and Resources Committee, as the next part of the BMI Awake initiative, to produce a mission resource in 2011 promoting engagement with Scripture.

RA PATTON

### **Item 11 – UNION COMMISSION – Corrected Report**

#### **Par 21**

Call figure for Knappagh Stipend £12,500

#### **Corrected Resolution**

9. That the Congregation of Second Derry (Strand and Buncrana) Congregation be amalgamated with Carlisle Road Congregation on terms agreed by the Union Commission on 11 October 2010, or other suitable date as agreed by the Presbytery of Derry and Donegal.

**Item 12 – OVERTURES TRANSMITTED – Corrected Overture****Anent Par 274(6) of the Code**

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that Par 274(6) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

274(6)(a) Where in the opinion of the Commission the pastorate of two or more congregations may be linked the Commission shall consult with the Kirk Sessions and Congregations involved (either directly or through the Presbytery), with the Presbytery itself and, in the case of Home Mission Congregations, with the Board of Mission in Ireland. The Commission shall endeavour to agree the terms with the Kirk Sessions involved. Where it proves impossible to obtain the agreement of one or more Kirk Sessions, but the Presbytery consents and in the case of Home Mission congregations the Board of Mission in Ireland consents, terms of linkage shall be fixed by the Commission, a date for its commencement set and such action reported in due course to the Assembly. These terms shall be binding on all the parties concerned. The same action may be taken to facilitate a porting. The Commission shall be the final authority as to the area of porting to be effected.

(b) No congregation shall be dissolved or amalgamated, with loss of its identity, except by authorisation from the Assembly. Where the Commission has been instructed by the General Assembly to agree terms, where one or more congregations are being amalgamated or dissolved by resolution of the Assembly, the Commission shall endeavour to agree the terms with the Kirk Sessions involved. Where it proves impossible to obtain the agreement of one or more Kirk Sessions, but the Presbytery consents, and the case of Home Mission congregations the Board of Mission in Ireland consents, the terms shall be set by the Commission and shall be binding on all the parties concerned.

(c) When any congregation is considering a proposal for dissolution, amalgamation or linkage with another congregation, no arrangements regarding the sale of its properties and distribution of the proceeds or the income there from shall be made without first obtaining the agreement of the Commission.

(d) Where it is decided that within five years from the date of the leave to call the vacant congregation/s shall be linked with another congregation or congregations where there is still a minister in active duty (hereafter referred to as “the other congregation or congregations”), the Commission may issue leave to call to the vacant congregation/s on deferred linkage terms.

- (i) The Union Commission will have power to direct that in the choice of a Minister the vacant congregation or congregations and the other congregation or congregations shall act as one congregation and the Kirk Session as one Kirk Session.
- (ii) The rights and entitlements of the active minister/s in the other congregation or congregations shall not be adversely affected by this arrangement.



- (iii) When the minister/s in active duty retires or ceases to be minister/s of the other congregation or congregations in the deferred linkage the Union Commission shall agree final terms of linkage and the Presbytery arrange a service of installation in the other congregation or congregations.
- (iv) If the minister called to the original vacant congregation in the deferred linkage resigns his charge, the same procedure as above will be followed.

*(Please note that if the overtures relating to 'link and linkage' are not passed, then the phrase "united" should replace the phrase "linked" and the phrase "union" should replace the phrase "linkage" in the overture anent Par 274(6)).*

SA MATTHEWS

## **Item 14 – GENERAL BOARD – Supplementary Report**

### **General Board Conference**

1. The General Board met in Conference mode in January 2010 to explore two areas which were identified as important for the life of the Church:  
1) A Healthy Ministry 2) Resourcing Ministry and Mission.

### **Morning Session – A Healthy Ministry**

2. The Clerk introduced the topic as a positive way of looking at how to support ministers who are experiencing some level of stress. A report to the General Assembly in 1997 was entitled – “Stress in the Christian Ministry – The Human Cost of Caring”. It included a survey to which 123 ministers replied and showed: 22% experienced excessive stress levels; 9% had time off due to stress; 17% had considered leaving full-time ministry. While there has not been a more recent survey, anecdotally the problem is still a serious one.

3. Peter McBride, Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health, gave an interesting and informative talk on the causes of stress in ministry and how it may be more effectively managed.

4. For ministers and their families, most support is given and experienced informally through networks and friendships. More recently the Panel on Pastoral Care of Manse Families has offered a confidential service of pastoral support. Carecall has also been introduced and made available as a

telephone listening service. It is too soon to assess how widely these services are being used.

5. The main question for the Conference was whether Church structures, particularly the “Courts” of the Church, help to promote and support a healthy ministry or whether at times they can add to the pressures. The Conference broke into three groups to discuss the role of a) the Kirk Session b) the Presbytery c) the General Assembly through its Boards and Committees. Some of the main points raised were:

6. **On the Kirk Session**, the need for further education in understanding of the role of the Kirk Session both as a leadership and pastoral body; the importance of the Code harmonising with good practice and of confidentiality; the question of elders serving for life.

7. **On the Presbytery**, the importance of recognising a pastoral as well as administrative role; the need for greater participation at meetings; a mentoring role with greater supervision of ministers; the need for accountability and for a better relationship between Presbytery and Kirk Session.

8. **On the General Assembly**, the need for strategic thinking; decision-making at an appropriate level – some more effectively carried out at Presbytery level; the size of Boards and Committees in order to create a dynamic that works; issues of culture, communication and relevant authority.

9. A resolution to encourage further thought on the role of the Church Courts, including Boards and Committees, is appended.

### **Afternoon Session – Resourcing Ministry and Mission**

10. The Clerk gave an overview of how ministry and mission is presently financed through assessments and United Appeal. He also indicated recent work undertaken by the Union Commission, United Appeal Board and General Board to ensure accountability in central spending. The Very Rev. Dr. John Dunlop spoke passionately about the need to encourage greater and intentional giving through tithing. A resolution to initiate further thought on and encouragement of planned giving is being brought to the Assembly by the United Appeal Board.

## **Presbytery Bounds**

When adjustments were made to Presbytery Bounds the Monaghan Presbytery was extended and now asks that its name be changed. An additional resolution in the name of the Presbytery Clerk is appended.

## **Recognised Ministries Committee**

### **Par 6 add:**

Dromore      Rev Kiran Wimberly      to be retained as a Minister  
without Charge

DJ WATTS

## **Church and Society Committee**

### **Victims & Survivors**

1. The debate about the definition of a victim and the hierarchy of victims remains contentious. At the same time the Commission for Victims and Survivors NI (CVSNI) continues in its efforts to address the needs of victims and survivors and bring cohesion and direction to the sector generally.

2. In order to further inform itself the Committee agreed to meet with representatives of victims groups, most of whom it had not met before. Over the autumn months the committee met with Reetha Hasson, Saver Naver, Mark Thompson, Claire O'Reilly and a number of other individuals connected with the umbrella group Relatives for Justice, Alan McBride, WAVE and Brendan McAllister, CVSNI. Some of those invited did not respond.

3. At the same time the Pilot Victims Forum was being put in place and will make recommendations about the future of the Forum in autumn 2010. The Committee felt that any position it might take publically on the definition or hierarchy issues would undermine the Forum process. Ultimately it is better if this difficult area is navigated by the sector itself. What the Committee has learned will inform the paper on Shared Future. In the meantime the Committee wishes the present Forum well as it comes towards the end of its business.

4. Again and again comment is made that the CVSNI has achieved very little, value for money is questioned and the number of Commissioners a matter for debate. However, it would seem that the Victims' Forum has had some success in moving towards finding a way through the conflict around the definition and hierarchy of victims. The Committee believes that moving forward in this conflicted area is necessary in order to more effectively deliver

what is needed for victims, survivors and the wider society in a post-conflict situation. It therefore encourages both the Commission and the Forum in their work.

### **Future Work**

5. The future work of the Northern Committee is largely focussed on three areas: the economy; shared future; sectarianism.

6. *The economy.* This issue is common to society North & South of the border. A conference is in the planning stages to give the Church the opportunity to consider how Christians view different types of economic arrangement and what challenge the Gospel brings to us as disciples of Jesus Christ. Further information will be available in the coming months and the Committee remains hopeful of significant involvement from those living and working in the Republic of Ireland.

7. *Shared Future.* A position paper is being prepared and it is hoped that a first draft will be available to the October General Board.

8. *Sectarianism.* Responses were received from eight presbyteries for which the Committee would like to put its thanks on record. These responses will now be considered and a proposed way forward brought to next year's General Assembly.

LE CARROLL, AJ BOAL

## **Item 15 – GENERAL BOARD – Supplementary Report**

### **Financial Crisis**

1. Since the Special Assembly on 13 April, 2010 there has, of course, been a change of Government at Westminster. The Moderator immediately wrote to the Prime Minister asking for a meeting and outlining the Church's view that "the failure of the PMS was a local manifestation of the malaise which affected so much of the UK financial services sector" and calling on the Government to "respond in a way which would produce the same result for PMS savers as had been achieved for all the savers in failed institutions in the rest of that sector – namely that all their savings were protected".

2. The Panel commends the efforts of all who are working to this end. At this time of change in Government, it encourages concerned members to write to the Prime Minister and engage with political representatives to bring about an acceptable resolution without further delay. To assist with this a list of possible contacts is available at the Carrickfergus window.

3. The clerk wrote similarly to the Secretary of State and this has resulted on a meeting with Mr Owen Paterson MP on Monday, 7 June, 2010. This will be reported on verbally at the General Assembly. A meeting with the First and deputy First Ministers has also been requested.

4. The Panel has considered how, if it is appropriate, the £1m agreed at the Special Assembly should be raised. This is not an endorsement of any particular Government plan but a sign of willingness on the part of the Church to contribute towards a solution. When the General Board indicates that the contribution is appropriate, the Panel recommends, in the first instance, that an appeal should be made to those individuals and congregations who wish to contribute as a sign of goodwill.

### **Judicial Appeals**

1. The ad hoc Committee on Judicial Appeals held a further meeting on 13 May.

### **Minority Report**

2. The Committee further considered the suggestion of a minority report from members of the Judicial Commission (see Annual Reports, p 66, par 5). The following questions were raised.

- (i) Would the provision for a minority report apply only to appeals or to all Judicial Commission business? If applying to some items but not to others, which items?
- (ii) How could members of Assembly or General Board who had not seen the witnesses or heard the evidence make an informed decision?
- (iii) In the event of a final decision made by the Assembly or the General Board being the subject of civil litigation, might all members be summoned to appear before a court or tribunal to explain how they had voted and why?

3. The Committee decided not to support the suggestion of a minority report.

### **Court of First Instance**

4. The Committee considered the implications of the Judicial Commission acting as a court of first instance (see Annual Reports, p 66, par 6). That procedure precludes the possibility of an appeal. The following points were raised.

- (i) The importance of appointing assessors to assist Presbyteries dealing with judicial cases;
- (ii) The possibility of appointing a Committee of the Judicial Commission to act as a court of first instance for cases referred. Appeal could then lie to the remaining members of the Judicial Commission. Such a Committee should be a Standing Committee (like the Special Commission) rather than being selected and appointed for each case arising. This proposal would require an amendment to the Code.

### **Procedures after a decision**

5. The Committee considered what further procedures are available to parties involved in a case after a decision is made by the Judicial Commission. There could be an informal discussion with office bearers of the Commission or, failing that, a Memorial to the Assembly.

### **Code Par 126(3)**

6. It was agreed that the meaning of Code Par 126(3) (an allegation that a commission has exceeded its powers) should be clearly explained.

### **2011**

7. The Committee proposes that it be re-appointed to continue its discussion on matters arising from this year's Reports and to bring proposals to the General Assembly in 2011.

### **Pensions and Assessments**

1. The Panel has met once since the Report was written. In order to understand more fully the reason for the recommended change in accrual rates the following note on Scheme Funding is provided.

#### ***Scheme Funding***

a. An actuarial valuation of the combined scheme was carried out at 31 December 2008 and revealed a deficit of £20m. The Church and Scheme Trustees agreed a recovery period of 14 years to remove the deficit which resulted in a deficit funding contribution of 10.9% of pensionable salaries, in addition to the Church's normal contribution of 16.5% and the members' contribution of 7%. The deficit funding contribution will be reviewed at the 31 December 2011 actuarial valuation.

b. The funding position has improved since the valuation date and the deficit stood at approximately £9m at 31 December 2009. However it should be

noted that the amount of the deficit will continue to be volatile due to ongoing volatility in the investment markets and the related impact on the value of the liabilities.

c. The Scheme Trustees are in the process of reviewing the Scheme's investment strategy, in consultation with the Church. The intention is to reduce the level of volatility in the asset portfolio by investing increasingly in more stable assets such as UK government bonds. This should result in an increasingly stable long-term contribution rate.

d. However, more stable assets usually produce lower long-term investment returns, and so to compensate for this, a higher level of contribution from the Church would be expected at the next actuarial valuation at 31 December 2011. This increase is likely to offset some of the reduction in the deficit funding contribution arising from the improved funding position referred to above.

2. The Panel is aware that the Government is introducing the National Employment Savings Trust (NEST) and this will affect employees, mostly under the Board of Social Witness, who are not currently in a pension scheme. It makes the following comment.

### ***National Employment Savings Trust (NEST)***

a. The Government first announced in 2006 that it intended to introduce a system of automatic pension scheme enrolment for all eligible employees. Enrolment can be made into the NEST scheme or an employer's own scheme if it meets certain requirements.

Employee	4% of Qualifying earnings
Employer	3% of Qualifying earnings
Tax Relief	1% of Qualifying earnings

This was to ensure that as many people as possible could look forward to an employer-sponsored pension to supplement the state pension on reaching retirement age.

Accordingly the Pensions Act 2008 implemented the framework for the "Personal Accounts" regime (now known as NEST) and during 2009 a number of consultations by the Government and the Delivery Authority, which will oversee the new scheme, have provided more detailed proposals.

b. The scheme is scheduled to start in 2012 and over the period 2012 to 2016, on a monthly basis (known as "staging dates"), employers in order of

size will be required to enrol automatically into a scheme all workers, including part-timers, between the ages of 22 and the state pension age and earning over £5,700 pa (in estimated 2010/11 terms). The anticipated staging date for the Church would be around October 2013.

NEST is a defined contribution scheme from which an individual worker who has been auto-enrolled, can subsequently opt out by giving notice within a limited period, but there is provision for a process for re-enrolment every 3 years for such people.

c. The Panel has considered NEST in the context of those PCI employees for whom no pension provision is available and also those who may have opted not to avail themselves of membership despite their eligibility to join an available scheme.

d. The Panel has considered the comparative costs of extending membership of the PCI (2009) to all PCI employees, and alternatively, all those not in any scheme being directed to the Pensions Trust scheme, and it has looked at the inherent costs of putting all the non-pensioned into NEST. However, it is always possible that the new coalition Government may alter the Labour Government's proposals and the Panel's judgement was that until a clearer picture emerges it would be premature to make any specific recommendation.

3. The Panel is aware of concerns expressed by some of a conflict of interest when members of Assembly vote on pension benefits and other topics on which they have a personal interest. While it has not, in the timescale available, been possible to explore fully the legal implications this is an important discussion which the Panel would like to explore further with a view to a definite recommendation next year. An additional resolution is appended.

### **Future of Peacemaking**

The application to the Special EU Programmes Body for an inter-Church Project is still being actively considered but a decision is not now expected until late July. If the response is positive the project will be taken forward by the General Board.

DJ WATTS



## Memorial Record

**The Rev Robert John Lester** died on 14 March 2010 in the 84th year of his age and the 45th year of his ministry. He was brought up within the fellowship of St Enoch's Congregation and was educated at the Boy's Model School, Cookstown Technical College, Pomona College California, San Jose State College and, what was then the Assembly's College, Belfast. Before entering the ministry he worked for British Rail and in the Travel Agents – Messrs McCalla and Co Ltd. The experience he gained in these establishments was to stand him in very good stead throughout his future life and ministry. For many years he toiled with the idea that God could be calling him into some form of full time Christian Work. When it became clear to him that this was indeed the case he allowed no challenge to stand in his way of following his Lord throughout a long period of study and subsequent ministry. On completion of his studies he was licensed by the North Belfast Presbytery in May 1965 and ordained and installed as Assistant Minister in Ballysillan Congregation in December of that same year. In November 1967 he was installed to his first Charge of First and Second Ramelton. During his time here he took on the additional responsibility of Kilmacrennan Congregation. In March 1976 he responded affirmatively to a call from Newington Congregation where he remained until 1983 when he moved to his final Charge of Ringsend. Here he remained until retirement in April 1992. In all his Congregations his pulpit ministry was deeply appreciated. However it was as a most caring pastor that he is most lovingly remembered. As a shepherd he knew his flock and as he loved them, they in turn loved him and continue to remember him with the utmost respect. Roy had many gifts and varied interests. He was throughout his life a strong supporter of the Boys Brigade. As he himself had received so much from this organisation he unstintingly gave much back and epitomised all that was best in BB. Having benefitted himself from the Ministry of Divine Healing during a serious life-threatening illness, he maintained a lively interest in this ministry thereafter and indeed was the Convener on the General Assembly's Divine Healing Committee from 1985 until 1992. In April 1967 he married Lorna Hunter and what an example of true Christian Marriage their union turned out to be! Their joy was to work hand in hand with the people God had called them to work amongst. Lorna and their daughter Sylvia can be assured that the sympathy of the General Assembly is with them in this time of sorrow and loss.

**The Very Rev Professor John Thompson BA, BD, PhD, DD**, died on 30 May 2010 in the 88<sup>th</sup> year of his age and the 58<sup>th</sup> of his ministry. From the Bushmills area, he was brought up within the fellowship of Toberkeigh Congregation and educated at Ballycastle High School, Magee University College, Trinity College, New College Edinburgh, Basel University

Switzerland, Queens University and, what was then, Assembly's College. On completion of his studies for the ministry he was licensed by the Route Presbytery in 1947 and ordained and installed to his first Charge of Sandymount in 1952, having served his Assistantship in St Enoch's Congregation. He remained in Sandymount until 1961 when he was called to Fortwilliam Park. During his time in Fortwilliam Park he completed a Queens PhD on – Christology in the thinking and writings of Karl Barth – and from time to time he deputised for the late Professor JLM Haire – the then Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics – at Assembly's College. On the retirement of Professor Haire in 1976 he was appointed to this Chair where he remained until his own retirement in 1994. In addition to being Moderator of the General Assembly in the year 1986/7, he held several other General Assembly appointments including Convener of the Jewish Mission and membership of the Irish and British Council of Churches. For several years he was joint editor of the journal – Biblical Theology. As those who remember John Thompson's pulpit ministry will confirm, he was no mean preacher. Careful thought and attention to detail shone through in a most convincing and challenging way. The same could be said of his pastoral ministry where he demonstrated genuine love and concern for the people among whom he was called to serve. However it is as an outstanding Systematic Theologian that he will be most remembered. Indeed his writings and translations of Karl Barth's – Church Dogmatics – and his book – "Christ in Perspective in the Theology of Karl Barth" – must be essential reading for any serious student of twentieth century theology. Fortunate indeed were those who sat under his lecturing ministry. They soon became convinced of the need for an accurate biblical understanding of doctrine and of how essential it is to have a sound grasp of the humanity and divinity of Christ. To him, this was the touchstone by which theologically everything else stands or falls and should always be at the core of theological discussion whether within or outside the pulpit. With his first wife Ann, who sadly died some years ago, he had a daughter and two sons Catherine, Jonathan and Michael. They, and his wife Dame Professor Ingrid Allen, can be assured that the sympathy and prayers of the General Assembly are with them at this time of sorrow and loss.

WJT RICHARDSON

## **Additional Resolutions**

### **Priorities**

4a. That the General Assembly encourage the General Board to continue its thinking on how the Courts of the Church, including General Assembly Boards and Committees, may effectively support mission and ministry.

### **Church and Society**

19a. That the General Assembly continue in prayer for victims and survivors of the conflict and offers encouragement to the Pilot Victims' Forum and the CVSNI for their work, particularly as CVSNI moves to deliver better services to meet the needs of victims and survivors.

### **Financial Crisis**

19b. That the General Assembly call on the new Westminster Government to consider the situation of PMS savers as a matter of utmost urgency and to ensure that, as for all other savers in the United Kingdom, their savings are returned in full.

19c. That the General Assembly authorise the General Board, when and if appropriate, to issue an appeal or take whatever other steps are necessary to raise the promised contribution agreed at the Special Assembly.

### **Church Courts**

21a. That the ad hoc Committee on Church Courts be thanked and discharged.

### **Judicial Appeals**

22a. That the ad hoc Committee on Judicial Appeals be re-appointed for another year to consider matters arising from this year's Report and to bring proposals to the General Assembly in 2011.

### **Pensions and Assessments**

27a. That the General Assembly ask the Pensions and Assessments Panel to report fully to the General Assembly 2011 with a recommendation on how possible "conflict of interest" issues may be dealt with.

DJ WATTS

### **General**

35a. That the General Assembly agree the extended Presbytery of Monaghan be known as the Presbytery of Monaghan Plus.

SAMUEL ANKETELL

35b. That the General Assembly approve the following budget from the Incidental Fund:

General work of the General Board	£6,000
Peace and Peacemaking	£9,000
Environmental Issues	£2,000
Pastoral Care	£2,000

DJ WATTS

**Item 16a – Overtures anent Pars 25, 48 of the Code****Anent Par 25 of the Code**

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 25 of the Code an additional sub-paragraph (3) be added:

(3) Remunerated employees of the congregation may be members of the Kirk Session but shall not sit and deliberate with the Session when matters affecting their work, and that of other remunerated employees, are under discussion.

**Anent Par 48 of the Code**

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 48 of the Code an additional sub-paragraph (5) be added:

(5) Remunerated employees of the congregation may be members of the Committee but shall not sit and deliberate with the Committee when matters affecting their work, and that of other remunerated employees, are under discussion.

DJ WATTS

**Item 17a – Overtures anent Pars 277, 280, 281, 283, 284 of the Code****Anent Par 277 of the Code**

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 277 of the Code sub-paragraph 277(5) be deleted.

**Anent Par 280 of the Code**

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 280 of the Code, sub-paragraph 280(5) be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(5) The Board may call ministers appointed to serve the Board in full-time administration.

**Anent Par 281 of the Code**

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 281 of the Code, at sub-paragraph 281(3)(a) the words “universities or colleges” be deleted and the words “universities, colleges or schools” substituted in their place and that sub-paragraph 281(4) be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(4) The Board may call ministers appointed to serve the Board in full-time administration.

**Anent Par 283 of the Code**

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 283 of the Code, at sub-paragraph 283(3)(b) the words “in Youth service work” be deleted and the words “in youth and children’s work” substituted in their place.

**Anent Par 284 of the Code**

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 284 of the Code sub-paragraph 284(3) be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(3) The Board may call ministers to serve as teachers in day schools, together with Advisers on R.E., who are at least two thirds of the school week engaged in specialist religious teaching, on the condition that, in the event of such work occupying less than two thirds of their time, they shall be deemed to have resigned from the work to which they were called; provided that ministers who are members of Church courts in virtue of such call and appointment report on their work to the Board as may be required, not less than annually.

DJ WATTS

**Item 19 – FINANCE AND PERSONNEL – Supplementary Report**

1. The Board confirms that Ernst & Young, LLP has issued an unqualified audit report on the accounts of the General Assembly for the year ended 31 December 2009. This follows compliance with Financial Reporting Standard No 17 “Retirement Benefits” and the disclosure of a pension liability of £30,423,000 on the Balance Sheet. This liability reflects not only the deficit

in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Pension Scheme (2009) of £11,093,000 but also a provision of £19,330,000 relating to other retirement benefits. These includes the benefits paid through the Retired Ministers' Fund, Widows of Ministers' Fund, to Retired College Professors and Deaconesses as well as the payment to retired ministers from the Central Ministry Fund. Further details are provided in the accounts and note thereto.

2. The assumptions used by the actuary to calculate the FRS 17 liability in respect of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Pension Scheme (2009) are prescribed and are slightly different from those used for an actuarial valuation. As a result, the latest annual update on funding report prepared by the actuary indicates a lower deficit at 31 December 2009 of 8.6m. The size of the deficit in the scheme varies not only as investment values increase or decrease but also for changes in the valuation of the pension liabilities.

JG HUNTER

### **Property Management Committee**

1. Tenders have now been received for the internal refurbishment of Church House as outlined in the Annual Report (p 284), including the provision of a new entrance from Fisherwick Place, a new reception area on the ground floor, the refurbishment of all offices on the third floor, the refurbishment of all offices on the second floor, and the upgrading of the Assembly Hall together with a new ground floor storage area, accessible from the Assembly Hall.

2. Six Contractors were invited to Tender, and competent and complete Tender documents were received from four Companies. The Tender from Felix O'Hare & Co. Ltd. has been examined in detail by our professional consultants and they are of the opinion that the pricing of the Bill of Quantities is extremely keen, the Tender is genuinely competitive and properly made up, and represents value for money. It is approximately £350,000 below a recent estimate prepared by the Quantity Surveyor. Pricing levels have been discussed with the prospective builders and they are satisfied that the total cost which they have submitted is adequate to enable them to satisfactorily carry out and complete this project.

3. It is recommended that the Tender of Felix O'Hare & Co. Ltd. in the sum of £3,228,000 be accepted, making a total cost for the project of approximately £4,200,000 including professional fees, furniture and VAT at 17.5%. (Estimated at £4,700,000 in the Annual Reports, p 284, paragraph 4).

4. It is anticipated that the present contract for the external works to Church House will be completed substantially under the approved budget. Whilst final account details cannot yet be calculated, recent cost monitoring suggests a saving of over £200,000 on the approved costs. This saving would indicate that, at current interest rates, the external works will be paid off by 2013 (three years earlier than anticipated).

5. To finance this proposed internal refurbishment contract, it is suggested that there should be no increase in the current assessment of 3.5p per £ of stipend and that this assessment should be allowed to continue until final payment is made (see Annual Reports, p284, paragraph 5). An assessment of 3.5p per £ of stipend currently generates approx £350,000 per annum. The date of the final payment is sensitive to interest rates and income from the Church House complex, and also, to a lesser extent, to the rate of VAT, but, if it is assumed that income and interest rates continue at the current level (of approx £100,000 and 2% respectively), the project should be paid off during 2022. However, due to the present commercial rental climate and the associated income from tenants, it may be prudent to assume a reduction in the net income to £75,000, and to suggest an average interest rate of 4.5% over the payment period. This would indicate that the final payment should be made in 2025. Continual assessment of payment balances should be made at regular intervals depending on the variables mentioned above.

JH MARTIN, RA McLERNON

### **Additional Resolution**

9a. That the contract work outlined in paragraph 1 of the Supplementary Report be approved and that the Tender of Felix O'Hare & Co Ltd in the sum of £3,228,000 be accepted, making a total cost for the project of approximately £4,200,000, and that this project be funded by continuing the existing rate of assessment of 3.5p per £ of stipend until final payment be made.

JG HUNTER

### **Item 21 – JUDICIAL COMMISSION – Supplementary Report**

1. Since the reports were written the Judicial Commission has considered and issued a finding on two further appeals.

**Appeal of six Elders of Ahorey Congregation to the Judicial Commission  
against the decision of Armagh Presbytery following inquiry under  
paragraph 224 of The Code that the six Elders be removed from office and  
duties of the eldership in Ahorey Congregation**

2. The Judicial Commission, having considered the record of the Armagh Presbytery in the case and the grounds of appeal from the decision of Presbytery dated 23 March 2010, met on 28 May 2010 to consider the written and the oral submissions of the Appellants and the oral submissions of the Presbytery concerning the inquiry by Presbytery under paragraph 224 of The Code following the public report by the Appellants that it was no longer possible for the minister of Ahorey Congregation satisfactorily to discharge the duties of his charge, and following the finding of the Judicial Commission (reported on pages 114 to 117 in Annual Reports, 2010) on the appeal of the same elders against the decisions of Armagh Presbytery following investigation under paragraph 161 of The Code in relation to complaints described as charges brought by the Appellants against their minister.

Having heard and considered the written and oral submissions and the record, the Judicial Commission thereafter considered the matter and finds:

a. The Appellants had refused to accede to the requests of Presbytery to agree to attend worship, to attend Kirk Session meetings and to cooperate in the life of the Church and did not accept the way forward through reconciliation. The Appellants declined to confirm that in practice they would work together with the Minister in the oversight and government of the Congregation, for the upbuilding of God's people in spiritual fruitfulness and holy concord, and for the extension of Christ's kingdom among people, as is stated in paragraph 30(1) of The Code.

b. The Minister had assured Presbytery, and Presbytery accepted, that he would strive to achieve reconciliation with the Appellants and had identified with Presbytery the issues which he would address in connection with his ministry.

c. The Appellants informed the Judicial Commission that they believe that the Minister is not meeting the Biblical standard and cannot fulfil the obligations of his calling, that the Minister is in a position where it is impossible for him satisfactorily to discharge the duties of his charge as stated in paragraph 224(1) of The Code, that they withdrew from worship in Ahorey on and since 13 December 2009 and that they would not worship and will not in conscience sit under his ministry. The Appellants refused to accede to the request of the Judicial Commission to act in accordance with paragraph 30(1) of the Code and to attempt reconciliation with the Minister.



d. The usefulness of the Minister is seriously impaired by the refusal of the Appellants, who comprise 60% of the elders, to act in accordance with their duties as stated in paragraph 30(1) of The Code, by their refusal to attend worship and to sit under his ministry, and by their refusal to attempt to achieve reconciliation with the Minister.

e. The appeal is dismissed and the decision of Presbytery affirmed.

The Judicial Commission commends the Minister and his family, the Appellants, the Kirk Session and the Congregation to the grace and peace of Almighty God and urges the Presbytery to provide ongoing pastoral care to them.

**Appeal of Sarah McAllister, Joseph McAllister and Thomas McAllister to the Judicial Commission against the decision of the Carrickfergus Presbytery Commission made on 6 May 2010 under paragraph 161(1)(d) of The Code, that the facts do not call for further investigation and that the Presbytery should take no further action concerning the graves of members of the McAllister family at Loughmorne Presbyterian Church.**

3. The Judicial Commission, having considered the record of the Carrickfergus Presbytery in the case including extracts from the Minutes of Loughmorne Congregational Committee, met on 28 May 2010 to hear and consider the oral submissions of the Appellants and the written and oral submissions of representatives on behalf of the Congregational Committee and of the Presbytery, finds:

a. In September/October 2007 the Appellants caused the erection of surrounds on ten graves and the permanent sealing of four graves of deceased members of their family in Loughmorne Church graveyard (“the alterations”).

b. The Appellants believe that the former, now deceased, Clerk of Session had given oral permission in 1996 for the McAllister family to replace old grave surrounds which were in disrepair.

c. The approval of the Congregational Committee for the alterations to the McAllister graves in 2007, which comprised cement, stones and surrounds, had not been sought or obtained.

d. Extracts from the minutes of the Congregational Committee concerning applications by and on behalf of other families disclose that: (1) in February 1992 a request for erection of surrounds was refused and it was recorded “Bye-laws prohibit the erection of surrounds”; (2) in September 1992

a request for replacement of existing surrounds was refused; (3) on 18 September 1996 the former, now deceased, Clerk of Session stated in response to a request for erection of edging “[permission] would not be allowed as surrounds are forbidden”.

e. The Committee in 2000 required and obtained the removal of grave surrounds which had been erected by or on behalf of others without permission. In 2003 the Committee required and obtained removal of grave surrounds and covering which had been placed by others without permission. In 2009 covering on the grave by descendants of the deceased Clerk of Session without Committee approval was removed at the request of the Committee.

f. Graveyard Rules dated 1 March 1997 include the rules “Plans for memorials must be approved by the church committee before work begins” and “Approval will not be given for surrounds”. A Graveyard Rules notice appended to the graveyard wall includes the same rules.

g. Members of the congregation and others with burial rights in the graveyard in October 2007 complained to the Congregational Committee that surrounds on McAllister family graves had been erected and graves had been sealed.

h. Between October 2007 and August 2009 numerous requests, written and oral, were made by and on behalf of the Committee to the Appellants seeking the removal of the alterations and reinstatement of the McAllister graves to an acceptable condition, to no avail. In August 2009 the Committee instructed a contractor to remove the alterations, the costs of which and of the grass re-seeding of affected areas were borne by the Committee.

i. The Congregational Committee acted in accordance and conformity with the bye-laws and rules concerning the graveyard and in accordance with their long standing practice and procedures in its responses to the alterations to the McAllister family graves. To have acted otherwise and to have permitted the alterations would have discriminated unfairly in favour of the Appellants and against the other families who previously and subsequently had been refused permission to carry out similar works and alterations.

j. The Judicial Commission is satisfied that the Congregational Committee and the Presbytery Commission were justified in reaching the conclusions and decisions which are the subject of the appeal. The appeal is dismissed and the Presbytery Commission’s decision is affirmed.

k. The Judicial Commission directs pursuant to paragraph 161(1)(d) of The Code that further investigation by Presbytery or the Commission is neither appropriate nor required and that no further proceedings be taken.

4. The Judicial Commission is conscious of the time and energy spent by those involved in trying to resolve this matter, and commends the Appellants and their families, the Minister, Kirk Session and Congregation of Loughmorne to the grace and peace of Almighty God.

DJ WATTS

### **Item 21a – MEMORIAL OF REV BA McDONALD**

#### **MEMORIAL TRANSMITTED**

To the Venerable the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to meet in Belfast on 7<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2010.

#### **The Memorial of the Rev Barbara Ann McDonald Respectfully Showeth:**

That she was born on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 1949 and ordained to the Christian ministry in Cregagh Congregation on 27<sup>th</sup> January, 1991;

That she was called and installed to the pastoral oversight of the Congregations of Caledon and Minterburn on 19<sup>th</sup> March, 1993, where she continues to minister;

That she is also the principal carer for her husband who has a progressive illness and requires an increasing amount of her time and attention;

That for this reason she wishes to demit the charges of Caledon and Minterburn and seeks to retire early under Code Par 223(3);

Memorialist, therefore, prays your Venerable Assembly to grant special leave to the Rev Barbara Ann McDonald to retire on 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2010, upon terms to be recommended by the Committee on Pensions and Assessments of the Board of Finance and Personnel.

And Memorialist, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

ANN McDONALD  
10 May 2010

Licensed by the Armagh Presbytery at its meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2010 and transmitted with the strong recommendation that its prayer be granted.

EP GAMBLE, Moderator  
JAMES GORDON, Clerk

## **Item 25 – EDUCATION BOARD – Supplementary Report**

### **Mr Brian Duffy**

Brian Duffy has served as Director of Secondary Education in the Republic of Ireland since 1993. Due to his increasing workload as a Principal of a school in the Republic he has had to review his external voluntary commitments and in May 2010 informed the Board that he was standing down. During the past 17 years, Brian has served on the Board of Education, the State Education Committee and the Secondary Education Committee. In his succinct annual report to the General Assembly and regular contributions to the Board of Education he kept the church apprised of developments in Secondary Education in the Republic of Ireland. The Board thanks him for his commitment, valuable insights and professional expertise which have enabled the Church to make an informed contribution to secondary education in the Republic of Ireland.

ROBERT HERRON