

GENERAL ASSEMBLY



ANNUAL REPORTS



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ORDER OF BUSINESS

- Notes:**
- (i) Business commences at 9.30 a.m. on Tuesday, 9.15 a.m. on Wednesday and 9.30 a.m. on Thursday.
 - (ii) An “Introduction to Assembly Business” will be given in the Assembly Hall on Tuesday at 9.00 a.m.
 - (iii) Communion will be held on Tuesday at 11.45 a.m. and Worship on Wednesday and Thursday at 12.15 p.m. The break for lunch will be at 1p.m. each day.
 - (iv) Figures in brackets refer to page numbers in the Annual Reports.

Tuesday

GA Business Committee –
Initial Report

Presbyteries

General Council (Section 1)

Honouring Christ in the
Public Square

Church in Society

Social Witness

Wednesday

Congregational Life and Witness

Training in Ministry

Listening to the Global Church

General Council (Section 2)

General Council (Section 3)

Thursday

Mission in Ireland

General Council (Section 4)

People Matter to God

Global Mission

General Council (Section 5)

Friday

Judicial Commission

Special Judicial Commission

Commission on Applications

Linkage Commission

Trustees

Nominations Committee

Finance and Staffing Commission

GA Business Committee –
Second Report

NOTES

MONDAY, JUNE 6

Assembly Buildings

7.00 p.m. –

Service of Worship
Constitution of Assembly
Election of Moderator

TUESDAY, JUNE 7

9.30 a.m. –

1. GENERAL ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE:
Initial Report and Resolutions 1-4 (pages 3-4 and 105).
2. Reports of Presbyteries (pages 143-149).
- (9.45) 3. GENERAL COUNCIL: Section 1 of Report and Resolutions 5-8 (pages 1-2, 14-37 and 105).
Priorities Committee; 2017 Residential Assembly Conference Task Group; Engagement and Consultations Task Group; Memorial Record.
4. OVERTURE: General Council Priorities Committee (page 109).
- (10.45) 5. Reception of Corresponding Members and Delegates.
Church of Scotland: Rt Rev Dr Russell Barr; Rev Ian Y Gilmour; Mrs Marjory Vennelle
United Reformed Church: Rev David Grosch-Miller
Presbyterian Church of Wales: Rev Dr Elwyn Richards
Church of Ireland: Ven George Davison; Mrs Hilary McClay
The Methodist Church in Ireland: Rev Peter Murray; Mrs Joan Doherty
Irish Council of Churches: Dr Kenneth Milne
Religious Society for Friends: Rosemary I Sinton
Greek Evangelical Church: Rev Dimitris Boukis
CCAP, Synod of Blaytyre: Rev Moyenda S Kanjerwa; Rev Edina Navaya
(Please note: Additional Corresponding Members and Delegates will be reported in the Supplementary Reports)

Times in brackets may be anticipated but should not be passed.

NOTES

(11.30) Short Intermission.

11.45 a.m. Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

including the Memorial Roll.

1.00 p.m. LUNCH

2.00 p.m. –

6. HONOURING CHRIST IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE
- Building our Vision for Society.

(3.00) Tea/Coffee Break.

3.30 7. COUNCIL FOR CHURCH IN SOCIETY: Report and Resolutions (pages 281-313).

4.45 8. COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL WITNESS: Report and Resolutions (pages 268- 280).

Lapsed Business (if any).

(6.00) Close of Business.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8

9.30 a.m. –

9. COUNCIL FOR CONGREGATIONAL LIFE AND WITNESS (including 'A Community of Global Concern'): Report and Resolutions (pages 193-219).

(10.45) Tea/Coffee Break.

11.15 10. COUNCIL FOR TRAINING IN MINISTRY: Report and Resolutions (pages 220-237).

11. OVERTURES: Council for Training in Ministry (pages 109-114).

Times in brackets may be anticipated but should not be passed.

NOTES

12.15 p.m. – Worship.

1.00 p.m. LUNCH

2.00 p.m. –

12. LISTENING TO THE GLOBAL CHURCH
- The Welcoming Church.

(3.00) Tea/Coffee Break.

- 3.30 13. GENERAL COUNCIL: Section 2 of Report and Resolutions 9 & 10 (pages 38-41 and 105).
Moderator's Advisory Committee; Dialogue and Resources Task Group; Republic of Ireland Marriage Task Group.

14. OVERTURE: General Council Republic of Ireland Marriage Task Group (pages 114-115).

- 4.30 15. GENERAL COUNCIL: Section 3 of Report and Resolutions 11-15 (pages 42-54 and 106).
Charities Legislation Task Group; Communications Review Task Group; Historical Archiving Task Group; Guysmere Redevelopment Task Group.

16. OVERTURES: General Council Charities Legislation Task Group (pages 115-122).

Lapsed Business (if any).

(5.45) Close of Business.

Please – At 6.15 p.m. **SPUD** will serve a light tea in the
Note Minor Hall and then share their insights, contributions and stories in areas of our culture with which they have been engaging: Sexuality, Secularism, Selfies and Science.

7.45 p.m. – Evening Celebration: A Community of Global Concern

Times in brackets may be anticipated but should not be passed.

NOTES

THURSDAY, JUNE 9

9.30 a.m. –

17. COUNCIL FOR MISSION IN IRELAND: Report and Resolutions (pages 238-267).

(10.45) Tea/Coffee Break.

- 11.15 18. GENERAL COUNCIL: Section 4 of Report and Resolutions 16-22 (pages 55-90 and 106).
Support Services Committee; Commercial Use of Assembly Buildings Task Group; United Appeal Committee.

19. OVERTURES: General Council Support Services Committee (pages 122-123).

12.15 p.m. – **Worship**

1.00 p.m. LUNCH

2.00 p.m. –

20. PEOPLE MATTER TO GOD
- Caring for our Older Members.

(3.00) Tea/Coffee Break.

- 3.30 21. COUNCIL FOR GLOBAL MISSION: Report and Resolutions (pages 314-329).

- 4.45 22. GENERAL COUNCIL: Section 5 of Report and Resolutions 23-29 (pages 91-103 and 106-107).
Church Relations Committee; Organists and Employment Task Group; Doctrine Committee; General Business of the Council.

23. OVERTURES: General Council General (pages 124-141).

Lapsed Business (if any).

(6.30) Close of Business.

Times in brackets may be anticipated but should not be passed.

NOTES

FRIDAY, JUNE 10

In Private

9.30 a.m. –

24. JUDICIAL COMMISSION: Report and Resolutions (page 152).
25. SPECIAL (JUDICIAL) COMMISSION: Report and Resolution (page 153).
26. COMMISSION ON APPLICATIONS: Report and Resolution (page 154).

In Public

27. LINKAGE COMMISSION: Report and Resolutions (pages 155-192).
28. OVERTURES: Linkage Commission (pages 141-142).
29. TRUSTEES: Report and Resolutions (pages 330-336).
30. NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE: Report and Resolutions 29-35 (pages 103-105 and 107).

(10.45) Tea/Coffee Break.

11.15 31. FINANCE AND STAFFING COMMISSION: Report and Resolutions (pages 150-151).

11.45 32. GENERAL ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE: Second Report and Resolutions 36-39 (pages 4-13 and 107-108).

Lapsed Business (if any).

CLOSE OF ASSEMBLY.

Times in brackets may be anticipated but should not be passed.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE

A Guide to Assembly Procedure

1. **Members of Assembly** consist of all ministers in active duty or retired and some elders, ex officio, together with a representative elder from each established Congregation plus other elders commissioned by Presbyteries to correspond with the number of ministers serving in special appointments. The Assembly quorum is fifty members.
 - (a) Deaconesses, Licentiates, Presbytery representatives of Presbyterian Women and youth, representatives of SPUD and some others are invited to “sit and deliberate” as associates – i.e., to take part with members freely in debate but without voting. Kirk Sessions have been given permission to name an additional elder who may sit and deliberate when the representative elder is not able to attend.
 - (b) While members should bear in mind any opinions or concerns of their Congregations, Kirk Sessions or Presbyteries, neither ministers nor elders attend as “delegates”, obliged to vote as instructed by any of these. The Assembly should be a gathering of fully responsible, free Christian men and women, always open to spiritual guidance and information on a Church-wide basis, not a device for counting up decisions already made elsewhere.
2. **The Moderator** is chairman of the Assembly, in charge of proceedings, but should not take sides in debates. Former Moderators may deputise from time to time, should the Moderator wish to take part in debate or to withdraw from the House.
 - (a) When the Moderator rises to speak at any point all other members must yield to the Chair.
 - (b) Members should stand when the Moderator enters or leaves at the beginning or end of proceedings. Members may enter or leave at any time during proceedings, but should do so with as little disturbance as possible. It is a courtesy in so doing to give a slight bow to the Chair.
 - (c) The recommended form of address to the House is simply “Moderator” (not “Mr.” Moderator, etc). Speakers should face towards the House and the microphones, not towards the Moderator.

3. **Councils & Commissions:** Work for which the Assembly is responsible is generally entrusted to various General Assembly Councils and Commissions. These must each present a report to the Assembly. Councils normally have a number of General Assembly Committees working under them, along with permanent Panels and ad-hoc Task Groups. A Commission of Assembly is entrusted with the executive powers of the Assembly, within the terms of its appointment. Members of Commissions, Councils and General Assembly Committees are appointed by the Assembly itself, on the nomination of the General Assembly's Nominations Committee. Councils and Commissions are led by a Convener, supported by a Secretary, with the latter often being a senior member of staff. In what follows the word "Councils" covers Councils, Commissions and the General Assembly Business Committee.

4. **Reports of Councils:** While the Assembly is obliged to "receive" the report of each Council, it does not "adopt" or accept responsibility for the contents of any report. Reports carry only the authority of the Council concerned and not of the Assembly.
 - (a) If found too unsatisfactory the report, or a section of it, may be received and referred back. This is done by an amendment to the resolution "That the report of the [name of Council] be received". Any matter to which the Assembly is to be committed must be stated in a specific resolution. Resolutions should be kept to conclusions, rather than include arguments in support such as are appropriate to reports and speeches. Similarly, speeches in the Assembly carry the authority only of the speaker.
 - (b) Reports are first of all "presented" and the appended resolutions "proposed" en bloc, usually by a Council Convener who will make a speech in support highlighting aspects of the Council's work. The resolutions are then "seconded" en bloc, usually by another officer of the Council, who again speaks in support and usually addresses a different aspect of the Council's work. There is then an opportunity for questions to be asked. Routine and non-controversial resolutions have been grouped into one consolidated resolution for each Council, where appropriate.

5. **Questions to Commissions or Councils:** These should quite strictly be asked only for further information or explanation, whether of something in the report or not in the report but for which the Council carries responsibility; they should not be rhetorical or debating “questions” to score a point. Questions should be written out and placed in the box provided as early as possible during the Assembly. They can also be submitted by e-mail to the Deputy Clerk *deputyclerk@presbyterianireland.org* in advance of the Assembly or during the Assembly, up to 15 minutes before the report in question is scheduled. Questions will normally be limited to two per person and ten minutes in all, unless the Moderator judge that a particular subject merits an extension of these limits.
6. **Resolutions of Councils:** These are then taken in succession, as printed in the General Assembly Reports, and on occasion also in the Supplementary Reports. Resolutions are called by number. Those wishing to speak should at once come forward, or otherwise indicate to the Moderator their desire to speak: it will be helpful if they move in good time to sit on one of the seats reserved for the purpose on the front row, ready for the Moderator to call them. The final resolution of a Council is “that the report of the [name of Council] be received”. This is the point where members may discuss (not ask questions about) any matters in the report or for which the Council should bear responsibility, but which do not arise under any previous resolution.
7. **Timings during debate:** Unless otherwise arranged, speeches are limited as follows:
- | | |
|---|-----------|
| Presenting a group of reports and resolutions | 7 minutes |
| Seconding a group of reports and resolutions | 7 minutes |
| All other speeches | 4 minutes |
- (a) If lapsed business accumulates, these timings may be shortened.
- (b) A flickering light is given 1 minute before the end, a steady light for 30 seconds and a buzz when the time is up. Before commencing, speakers should announce their name and Congregation (or PW, SPUD etc) and Presbytery. Apart from the proposer (or alternatively the seconder) having the right to speak again in closing the debate, no one may speak twice in debating any one resolution or amendment, except to clarify some misunderstanding.

8. **Alternative format:** The Assembly may decide from time to time to conduct a particular item of business using an alternative format. This is usually on the recommendation of the General Assembly Business Committee. In such circumstances alternative rules of debate and timings may apply.
9. **Amendments:** These may be moved without prior notice by any member so as to change the terms of a resolution within its general scope but not so as to introduce another subject. Before debate on an amendment commences, the amendment must be given in writing to the Clerk's desk (or be submitted electronically to deputyclerk@presbyterianireland.org).
 - (a) Amendments can be submitted to the Clerk of Assembly in advance of the business concerned, and if received in sufficient time and licensed by the General Assembly Business Committee, will take precedence over any other amendments.
 - (b) At least one day's notice must be given of an amendment which would substantially affect the scope of a motion or overture. A plea for the outright rejection of a resolution is not an amendment.
 - (c) An amendment, if seconded, must be dealt with before further debate on the original resolution or consideration of any further amendment. If passed, the amendment is then put as a substantive motion, when one more amendment may be considered. If the first two amendments are rejected, one more amendment may be considered before reverting to the original resolution.
10. **Additional resolutions:** When a matter is not covered by existing resolutions from a Council an additional resolution may be submitted by any member or associate as notice of motion for license. Unless there are exceptional circumstances these should be received by the Clerk at least one week before the Assembly. Resolutions rescinding or reversing a previous decision of the Assembly require notice of motion to be first given and accepted at the preceding annual meeting. Those invited to sit and deliberate may "present" resolutions or amendments in the usual way, but these must be formally proposed and seconded by a member of Assembly before being debated.

11. **Voting:** This will normally be by voice, when the Moderator calls for those in favour to say “Aye” and those against to say “No”. The Moderator may also call for a standing vote, with voting cards displayed, to be counted. A vote by ballot will be held when asked for by not fewer than twenty-five members or at the discretion of the Moderator, by the use of voting tickets, to be counted by tellers. Proxy voting for an absent member is not allowed. A member who has spoken or voted against any decision may intimate his or her personal dissent or protest immediately after the decision has been pronounced, but does not thereby free himself or herself from obligation loyally to implement the decision taken.

12. **Overtures:** These are proposals for a change in the Code, the Church’s Constitution and Government. Changes in rules, of which notice has been given in the printed Reports, may be adopted forthwith if approved by a two-thirds majority, or without such notice if approved with no one voting against. If approved by a lesser majority it is “placed on the books”, to be decided upon at the following Assembly. This applies also to rules governing the Central Ministry Fund and other Ministry Funds. In the Basic Code, where immediate operation is desirable, the change may be adopted temporarily during the intervening year as an “Interim Act”. If an overture contemplates a significant constitutional change it must also be sent down to Presbyteries to be voted on during the intervening year.

13. **Memorials:** These are petitions to the Assembly, usually from some person or body who is not a member of Assembly, such as a subordinate court of the Church, a Church member or group of members, or persons unconnected with the Church. Procedures and forms are laid down by which the circumstances of the Memorial are outlined and a definite request or “prayer” is stated. A Memorial is also the procedure by which someone, whether member of the Assembly or not, asks for exemption from some Church rule on the plea of special circumstances.

GENERAL COUNCIL

SECTION 1

(Tuesday morning 9.45 am)

Convener: Very Rev RL CRAIG
Secretary: THE CLERK

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. In seeking to understand the nature of the work of the General Council the key word is “General”. Whereas each of the other Councils has a specific focus and remit the General Council is a kind of umbrella under which several General Assembly Committees and Task Groups take shelter. These Committees and Task Groups can and do work independently from one another; in the past year their reports to the General Council and their resolutions before this year’s General Assembly are an indication of a busy schedule both for the Council and each of its bodies.

2. In keeping with the new approach to business since the introduction of our new structures, the General Council, through the **General Assembly Business Committee**, is offering this year’s Assembly options in respect of the conduct of future business. The General Council, through the **Priorities Committee**, draws the attention of the General Assembly to the proposed direction of travel in seeking to discover “what seems good to the Holy Spirit and to us” in determining priorities for PCI.

3. As a denomination the Presbyterian Church in Ireland seeks to pursue good relationships with sister Churches both within the UK and Ireland and further afield. Reports from both the **Church Relations and Doctrine Committees** are a reflection that such relationships are dynamic and not static.

4. This year **eight Task Groups** have been working under and reporting to the General Council. The Council thank and commend all who play their part in these Task Groups.

5. The General Council is very thankful for the time, experience and advice of those who have been serving on the **Charities Legislation Task Group**. The Clerk, in particular, has found that many hours of his time have been consumed with matters related to interaction with government officials, and concerned Ministers and Elders.

6. Many have become aware that, at the local level, PCI has become very congregational in its outlook and is in danger of losing its sense of what it means to be Presbyterian. The General Assembly are asked to consider carefully and support the resolutions from the **Engagement and Consultations Panel** both in seeking the help of Presbyteries and in piloting a new scheme for Consultations.

7. As people of the Word who live in a world saturated with all kinds of social media, the General Council, through the **Communications Review Task Group**, has been considering how best to communicate both within the denomination and beyond.

8. The **Dialogue and Resources Task Group** has been exploring ways in which ministers might be better resourced to offer pastoral assistance to both individuals and families in respect of matters related to sexual orientation.

9. Like a local congregation the General Council has been entrusted with properties which have served us well and which need both constant upkeep and a timely consideration as to their future use. To this end, a Task Group has been considering the **Commercial use of Assembly Buildings** and brings a substantive report with options to this Assembly.

10. To facilitate the ordering of business in the Assembly, the General Assembly Business Committee will report in its own right at the beginning and the end of the Assembly (9.30am on Tuesday 7th and 11.45am on Friday 10th respectively). The General Assembly Nominations Committee will also report separately on Friday morning. The main General Council's report this year will then be considered in five separate sections, as follows:

Section 1 (9.45am on Tuesday 7th June):

- Priorities Committee
- Residential Assembly Task Group
- Engagement and Consultations Task Group
- Memorial Record

followed by Overtures relating to the Priorities Committee

Section 2 (3.30pm on Wednesday 8th June):

- Moderator's Advisory Committee
- Dialogue and Resources Task Group
- Republic of Ireland Marriage Task Group

followed by Overture relating to Marriage

Section 3 (4.30pm on Wednesday 8th June):

- Charities Legislation Task Group
- Communications Review Task Group
- Historical Archiving Task Group
- Guysmere Redevelopment Task Group

followed by Overtures relating to Charities Legislation

Section 4 (11.15am Thursday 9th June):

- Support Services Committee
- Commercial Use of Assembly Buildings Task Group
- United Appeal Committee

followed by Overture relating to Support Services

Section 5 (4.45pm Thursday 9th June):

- Church Relations Committee
- Organists and Employment Task Group
- Doctrine Committee
- General Business

followed by General Council Overtures

GENERAL ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE

INITIAL REPORT

Matters relating to the 2016 General Assembly (Tuesday Morning 9.30am)

1. At the time of writing The General Assembly Business Committee has met on four occasions during the year with further meetings planned in preparation for the 2016 General Assembly.

2. The Committee received the resignations of the Rev Gordon Best as Convener of the **Arrangements Panel** and of Mrs Maureen Patterson as **Hospitality Secretary**. The Committee puts on record its thanks to both of them for the helpful and efficient manner in which they fulfilled their responsibilities. The Rev Andrew Thompson is welcomed as the new Convener and thanks are also due to Mrs Daphne Patton and Mrs Phyllis Spence for agreeing to look after Hospitality and Catering.

3. A **Draft Order of Business for 2016** was agreed and approved by the General Council. This includes the following:

- (a) A Friday morning has been added as already agreed at last year's General Assembly.
- (b) Following on from last year's innovations, which were well received there will be alternative presentations on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons for the Council for Church in Society, Listening to the Global Church, and the Council for Social Witness respectively. The latter will include input from the Pastoral Care Committee of the Council for Congregational Life and Witness and focus on older people, including the topic of dementia. It is hoped that these alternative presentations will engage, inspire, and enable the General Assembly to participate in aspects of its business in a more creative way.
- (c) The General Council's report and business is divided into five sections over three days.
- (d) The Arrangements Panel has appropriate matters in hand and a budget of £20,000 has been agreed for recommendation to the Assembly.

4. **The Wednesday night event and the Wednesday and Thursday worship** will address the Fit for Purpose theme for 2016/17, 'A Community of Global Concern'. **SPUD** will have been engaging with four key areas of our culture: Sexuality, Secularism, Selfies and Science. Before the main Wednesday evening gathering they hope to serve a light tea in the Minor Hall and then share their insights, contributions and stories in these areas.

5. **The Creative Production Department** is cooperating in finding ways to publicise the Assembly with a view to increasing attendance and raising the public profile. The Committee has also considered the pre-Assembly scrutiny of business and encourages colleagues, ministers and representative Elders to meet with each other to discuss the forthcoming business.

6. Attention is drawn to the fact that changes to the **ordering of business and speaking times** implemented last year are continued this year, with a slight increase in speaking times, and are included in the procedure outlined in 'the yellow pages'.

7. The **Innovations** agreed for this year will be implemented. These include:

- (a) Additional named Elder to sit and deliberate
- (b) Reports restricted to strategy and implementation, not ‘showcasing’
- (c) Reports: executive summary; Implementation of previous decisions; decisions to be made;
- (d) Where appropriate each Council’s non-controversial resolutions be blocked together and taken as one item (without speeches unless challenged) along with the remainder of the Council’s more significant business.
- (e) Cross-council discussion of topics, especially priorities.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE

SECOND REPORT

Matters relating to future General Assemblies (Friday Morning 11.45am)

8. The Committee recommends that, for future Assemblies, all the Council’s non-controversial items be moved into one consolidated resolution.

9. As requested by last year’s General Assembly (Minutes page 76 resolution 26) the committee has looked at ‘**much more radical proposals**’ concerning the General Assembly than those presented in 2015. The Committee was asked to bring options that would, among other things, enable working Elders and younger people to be involved in the highest court of the Church. The Committee has consulted with a range of people, including the proposer and seconder of the amendment, younger ministers, Spud representatives and a cross-section of Elders. Following the Committee’s report the General Council agreed that the following options be presented for decision at the 2016 General Assembly:

- 1A. Development of the current arrangements. This is already agreed for 2016 and involves some minor changes.
- 1B. As above but with a change of date to possibly September/October.
- 2A. Move to the first weekend in June starting on Thursday evening, Friday and Saturday business, worship on Sunday morning with a Sunday afternoon focus on the work of Church at home and abroad.
- 2B. As above but with a change to date to possibly September/October
3. An Assembly split over two separate dates.
10. Each option has its pros and cons and, along with the details of each option, are included in Appendix 1. It should be noted that in the appended resolution 32 the Assembly is being asked to decide upon which of these options it wishes to adopt.

REPORTS FROM OTHER CHURCH ASSEMBLIES etc**The Welsh Assembly 2015**

The Right Rev Dr Ian McNie reports:

11. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Wales met from 6th-8th July 2015 in Aberystwyth University.

12. Both Anne and I, along with other delegates, were warmly welcomed and many opportunities were afforded to us to be involved in all the Assembly activities. I was asked to speak at the closing session, on behalf of the visiting delegates. Hospitality was provided in a local hotel and after the evening session visiting delegates gathered and shared opinions on the day's proceedings. During the Assembly coffee breaks we were regularly joined by a group of young Presbyterian Ministers from India whose Church was established after Missionaries from the Presbyterian Church of Wales went to India following the Welsh Revival. They seemed to want to identify with us and hear about the work of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

13. It was good to renew fellowship with the outgoing Moderator, Neil Kirkham, who chaired the first and second days of the three day Assembly, before handing over to Dr Elwyn Richards.

14. Concern was expressed with regard to falling numbers, with a larger proportion of Churches having a membership of fewer than 50.

15. The issue of same-sex marriage was highlighted, but not discussed in detail due to the Clerk's caution, 'that the process that needs to be followed is complex, and I am aware that wisdom and diligence will be required when dealing with the issue.' As an outsider seeking to understand these complex procedures, with many of the speakers articulating their point of view in Welsh, albeit with a translation available, it did become a challenge for those of us who were visitors.

16. It was heartening to read the Clerk's final sentence on the matter, 'I pray that we will discern God's will, and that we as a Church might be found to be dealing with these matters in a way which is God-honouring, thus adorning the Gospel.'

17. The Church and Society Department dealt with many issues that dominate our own agenda: the Syrian and the evolving migrant crisis, the plight of persecuted Christians and support for Christian minorities. In respect of the migrants, they cite a Calvinistic/Methodist publication of 1800, 'it is beholden on everyone living close to the sea behave compassionately towards those they see in danger ... also you shall not oppress a stranger.'

18. An examination of the role of the Moderator and his or her duties, and the length of the term of office brought no change to the present arrangement, Welsh Moderators continue part time in their own Congregations and are encouraged to use their distinctive and individual gifts for the benefit of the whole Church.

19. Listening to the report on Women's Ministry, and the Youth and Children's Work, reminded me much of what we experience at our own Assembly. In both cases there was an emphasis on the need for spiritual growth and development, and a passion within the leadership of these departments to facilitate this aspiration.

20. The overall impression I gleaned from attending the Assembly was a concern that the Church was in decline and there was no easy quick-fix. Majoring on the non-essentials and personal preferences must be eclipsed by a challenge to “be re-energised and accept the reality of being strangers and aliens within a culture that needs to be renewed”.

21. It is always good to have the opportunity to experience other Churches and their practices, and having spent three days at the Welsh Assembly, return with a renewed appreciation and enthusiasm for the work and witness of our own Church.

The Methodist Conference 2015

The Very Rev Dr Michael Barry reports:

22. I attended the Methodist Conference accompanied by Mr Martin Hampton, an Elder from Strand Congregation in East Belfast. Each year the Conference is hosted by a different District and this year it was based at the East Belfast Mission in the Skainos Centre on the Newtownards Road, Belfast. The theme of Conference was *Living as Aliens in a Strange Land*.

23. The Conference ran from Wednesday to Sunday and on the opening night the Rev Brian Anderson was elected and installed as President of the Conference.

24. Each day started with worship and Bible Study. Unfortunately the Rev David Bruce was unable to lead the studies each morning due to a family illness. However it was good to begin the day in God’s presence before the business began.

25. **Dr Neil Hudson**, Director of the Imagine project at the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, was the special speaker at the Conference and he presented a challenge to reach our communities by building relationships.

26. There was a familiar ring to the Conference as it completed its business. However there were a number of differences between it and our Assembly. For example, as well as the morning Bible Study, there was an evening celebration on the Thursday and Friday evenings. Ministers who had died during the past year were remembered and opportunity given to members to speak about their life and witness. This was particularly relevant for me as one of those who had died was the Rev Stanley Ross, my next door neighbour when I came to Newry. Brought up in a Presbyterian home Stanley would often end a discussion with an unanswerable quotation of the Shorter Catechism.

27. One other notable difference, found in the Church of Scotland Assembly and the URC Conference, was taking non-controversial business en bloc. This greatly reduced the time given to individual resolutions.

28. The business of the Conference dealt with the important issues facing the Church. The Faith and Order Committee had set up a working group to examine issues surrounding human sexuality. This is an ongoing discussion but at present no change will be made to the teaching or practice of the Church.

29. Other matters which were discussed were the reactions to the marriage referendum in the Irish Republic, asylum seekers, domestic violence and abortion.

30. It is obvious that the Methodist Church, like our own, is facing difficult issues. Also like ourselves they are seeing numbers decline. In the face of such trials their Home Mission Department presented “God’s Mission Our Mission”

as a follow up to a 2014 Faith and Order Committee statement. The tag line is intriguing – Warm Hearts, Tough Hands, Wet Feet.

31. The Nominations Committee submitted names for consideration as President and Lay Leader for the following year and on Friday afternoon a vote was taken. The President Designate is the Rev Bill Mullally, currently stationed on the South Cork and Kerry Circuit. The Lay Leader, who holds the post for three years, will be Dr Fergus O’Ferrall, a local preacher on the Dun Laoghaire Circuit. They will now have a year to prepare.

32. Another appointment that was made was that of the Rev Dr John Stephens as Secretary of Conference, who will be replacing the Rev Donald Ker following his impending retirement after eight years in office.

33. The Conference ended as usual with the Ordination Service which, like the opening service, was held in St Patrick’s Parish Church on the Newtownards Road.

34. Each of the candidates for ordination was presented to the President and then gave an account of their call to ministry. The service ended with the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

35. It was a privilege for Martin and me to represent our Church at Conference. Someone had told me that the Methodist Conference was more easy-going than our General Assembly, and while I think that was an accurate assessment, the Methodist Church got through a lot of business. One of the memorable quotes made from the platform was, “I am energised by this Conference.” Not something I have often heard said at our General Assembly.

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE
APPENDIX 1**

Options for future General Assemblies

Option 1: A development of the current arrangements

Item	Current	OPTION 1A	OPTION 1B
Dates	1st Monday in June to Thursday	Already agreed for 2016: 1st Monday in June to Friday	As 1A but held in September or another date
Opening	Monday night		
Election of Moderator	Monday night		
Reception of Corresponding Members & Delegates	Tuesday morning		
Business Sessions	Morning & Afternoon		
Worship	Wednesday & Thursday lunchtimes	Wednesday, Thursday & Friday lunchtimes	
Lord's Supper	Tuesday lunchtime		
Memorial Roll	Tuesday lunchtime		
Private Session	Thursday morning	Friday morning	
Missionary Personnel	Prior to CGM report		
Retirees & Licentiates	Prior to CTM report		
Forces Chaplains	During CMI report		
Evening Celebration	Wednesday night		
Closing	Thursday afternoon	Friday afternoon	
Youth Event	Saturday night		

Item	Current	OPTION 1A	OPTION 1B
Presentation of business	'Alternative Presentations'	Already agreed: GABC reflect on CCLW's alternative presentation in 2015 with authority to GC to implement related changes in 2016	
	'Listening to the Global Church' types		
	'That the report be received taken at end'		
		Already agreed for 2016: (a) Additional named Elder to sit and deliberate (b) Reports restricted to strategy and implementation, not 'showcasing' (c) Reports: executive summary; implementation of previous decisions; decisions to be made; (d) Each Council's non-controversial resolutions be blocked together and taken as one item (e) Cross-council discussion of topics, especially priorities	

Option 2: Move to the weekend

Item	Current	OPTION 2A	OPTION 2B
Dates	1st Monday in June to Thursday	Thursday evening before first Monday in June to Sunday evening	As 2A but September or another date
Opening	Monday night 7pm	Thursday night 8pm	
Election of Moderator	Monday night	Thursday night	
Reception of Corresponding Members & Delegates	Tuesday morning		
Worship	Wednesday & Thursday lunchtimes	Friday & Saturday mornings	
Business Sessions	Morning & Afternoon	Friday Morning, Afternoon, Evening; Saturday Morning, Afternoon	
Lord's Supper	Tuesday lunchtime	Sunday morning	
Memorial Roll	Tuesday lunchtime	Sunday morning	
Private Session	Thursday morning		
Missionary Personnel	Prior to CGM report	Sunday afternoon	
Retirees & Licentiates	Prior to CTM report	Sunday afternoon	
Forces Chaplains	During CMI report	Sunday afternoon	
Evening Celebration	Wednesday night	Sunday night	
Closing	Thursday afternoon	Sunday night	
Youth Event	Saturday night	Saturday night in Ulster Hall or Local Church	
Presentation of business	'Alternative Presentations'		
	'Listening to the Global Church' types		

Item	Current	OPTION 2A	OPTION 2B
	<p>‘That the report be received taken at end’</p>		
		<p>All non-controversial resolutions as one item at end of Saturday ‘Showcasing’ at Sunday afternoon session. In Business Sessions proposers and seconders root their proposals in Scripture and there be a pause for prayer before voting takes place. Material provided for congregational services for that Sunday 2-day holiday for Assembly Buildings staff on following Monday & Tuesday</p>	

Option 3: An Assembly split over two separate dates

Item	Current	OPTION 3
Dates	1st Monday in June to Thursday	Thursday to Saturday twice a year, perhaps February half-term and June.
Opening	Monday night 7pm	February Thursday night
Election of Moderator	Monday night	June Saturday final session
Reception of Corresponding Members & Delegates	Tuesday morning	
Worship	Wednesday & Thursday lunchtimes	Friday and Saturday mornings or lunchtimes
Business Sessions	Morning & Afternoon	Friday and Saturday mornings and afternoons plus one Friday evening
Lord's Supper	Tuesday lunchtime	
Memorial Roll	Tuesday lunchtime	
Private Session	Thursday morning	
Missionary Personnel	Prior to CGM report	A Friday night celebration
Retirees & Licentiates	Prior to CTM report	A Friday night celebration
Forces Chaplains	During CMI report	A Friday night celebration
Evening Celebration	Wednesday night	A Friday night
Closing	Thursday afternoon	June Saturday
Youth Event	Saturday night	February would not conflict with exam time but Assembly Hall would not be available for setting up
Presentation of business	'Alternative Presentations'	
	'Listening to the Global Church' types	
	'That the report be received taken at end'	

Pros and Cons

Option	Pros	Cons
Option 1: Development of current arrangements	Familiarity It 'works'	Doesn't help the issue of inability of many to attend. Falls down on participation.
Option 2: Move to the weekend	Opens up possibility of attendance to more people More room for debate of important issues – less time needed on routine matters Possible to make it residential	Three business sessions on one day (Friday) may not be sustainable. Difficulty of getting Sunday proposals accepted – likely to be divisive. Youth Night could not be in the Assembly Hall.
Option 3: An Assembly split over two separate dates	Opens up possibility of attendance to more people. Would in particular enable more of an input from younger people at February date – could deal with matters more likely to be of interest to them then. The two meetings could be separated along 'routine' and 'directional' or 'outward' and 'inward' lines. If there was a clear theme linking both dates it may be able to work.	Difficult to see the two meetings as 'one assembly'. Would June meeting want to rescind decisions taken at February meeting? Need for two sets of reports. Marginally increased cost. Decisions would have to be made on which meeting contained things like Lord's Supper, Memorial Roll, presentations of personnel etc. Would one meeting become more 'important' than the other? Which meeting would delegates from other Churches and overseas attend?

ROY PATTON, Convener

PRIORITIES COMMITTEE

The Priorities Committee met twice during the last session and transacted the following business:

Towards a new process to be followed by the Priorities Committee:

1. At its first meeting of the session the Committee received a report from a small group which had been set up by the Clerk, as Convener of the Committee, and the Very Rev Dr Rob Craig, as Convener of the General Council. The small group had been tasked to draw up a draft framework paper to facilitate discussion regarding the direction of the Committee's work, and its membership was: The Clerk (Convener), the Very Rev Dr Rob Craig, the Rev Dr Graham Connor, the Rev David Bruce and Mr Maurice McNicholl.

2. In its report, the small group noted: the relevant aspect of the remit of the Priorities Committee, as set out in the Code Par 272(6)(c); statements agreed by the Priorities Committee in February 2015; the various reports of the former Ad-Hoc Committee on Priorities to the General Assembly (especially the 2003 report) and the various reports of the former Priorities Committee itself to the General Assembly (especially the 2005 report). The group's report also included a framework paper to assist the Priorities Committee in clarifying one aspect of its role and related modus operandi – that of assisting the General Assembly in identifying key priorities for its work for specific periods of time.

3. Following detailed consideration of the small group's paper, and the further consideration of a more detailed report at a subsequent meeting, the Committee agreed a process, running from June-December 2016, which will enable representatives of Councils to listen to each other's narratives and, along with others, begin to discern the priorities that need to be brought to the General Assembly for consideration and decision in 2017.

4. The Committee is thankful to Mr Maurice McNicholl for his willingness to facilitate this process over the ensuing months and also recognises the dedicated and focussed time committed by its own members, for a process which will include two 'days away' and one 'overnight'.

PRIORITIES REFERENCE PANEL

Mr Martin Hampton reports:

5. The Priorities Reference Panel has also been considering its detailed modus operandi to enable it to be in a position to begin its work in 2016/17. It was noted that from the 2016 General Assembly, the Priorities Reference Panel would be taking responsibility for the work carried out by the former Appraisals Panel. (This work is currently being carried out by the Finance and Staffing Commission, which will be thanked and discharged at the 2016 General Assembly).

6. The Panel recognised that in addition to any specific Priorities allocated by the General Assembly, the Councils also have to carry out all aspects of their remit (as laid down in the Code) – their everyday function to support the work of the Church in Ireland and globally. The Panel therefore recommends to the General Assembly that this consideration be reflected in a change to the order and wording to the Code par 272(6)(c), which should now read as follows:

- Though a suitable Council Reference Panel, independent of other Councils and reporting directly to the General Council, to:
 - report whether each Council is focussed on the remit allocated to it by the General Assembly.
 - report that the work of the Councils takes cognizance of the priorities agreed by the General Assembly;
 - approve, on behalf of the General Council, all new projects and/or staffing posts, following the scheme agreed from time to time by the General Council;
 - report that the United Appeal allocations are consistent with the remit of Councils and reflective of priorities agreed by the General Assembly;

An appropriate resolution and overture are appended.

7. With regard to the review of the Councils' work (as envisaged in the first bullet point in 6 above), the Panel felt that it could start with consideration of the remit of each Council, in advance of any specific priorities being allocated by the General Assembly in 2017. The Panel is still to determine the best approach, based on skills and resources required. Two approaches are under consideration:

- Review all Councils each year;
- Review some Councils each year on a rolling programme to ensure all are covered in a three year cycle.

8. The Panel initially proposes to carry out a sample review with one Council, to allow it to develop a detailed method of ongoing review. This will also enable the Panel to identify suitable members to co-opt, based on skills/knowledge required.

TREVOR D GRIBBEN, Convener

2017 RESIDENTIAL ASSEMBLY TASK GROUP

9. Plans for the 2017 Residential Assembly are now beginning to take shape and most of the essential preliminary arrangements are now in place.

The dates are Monday 21st-Thursday 24th August, 2017. The University of Ulster, Coleraine, has been booked as the venue, with the main meetings to take place in the 'Diamond'. Twelve seminar rooms, including a 250-seater lecture-theatre have also been provisionally booked for workshops and break-out groups.

10. The title and theme of the Assembly is 'Everyday Disciples', in recognition of the increasing necessity for followers of Jesus today, to be equipped by the Church to be effective disciple-makers in their various spheres of everyday life. Our two keynote speakers, the Rev Dr Ray Ortlund Jnr (Immanuel Church, Nashville) and the Rev Randy Pope (Perimeter Church, Atlanta), both of whom have a well-informed knowledge of our PCI context, will flesh out this theme for us with a fresh, but strongly biblical perspective.

11. The workshop/seminar topics will similarly include 'Disciples the Jesus Way', 'Disciples in Family', 'Disciples who Think and Engage', 'Disciples

across the World', and 'Disciples who really Care'. It is envisaged that several of the workshop facilitators will be local or at least UK/Ireland based.

12. We also plan to supplement our keynote addresses by a series of TED Talks (personal stories) from local PCI contexts for our encouragement. Worship will be led by Mr Jonathan Rea and members of New Irish Arts.

13. A 'Publicity and Promotion' sub-group has been appointed, which will oversee the formal launch in the Autumn. This will be effected by direct contact with Congregations and Presbyteries. The 'Publicity and Promotion' sub-group will also be responsible for follow-up material, for use in Congregations, post-Assembly. Online registration of delegates will begin in January 2017 and further details regarding this will be forthcoming.

14. Initially, the Assembly will be open to Ministers, Elders, leaders and key personnel in Congregations (up to a maximum of 3 per Congregation), who *must* register in advance of the event, either for the 'full residential package' or as 'day-delegates'.

15. Costs have yet to be finalised. However, we are in contact with Mr Clive Knox to ensure that all budgetary requirements are in place. Mr David Thomson, from Saintfield Road Congregation, continues enthusiastically to act as chief administrator of the Task Group, to whom we are extremely grateful.

16. Please remember this Assembly very much in your prayers, as finer details are worked out over the coming months and as momentum gathers pace ahead of August 2017. Please pray especially that it will have a massive impact upon our denomination over the next few years as we face very real challenges, take tough decisions and seize our opportunities for Christ.

JOHN KIRKPATRICK & GORDON BEST (Co-Conveners)

ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATIONS TASK GROUP

Introduction

17. A reminder of the remit set up by the 2015 General Assembly: *a new Engagement and Consultations Task Group be formed to carry forward the examination of the issue of engagement (between Presbyteries and the new Councils and between Presbyteries and Congregations) and that this group subsume the work of reviewing Consultations.*

18. The Task Group in its various meetings has conducted a wide ranging discussion over the past year on issues such as what does it mean to be a Presbyterian today; how can Presbytery do business better; how can we streamline the Consultations process; how can ordinary Presbyterians feel more engaged with the wider Church?

19. The following is suggested as constituting the major elements of Presbytery's role into the future:

- Influencing the leadership of Congregations, particularly Ministers;
- Offering pastoral support, particularly to Ministers;

- Providing accountability for Ministers, Elders and Congregations;
- Facilitating administration;
- Representing member Churches in the public square;
- Training of leaders and members of Congregations;
- Formulating missional strategy on a Presbytery wide basis;
- Providing advice;
- Informing Presbytery of what individual Congregations are doing and celebrating successes.

Points considered:

On the issue of being a Presbyterian Church:

- (a) It is important to continue to have some form of accountability built into the Church structures for the health of our Church.
- (b) Part of being Presbyterian is to engage with the different aspects of the wider Church denomination – we are not congregationalist with each Congregation viewing itself as independent from others.
- (c) It is noted that the modern trend is to play down denominational distinctives and to lean towards congregational independence so we must be aware of this and seek to counteract it positively.
- (d) While engagement between Presbyteries and Congregations is considered “a good thing” it is a massive challenge to achieve this in a helpful way.
- (e) For Congregations to identify as being part of a Presbytery there need to be real benefits seen: people need to feel informed about relevant matters; have good prayer information; be encouraged to think that they are part of a bigger vision; be able to access regular training on a Presbytery basis.

On issue of Consultations:

- (f) Presbytery Consultations are becoming burdensome and an increasing number of Presbyteries are doing fewer of them (six Presbyteries did not carry out any last year).
- (g) The Consultation process can be viewed as increasingly unwieldy, involving too many people and too long.
- (h) The end product of Consultations tends to be innocuous and of minimal help considering the amount of time spent in carrying them out.
- (i) Consultations however can be of great benefit to spot major issues arising in a Congregation and of course aids in accountability.
- (j) We should endeavour to find ways of keeping Congregations engaged with the wider Church, especially through Presbytery.
- (k) A way should be found to keep Presbyteries meaningfully engaged and knowledgeable about what Congregations are doing within their bounds in an ongoing way.
- (l) A way should be found to maintain accountability but in as non-threatening and affirming a way as possible.
- (m) The current Consultation questions are helpful and need not change considerably but they do need reviewed.

20. The focus of our work recently has been concentrated on these two issues – how to improve the Consultation process; how we can improve engagement between Presbytery and Congregations including whether the format of Presbytery needs to change to facilitate this engagement?

21. The key question to be determined is whether we see Presbytery mainly as a court of the Church which guides the tenor of the way business is conducted, or whether it can appropriately meld into a forum for fellowship, prayer, training and strategizing in addition to being a court. There is more thinking needing to be done on this key question as it will shape how we conduct Presbytery business.

22. This paper focuses on the thinking done so far in two main areas –

Appendix A: Improving engagement and communication between Presbytery and Congregations;

Appendix B: Consultations.

23. Thanks are due to the Revs Albin Rankin and Jonathan Boyd who have contributed substantially to this report.

ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATIONS TASK GROUP

APPENDIX A

Improving engagement and communication between Presbytery and Congregations

Introduction

1. A survey of Clerks of Presbytery revealed the following barriers to significant and positive engagement between Presbytery and Congregations.

2. **Perspective:** The overriding attitude adopted by Congregations is that of congregationalism not Presbyterianism. Presbytery is therefore often seen as an agent of the central Church; an imposition, not an encouragement and a body best avoided, or least a body with whom minimal contact should be maintained.

3. **Priority:** Closely aligned to the perspective is the place of Presbytery on the agenda of already overstretched Ministers. Presbytery does not rate as a key priority and Elders and Congregations reflect this view in the attitude they adopt towards and the involvement they seek to have with Presbytery.

4. **Representation:** While in many cases representative Elders serve for long periods, in some cases the turnover is high. This makes relationship-building difficult and hampers the development of engagement between Presbytery and Congregation.

5. **Capacity:** The perspective taken and priority adopted is in no small measure a result of the limited capacity within Congregations to undertake any additional activity or relationship-building outside of Congregation life.

6. **Geography:** Although predominantly an issue within rural Presbyteries, the spread of Congregations over either a wide physical region or across diverse socio-economic areas often mitigates against real engagement.

7. **Identity:** The geographical issue is exacerbated by the lack of identification with Presbytery. Congregations may all bear the imprimatur of PCI but Presbytery is often viewed as an unknown and unknowable entity. It is telling that Presbytery is more often referred to as “they” rather than “we.”

8. While it is vital that the administrative, supervisory and judicial roles of Presbytery are protected and its place as a court of the Church is not devalued, it is nevertheless equally vital for Presbytery to become a place as much about people as it is about process.

9. To that end the dissemination of good practice is a first step, in encouraging a proactive approach by Presbytery, towards more meaningful and productive engagement with Congregations.

10. Alongside its role as a court of the Church, Presbytery can become a catalyst sparking fresh thinking and innovation as it seeks to engage, encourage and enable Congregations to fulfil their calling as missional communities in the 21st century.

11. The survey of Clerks revealed the following elements of good practice:

- (i) **Hosting:** Having Congregations host Presbytery meetings and events on a rotation basis.
- (ii) **Sharing:** Inviting host Congregations to share opportunities and challenges in mission as part of a Presbytery meeting. Where this involves congregational members participating (rather than Minister or full-time staff), greater engagement is afforded. However, excusing such participants when their contribution is over only serves to reinforce the perception that Presbytery is only for Ministers and Elders and/or Presbytery is boring!
- (iii) **Praying:** Create space to pray for and with one another within each Presbytery meeting. This can be complemented by distributing prayer points before or after Presbytery meetings; appointing a prayer co-ordinator and encouraging prayer in Congregations for groups of Presbytery Congregations throughout the year.
- (iv) **Role specific and single-issue meetings:** Gathering congregational members who serve similar roles together for sharing and training can be a basis for developing better relationships between Congregations. The training component could also involve vision-casting about Presbytery, its roles, responsibilities and the relationship it seeks with each Congregation under its care.

12. Single-issue meetings provide opportunity for Presbytery to invite a wider range of congregational members to sit and deliberate. This has a two-fold benefit in that it allows more people to be part of Presbytery's work and it allows Church members to have real opportunity to impact and shape the direction of Presbytery.

Areas for further consideration

13. **Representative Elders:** The role of Representative Elders is crucial in the engagement of Presbytery with Congregations. It may be useful for Presbytery and Kirk Sessions to consider minimum (and maximum) terms of service for Elders in this role.

14. In addition thought needs to be given to fostering better two-way communication between Congregations and Presbytery. What would Presbytery wish Congregations to know about their current work and planning? What is taking place at congregational level that would be useful to share at Presbytery level?

15. **Clustering:** Where geography, demographics or socio-economic factors make Presbytery-wide engagement difficult, if not impossible, might consideration be given to a clustering model? Relationship-building might be more meaningful and productive between smaller groups of Congregations than on a Presbytery basis. This model is being trialled in one Presbytery as part of an alternate format for Presbytery meetings. This will involve breakout sessions in clusters but with a plenary session to ensure that no one loses sight of the bigger picture, namely Presbytery. It is also envisaged that such clustering will involve gatherings outside of stated meetings by Ministers and possibly also by Clerks of Session and Elders. The aim is to foster better relationships with an intentional missional focus.

16. **Consultation:** The role of Visitation/Consultation/Oversight or whatever the next development of the process whereby Presbytery exercises its supervisory role, is a crucial element in the Presbytery-congregational relationship. The refreshing of how this task is undertaken has the potential to develop more meaningful and significant engagement between Congregations and Presbytery.

Conclusion

17. The congregational model of mission and ministry coupled with the new Assembly structures of Councils and Commissions dominates the landscape of Church life and work. The place and purpose of Presbytery remains hazy in the minds of many Church members and Ministers.

18. The challenge facing Presbytery is identity, “Who or what is Presbytery?” and involvement, “What does Presbytery add to the conversations about ministry and mission at congregational and Assembly level?”

19. Developing better engagement between Presbytery and Congregations will require further reflection on these two fundamental questions.

ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATIONS TASK GROUP

APPENDIX B

Review of Consultations

Introduction

1. A working group of the Engagement and Consultations Task Group has been reviewing Consultations with the aim of producing:

- a revised process;
- new resources and guidelines for Presbytery to carry out Consultations; and
- resources to help Kirk Sessions make effective use of Consultations to develop the fruitfulness of congregational life.

2. It is envisaged that a smaller number of people be involved:

- (a) Consultation Team: A four-person team appointed by Presbytery, consisting of members of Presbytery, at least two of whom should be Ministers. They would have a quorum of three. One member will be the

Consultation Convener with responsibility for preparing reports and presenting them to Presbytery.

- (b) Congregational Representatives: In order to involve the Congregation more in this process, get a fuller picture and ensure that there is ownership of outcome; we propose having a representative group of people meet with the Consultation Team for face-to-face discussions. This group would have to be large enough to present a wide and representative picture of congregational life, yet small enough for effective discussion to take place. The whole Kirk Session will have opportunity for input into the process via a written submission but the Team will meet with the Congregational Representatives, a smaller group which facilitates better discussion. Kirk Session should assemble a group of 10–12 people consisting of e.g.
- up to four Elders;
 - two young people (under age 25);
 - four to six other leaders/representatives from the Congregation (at least two of whom are female).

3. To ensure that these are coherent and helpful, we are working backwards to establish:

- (a) the goals of Consultations;
 - (b) the product of this process that will allow the goals to be accomplished, by way of reports to Presbytery, and resources for Kirk Session;
 - (c) the best means of assessing congregational life leading to good recommendations for action;
 - (d) the process of gathering and analysing the data required to make this assessment; and
 - (e) the specific questions used to gather data including guidelines for assessing answers.
4. This part of the report addresses steps (a)–(d) above.

a. Goals

- (i) Get a full picture of congregational life that comes from the different perspectives present in a Congregation, but without overburdening the Congregation with many meetings.
- (ii) Involve the Congregation in discussions so that they will understand and have ownership of the outcome of the process and embrace it as a means of increasing fruitfulness, rather than go through the motions.
- (iii) Ensure that, under the leadership of Kirk Session, the Congregation is meeting its obligations to keep accurate records and up to date policies, and abide by the Code and the law of the land.
- (iv) Discover things in the life of the Congregation which could be celebrated by the Congregation for their edification, and by Presbytery for the building up of the wider Church.
- (v) Discover challenges that Kirk Session faces in congregational life, particularly with regard to mission, and resource Kirk Session to deal with these challenges internally so that it can take ownership of the work and embrace it rather than have a solution imposed from outside.
- (vi) Determine if there is a need for Presbytery to directly intervene to offer help or investigate problems.

- (vii) Inform Councils of the aforementioned celebrations and challenges to guide them in their work, particularly the resourcing of Presbytery and Congregations.

b. Product

- (i) For Congregations, it is hoped that this process will lead to the end product of enabling them to be more fruitful by identifying good things already happening which can be built upon, and by addressing challenges. This involves providing information to the Consultation Team, hearing their recommendations, and responding in a way that will improve the life of the Congregation. The specifics of what this looks like will vary greatly from Congregation to Congregation depending on their circumstances, the recommendations of the Consultation Team and the willingness to respond. With the help of CCLW some draft resources have been produced to help Kirk Sessions continue discussions about how to develop particular areas of congregational life during the ensuing year.
- (ii) For Presbytery, this process is about getting a better picture of life in a Congregation, both as it was when the Consultation process began and how it has changed as a result. For the Congregation, the process should primarily produce action and change.
- (iii) The finding and recommendations of the Consultation Team are not only a product of this process, arising out of investigation and analysis, but also an interim step leading to the desired final outcome of greater fruitfulness in the Congregation. While the actions of Congregations cannot be specified in advance, the nature of the Consultation Team's finding and recommendations can be clearly specified and would take the form of two reports:

1. **Consultation Report** – presented to Presbytery for approval and then passed on to Kirk Session for action. This would also be copied to CCLW to give them a picture of the positive stories in PCI and the needs that are being identified. Where appropriate, CCLW could pass this on to other Councils e.g. CMI. The report would answer questions and make recommendations as follows:

a. Questions to be answered

- (i) Has the Congregation complied with the requirements to maintain good records and review policies, etc.? Ideally for most Congregations this would be a one-sentence paragraph.
- (ii) What stories are there to celebrate?
- (iii) What challenges does the Congregation face?

b. Recommendations

- (i) Action for Kirk Session to take in the next year.
- (ii) Action for Presbytery to take immediately. This would be absent from most Consultation Reports, unless there is evidence of serious problems that require immediate intervention or investigation by a Commission.

2. **Follow-up Report** – This would come a year after the Consultation Report, during which time Kirk Session will have had time for action. Providing that the Consultation Team is satisfied with progress made, this should be a

brief verbal report to Presbytery. The report would answer questions and make recommendations as follows:

a. Questions to be answered

- (i) How has Kirk Session dealt with their challenges in the past year?
- (ii) Has a story come out of this that we can celebrate?
- (iii) Are there further challenges requiring some form of follow-up?

b. Recommendations

EITHER

- (i) That Kirk Session and Congregation be commended for their work.
- (ii) That the Consultation Team be discharged.

OR, in situations where the response of Kirk Session and/or the Congregation is particularly concerning, and Presbytery feels that further action is required

- (i) That further action be taken by Presbytery.
- (ii) That the Consultation Team be discharged.

c. Assessment

The conclusions which go into the reports would be formed after discussion by the Team who would be guided by the hard and soft data they have gathered throughout the process.

- (i) Hard data to be recorded in a booklet known as the 'Review of Resources, Records, and Policies'. It would be similar to the old 'Review of Resources' and collect data on:
 - (a) Numerical trends in attendance and finance;
 - (b) Property maintenance reports.
 - (c) Evidence of record-keeping.
 - (d) Up-to-date policies.
- (ii) Soft data
 - (a) The Consultation Report from the previous Consultation.
 - (b) Experience of a normal service in the Congregation by the whole team.
 - (c) The story of congregational life heard from the Minister via written response to a questionnaire and personal interview. This would also be done with the Associate Minister where one is present. As Licenced Assistants and other members of staff are not members of Presbytery, they will not receive the same individual attention, but could potentially be included in the Congregational Representatives if Kirk Session so desire.
 - (d) The story of congregational life heard from the Kirk Session via written response to a wide-ranging questionnaire.
 - (e) The story of congregational life heard from the Congregational Representatives via a group discussion focussing on issues arising out of the written responses and hard data.

Assessment for the follow-up report would be accomplished by hearing from the Kirk Session about action taken in response to the Consultation Report. The form of this report would be at the discretion of the Consultation Team and depend on the nature of the recommendations it makes.

d. Process of a Consultation

- (i) Presbytery inform Kirk Session twelve weeks in advance of when they will be due to participate in a Consultation and send an outline of the Consultation process.
- (ii) Groups are appointed to conduct the Consultation process.
 - (a) Presbytery appoints a Consultation Team and provides it with the previous Consultation Team Report for this Congregation.
 - (b) Kirk Session inform the Congregation that the Consultation will be happening and organise the appointment of a group of Congregational Representatives who will take part in the group discussion.
- (iii) The Consultation Team write to the Congregation to begin gathering data and require that all responses be made within six weeks.
 - (a) It sends Kirk Session a Review of Resources, Records and Policies to be completed with the help of Congregational Committee.
 - (b) It sends Kirk Session a questionnaire which requires a written response.
 - (c) It sends the Minister a questionnaire which requires a written response.
 - (d) It sends the Associate Minister, if there is one, a questionnaire which requires a written response.
- (iv) The Consultation Team visits a service in the Congregation.
- (v) Each member of the Consultation Team individually looks at data gathered so far and makes an assessment. The Team then meets to agree on areas of focus for discussion. Two methods of assessment will be given in the Presbytery pilot scheme.
- (vi) The Consultation Team organises discussion meetings. The order and timing of these would be at the discretion of the Consultation Team.
 - (a) It holds a group discussion with the Congregational Representatives.
 - (b) It holds an individual discussion with the Minister.
 - (c) It holds an individual discussion with the Associate Minister, if there is one.
- (vii) The Consultation Team meets to discuss their individual impressions and agree on recommendations.
- (viii) The Consultation Convener writes a Consultation Report.
- (ix) The Consultation Team or Consultation Convener may at their discretion meet with the Minister and Clerk of Session to verbally inform them of the content of the report as a courtesy, making it clear that the report still has to go to Presbytery for the recommendations to be agreed.
- (x) The Consultation Convener presents the Consultation Report to Presbytery.
- (xi) If urgent intervention is recommended in the report and agreed by Presbytery, Presbytery addresses the concerns as a separate process, with access to information from the Consultation process.
- (xii) If the Consultation Report is received by Presbytery, then the Consultation Convener sends the report to Kirk Session, along with resources to help hold discussions concerning the area(s) of congregational life addressed by the recommendations.

- (xiii) Kirk Session has a year to address the recommendations of the report.
- (xiv) The Consultation Team consults with Kirk Session after a year to hear about progress regarding the recommendations of the Consultation Report.
- (xv) The Consultation Team meets to discuss their views on the progress and agree on what to report to Presbytery.
- (xvi) The Consultation Convener makes a Follow-up Report to Presbytery.
- (xvii) If urgent intervention is recommended in the report and agreed by Presbytery, Presbytery addresses the concerns as a separate process, with access to information from the Consultation process.
- (xviii) If the Report is accepted by Presbytery, then Presbytery discharges the Consultation Team.

5. Conclusion

- (a) In short, the main new elements of the Consultation process are a reduced team conducting the review; new written questions for the Session and the Minister; the consultation Team meeting with a representative Group (maximum 12) from the Congregation and not the Session and Committee.
- (b) There are still a number of issues to be addressed such as the interval between Consultations (probably 10 years); should there be a Review of Resources every five years; how to deal with Charges made up of multiple Congregations; the relationship between Consultations and other Reviews (such as Tenure reviews); payment of Pulpit Supply Fees to facilitate the Consultation process.
- (c) The Task Group is currently finalising the areas to be covered in the written questions to Session and Minister. It is contemplating covering nine areas in the questions to Session which accord with the key areas of focus in the Council for Congregational Life and Witness. The nine areas would be outreach, discipleship, leadership, worship, pastoral care, global mission, sacramental discipline, relationships, staffing. There will only be two or three questions in each section so the overall maximum number of questions would be 30 (similar to the number in the current Consultation process).
- (d) There would be ten questions to the Minister which focus on his/her ministry emphases, personal development, recent highlights, concerns and relationships.
- (e) The Task Group hopes to be in a position to run a pilot of the new Consultation process in one or two Presbyteries in early 2017.

NORMAN AL CAMERON, Convener

MEMORIAL RECORD

The Very Rev Dr Donald Patton reports:

The Very Rev Robert Victor Alexander Lynas, OBE, BA, BD, DD, Minister Emeritus of Gardenmore Congregation, Larne, died 20th June 2015 in the ninety-sixth year of his age and the seventy-second year of his ministry. He was born at Belfast on 17th January 1920, the eldest of two sons (his brother, Cowper, became Minister of Ballywillan and Dunmurry successively) to William Lynas, a Belfast City Missionary, and his wife Winifred Mary, née Jamison. The family were members of Fitzroy Avenue Congregation. Dr Lynas attended Rosetta Primary School and then Methodist College, Belfast, 1932-1935, where he captained the Medallion Rugby XV, and won several Ulster Schools Athletics sprint titles. On leaving school he worked in Alexander Findlay, Soap, Candle and Glycerene Manufacturers in Ann Street, Belfast, but left in 1937 to pursue academic study at the Queen's University, Belfast, graduating BA in 1940. In response to the call of God to the ordained ministry he studied at the Assembly's College, Belfast, 1940-1943. He was licensed by the Presbytery of Belfast on 25th May 1943 and was assigned as Assistant to the Rev WR Megaw of St John's, Newtownbreda, Belfast. Mr Megaw had been Minister of Trinity, Ahoghill, before being called to St John's, and it was that Congregation which called Mr Lynas, where he was ordained and installed as Minister by the Presbytery of Ballymena on 15th December 1943. He ministered there until his call to Gardenmore, Larne, where he was installed by the Presbytery of Carrickfergus on 11th March 1947. This was the beginning of a long and distinguished ministry to which Mr Lynas gave his many gifts with great commitment. He was a noted pulpit speaker and efficient organiser. He was invited to conduct many evangelistic missions and had many opportunities as a broadcaster on radio and television. A devoted pastor, he brought the compassion of the Saviour and the hope of the Gospel to every situation, a much needed ministry when the Princess Victoria, the ferry that sailed daily between Larne and Stranraer, sank on 31st January 1953 with the loss of 133 men, women and children. As the town of Larne expanded the Congregation grew in numerical strength from six hundred to eight hundred families. A new manse was built on the site of the old one and was ready for use in September 1957. Mr Lynas gave enthusiastic leadership when the Congregation decided to build new halls and to add a tower to the Church building in 1969. In the mid-1950s the large housing estate of Craigy Hill was built and Mr Lynas saw the need for, and encouraged the planting and development of, a new Congregation in 1956 in the heart of the development. He was well known in the wider community especially through his association with Larne Grammar School, of which he was a Trustee Governor for sixty-four years from 1948, and a past Chairman of the Board of Governors, a position he also held in Larne Technical College for some years. His commitment was recognised with the awarding of an OBE for services to education in the New Year Honours List, 1998. In local Church life he served as Clerk of the Presbytery of Carrickfergus 1974-99 guiding the work of the court and advising and encouraging colleagues in their ministry. He was also twice Moderator of Presbytery and Moderator of the Synod of Ballymena and Coleraine in 1965. The central Church owes him a debt of gratitude for his work in a variety of roles. He was Convener of the State of

Religion and Evangelism Committee 1955-63; Convener of the Central Ministry Fund 1962-73; Convener of the Board of Ministry and Pensions 1966-76. His work and worth were recognised by the wider Church when he was elected Moderator of the General Assembly for the year 1972-73 and the Presbyterian Theological Faculty of Ireland conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Divinity. These were challenging times for all Church leaders as the IRA intensified its campaign of violence, and division and sectarianism spread. Dr Lynas brought able and reasoned leadership in this context and demonstrated the pastoral care and fellowship of the Church by his attendance at the funerals of Presbyterian and other victims of the 'Troubles'. As Convener of the Government Committee 1973-81 he continued to exercise a ministry of reconciliation and to speak for the Church in political and community circles. Dr Lynas retired on 31st December 1987 to live at Ballygally. Throughout his busy years of full-time ministry Dr Lynas was supported loyally by his wife, Margaret Elizabeth, a daughter of Mr Thomas Rainey whose name is closely associated with the building of the Presbyterian War Memorial Hostel in Howard Street, Belfast, opened in 1926, to provide accommodation for Presbyterian young people working and studying in the city. They had four children, Cowper, Brian, Stephen, and the late Karen. All three sons serve as Elders in the Presbyterian Church, two of them being Clerks of Session, and Stephen was Head of Press and Media for the General Assembly for twenty years. To them, and the wider family circle, we extend our sympathy and appreciation of the ministry and fellowship of their loved one in the assurance of the Gospel that 'No eye has seen, nor ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him.'

The Rev Samuel John Millar, BA, MA, Minister Emeritus of Hazelbank Congregation, Coleraine, died on 11th July 2015 in the seventy-eighth year of his age and the forty-seventh year of his ministry. He was born at Ahoghill on 12th April 1938 the second of two sons to Samuel John Millar, a Machine Engineer, and his wife, Mary, née Smyth. He was educated at Fourtowns Primary School and Ballymena Technical College. On leaving school aged fifteen, he trained as a draper with TG Alexander and Son in Ballymena. He was taught the Gospel in the family Church of Trinity, Ahoghill, and was converted to personal faith in Christ as a teenager at an Elim mission Service in Ballymena. This spiritual experience would inform the central thrust of his future ministry that men and women should know Christ personally. He was fully engaged in the life of his local Congregation being a keen member of the Christian Endeavour. The Minister, the Rev William Fleming, encouraged him in his faith and to think of the ordained ministry. To that end he studied part-time, leading to full-time study at Magee University College, Londonderry, and Trinity College, Dublin, graduating BA in 1965. He read theology at the Assembly's College, Belfast, and was licensed by the Presbytery of Ballymena on 18th June 1967 in his home Congregation. He was assigned as Assistant to the Rev Robert James Magee, Minister of Sinclair Seamen's Congregation, Shore Road, Belfast, where he was ordained on 19th December 1967. During this time he studied part-time for his MA, graduating from Trinity College, Dublin, in 1969. On 18th February 1970 he was installed by the Presbytery of Down to the joint charge of Clough and Seaforde. Here he ministered until 1974 when he was inducted into the Church Extension Charge of Hazelbank, Coleraine, on 5th September 1974. This work had begun in February

1973 with the Rev WP Addley, who was the Presbyterian Chaplain to the New University of Ulster, Coleraine, as Stated Supply. A hall was opened on 31st March 1973 and over the next few years the Congregation grew and a Church building was opened by the Rev Dr Addley on 18th November 1978. The Charge was erected to full congregational status on 7th January 1982 and Mr Millar was installed as Minister on 21st January 1982. The Congregation continued to prosper under Mr Millar's leadership, growing from fifty to two hundred and fifty families. He was a gifted evangelist and assiduous pastor to his people and the wider community. From 1976 he was also responsible for commencing a work at Burnside, Portstewart, until the Rev Eric M Borland was installed on 5th April 1978. Mr Millar retired on 30th April 2003. He married Adela (Della) Mary Wright, a nurse from Broughshane, in 1967. They had two children, Samuel and Judith. Mrs Millar fully supported her husband in his ministry and she was also closely involved with the central work of the Presbyterian Women's Association. Mrs Millar predeceased her husband in 2007.

Mr Millar was Moderator of the Synod of Ballymena and Coleraine in 1998 and taught RE in local schools over several years. An early interest in the sea led him to serve as Port Chaplain for the British Sailor's Society at Coleraine harbour for some years. In his leisure time he enjoyed sport, especially football, tennis and squash, as well as studying meteorology, and enjoying angling and gardening. While ministering in Clough he developed an interest in beekeeping. He qualified as a lecturer with the Federation of Irish Beekeeper's Associations, was a member of the Ulster Beekeeper's Association Education Sub-Committee and Education Officer of the Roe Valley Beekeeper's Association. In latter years he helped develop a beekeeper's network in New Zealand while visiting his daughter Judith, and helped with the beekeeping project at Zomba, Malawi. We give thanks for our brother's fruitful ministry and extend our sympathy to Mr Millar's children, Samuel and Judith, his brother Thomas, and the wider family circle, assuring them of our sympathy and prayers.

The Very Rev James Alexander Matthews, DipEd, BA, BD, DD, Minister Emeritus, Sixmilecross Congregation, died on 19th July 2015 in the eighty-seventh year of his age and the fifty-fourth year of his ministry. He was born at Lislimnaghan, Omagh, on 12th September 1927, the youngest of a family of seven, three boys and four girls, born to Samuel Matthews, a farmer, and his wife Elizabeth, née Arthur. His father died when he was aged ten years and he learned early to play his part in running the farm. He was brought up in connection with the Congregation of Mountjoy, and, with the encouragement of a sister, put his trust in Christ while still young. He was educated at Omagh Model School, then Omagh Academy from 1940 to 1945. He attended Stranmillis College from 1945 to 1947 to train for a career in teaching and qualified with a DipEd. He attended Trinity College, Dublin, from 1947 to 1950, graduating BA. He taught at several schools including Omagh Model, Mallusk, and Lislane near Limavady, until his appointment in 1952 as Principal of Derryboy Primary School, Crossgar, Co Down. A member of staff encouraged him to consider the ordained ministry which led him to begin theological study at the Assembly's College, Belfast, in 1957, completing his course in 1960 and graduating BD from the Queen's University, Belfast, in 1961. He developed a love for the biblical languages of Hebrew and Greek, and, in later years, helped others aspiring to the ordained

ministry to study them. He served as assistant to the Rev Alan Flavelle, Minister of the Congregation of Mourne, Kilkeel. He was licensed by the Presbytery of Down on 29th May 1960, and ordained in Brookside, Ahoghill, as Minister, by the Presbytery of Ballymena on 5th October 1960. His experience as a school teacher was utilised in teaching RE at Ballymena Academy from 1963 for several years. He remained at Brookside until called to the Congregation of First Lurgan where he was installed by the Presbytery of Dromore on 28th April 1971. He served there for twenty three years giving leadership to the Congregation in the tercentenary year of the Church's founding. In 1989 he was elected Moderator of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Theological Faculty of Ireland conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Divinity. He removed to Sixmilecross in the Presbytery of Omagh, where he was installed on 6th April 1994, ministering there until his retirement to Castlerock on 30th September 1997. Throughout his ministry he sought to commend Christ as Lord and Saviour. His warm personality, evident humanity, and teaching gifts, combined to equip him as a gracious pastor and a winner of souls. Dr Matthews was Moderator of the Synod of Armagh and Down in 1987 and Convener of the Arrangements Committee of the General Assembly 1983 to 1988. He met Jean Elizabeth Logan while interviewing for a place at Stranmillis College, and they married on 22nd July 1949, forming an effective partnership in the service of Christ and of the Church. They had three children, Carol, Barbara, and Stephen. We assure them, and Mrs Matthews, of our sympathy and prayers as we thank God for the ministry of Dr Matthews, a good and faithful servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Very Rev John Ross, BA, DD, Minister Emeritus, High Street, Holywood, Co Down, died on 31st August 2015 in the eightieth year of his age and the fifty-fourth year of his ministry. He was born at Ballymena on 7th January 1936 the only son of three children born to James A Ross, a draper, and his wife Ellen, née Millar. He was brought up in connection with the family Church of First Ballymena and attended Ballymena Model School followed by Ballymena Academy 1947 to 1953. Persuaded of his divine call to the ordained ministry he attended the Magee University College, Londonderry, completing his primary studies at Trinity College, Dublin, graduating BA in 1957. He began his theological training at New College, Edinburgh, rounding off his course at the Assembly's College, Belfast, in 1959. While in Edinburgh he served as a student assistant in Chalmers Church and back in Ireland was assigned as Assistant Minister to the Rev EM Borland, then Minister of Rosemary Congregation, Belfast. He was licensed in First Ballymena by a Commission of the Presbytery of Ballymena on 26th July 1959 and ordained on 18th September 1960 by the Presbytery of North Belfast. Having a strong interest in foreign mission work Mr Ross was inducted to work in Nyasaland (now Malawi) on 11th October 1961 with the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian. He was accompanied by his wife, Annie Sarah (Betty), née Meehan, whom he married on 16th March 1961. They lived at Livingstonia while a new manse was being built at Bandawe on the west shore of Lake Malawi with the help of funds raised by the Girls' Auxiliary in Ireland. Mrs Ross, a qualified nurse, opened a clinic which soon attracted many people from a wide area seeking medical help. Their first-born, a daughter, Fiona, was born here in 1962. They returned home in 1965 for family reasons and Mr Ross was installed as Minister in the joint charge of Clough and

Seaforde by the Presbytery of Down on 7th July 1966. After a relatively short ministry there he was installed in the Home Mission charge of Christ Church, Dundonald, (founded 1965) by the Presbytery of East Belfast, on 8th December 1969, as the second Minister of this charge to labour in this new and large housing area. His seven years there were busy building up the Congregation, a task in which he had the assistance of experienced Deaconess, Miss Janet Wood. He guided the fellowship to full congregational status officially celebrated in January 1974 when he was also formally called and installed as the Minister. Two years later he accepted a call to the Congregation of High Street, Holywood, where he was installed by the Presbytery of Ards on 22nd September 1976. This was a contrast to Christ Church in that it was a long established Congregation, formed in 1855, though it too had developed in response to a growing population in the town and district. Here Mr Ross remained for the next twenty-four years until his retirement on 17th September 2000. Through the years Mr Ross did not forget his interest in foreign mission. He was Convener of the Foreign Mission Board 1969 to 1972, and Convener of the East, West and South Committee of the Overseas Mission Board 1972 to 1979. It was due to his inspiration that the Board established relationships with Reformed Churches in Europe, specifically in Hungary, Romania and the Ukraine, which continue as enduring partnerships. He served as Convener of the Race Relations Committee 1986 to 1993 having a particular interest in the apartheid situation in South Africa. In the early nineteen nineties, along with Dr Moreen Gordon, he was appointed as Pastor to the Church's missionary personnel bringing his experience, warmth of personality, and spiritual heart to the role. His services to the Church were recognised in his election as Moderator of the General Assembly in 1995 and the conferment of a DD by the Presbyterian Theological Faculty, Ireland. In his free time he enjoyed photography, music, and the outdoors. Dr Ross was predeceased by his first wife Betty in 1990 and is survived by his children, Fiona, Sean, Mary, and Stephen, his second wife, Helen, née Ross, whom he married on 15th April 1998, and his sisters May and Annie. To these and the wider family circle we extend the prayers of the General Assembly and give thanks to God for the life and witness of our brother.

The Rev Thomas Campbell Davis, BA, DipSocS, Minister Emeritus, Sligo and Boyle, died on 19th September 2015, in the one hundredth year of his age and the seventieth year of his ministry. He was born at Belfast on 27th October 1915, the third of four children, to Thomas Davis, proprietor of a grocery business and the son of a well-known family which still farms in Ballybofey, Co Donegal, and his wife Jeannie, née Faulkner, originally from Cookstown, Co Tyrone. The family worshipped in the Congregation of Malone, and Mr Davis attended Carrickfergus Primary School, where his uncle was headmaster, from 1920 until 1926. From 1926 to 1933 he attended Methodist College, Belfast. He played scrum-half for the rugby 1st XV, and coxed the MCB 1st VIII to victory in numerous inter-school regattas. In 1933, Mr Davis proceeded to Queen's University, Belfast, graduating BA in 1937. At Queen's he coxed the university 1st VIII and was awarded a Double Blue for rowing. In 1939, Mr Davis entered the Assembly's College, Belfast, to train for the ordained ministry. He was licensed by the Presbytery of Belfast on 19th December 1943, while serving as Assistant, from 1941 to 1944, to the Rev William John Thompson,

Minister of College Square, Belfast. During the war years, he was responsible for billeting military personnel and those displaced by the German bombing of Belfast. In 1944, he moved to Coleraine to assist the Rev Thomas Doey of New Row Congregation, where he was ordained by the Presbytery of Coleraine on 3rd March 1945. While there he started a Youth Club. He also studied sociology, receiving a Social Administration Distinction in 1943 and gaining a Diploma in Social Studies in 1945 from the Queen's University. On 1st October 1946, Mr Davis married Elizabeth Mary Evelyn (Maeve) Fraser at Duncairn Presbyterian Church, North Belfast. The Best Man was Mr Davis's cousin, Brian (later Lord) Faulkner, who became the last Prime Minister of Northern Ireland. They had three children, Trevor, Sandra, and Daphne. Mr Davis resigned from New Row in 1947 to take up the post of Down County Welfare Officer, and subsequently published 'Plans for Welfare Services in County Down.' In 1950, he returned to ordained ministry and served as Assistant Minister in First Bangor, until he was called to the joint charge of Sligo, Drum, Ballymote and Boyle, where he was installed on 16th January 1952 by the Presbytery of Dublin and Munster. In moving to Sligo, Mr Davis was bringing his wife back to the town where she had been born to Robert and Evelyn Fraser on 11th July 1921. During the next 34 years, Mrs Davis played a full and active role in supporting her husband in parish life in town and country in the west of Ireland. She died at Belfast on 18th October 2009, aged eighty-five years. In Sligo, Mr Davis set up a local rowing club, with members from all denominations. He reared chickens – up to 1000 at one time – and won rosettes at the local agricultural shows. Mr and Mrs Davis's door at the Manse in Sligo was always open, both to parishioners and to those from further afield who needed help. At the time of the Hungarian rising in 1956, they gave shelter to a young family who had fled Budapest in the face of Russian tanks. Ecumenical activities in Sligo were important during his ministry, with excellent relations with Roman Catholic neighbours (the local Bishop lived next door), as well as the Church of Ireland and Methodist Congregations. In addition to fulfilling the duties of a parish Minister, Mr Davis was Chaplain to the Sligo North West Health Authority, combining his spiritual and social qualifications in the role. He was Moderator of the Presbytery of Dublin and Munster 1971-72, and Moderator of the Synod of Dublin in 1978. On 5th April 1986, he retired from Sligo, Ballymote and Boyle and from full-time ministry. We assure the family circle of our sympathy and prayers in their loss and give thanks to God for the ministry of our brother.

The Rev Hugh Dermot McMorran, BA, BD, Minister Emeritus, Trinity Congregation, Bangor, died on 10th October 2015, in the eighty-ninth year of his age and the sixty-third year of his ministry. He was born at Newtownards on 30th March 1927 one of three children (two brothers and a sister) to William Kyle McMorran, a garage proprietor, and his wife Mabel, née Magilton. He received his spiritual education in Greenwell Street Congregation and attended Castle Gardens Primary School and Regent House Grammar School. He studied for a BA degree at the Queen's University, Belfast, 1944 to 1947, and took a Post Graduate course in Mathematics, 1947 to 1948. He proceeded to the Assembly's College, Belfast, to study for the Christian ministry 1948 to 1950, spending the academic year of 1948 to 1949 at New College, Edinburgh. He completed a BD degree in 1952. He served as assistant to the Rev Ronald Craig in the

Congregation of Woodvale, Belfast, and was licensed by the Presbytery of Ards on 3rd June 1951. He was called to his first charge of Third Portglenone in 1953 where he was ordained by the Presbytery of Ballymena on 3rd December of that year. After six years he moved to Belfast to Duncairn Congregation, Antrim Road, where he was installed by the Presbytery of Belfast on 22nd May 1958. The Congregation was birthed by the revival of 1859 and the Church building opened in 1862. Mr McMorran was a worthy successor to his distinguished predecessors, having gifts of mind, of eloquence and of heart which were gladly given in the service of Christ. His evident humanity, gracious character and approachability commended him as a pastor to Church members and the community in general whose respect he earned. His courage and dedication shone through in the difficult early years of the Troubles which so disrupted the peace of North Belfast in the 1970s. The manse was sited in Duncairn Avenue just behind the Church where the family were exposed to the sounds and dangers of the violence which characterised life in the surrounding district for so many years. Congregational membership dwindled as residents moved away to escape the ongoing violence. The Congregation was eventually amalgamated with St Enoch's, Carlisle Circus, on 1st January 1992, but the buildings found new purpose housing the work of the 174 Trust from 1995. In 1976 Mr McMorran moved to Trinity Congregation, Bangor, in succession to the Very Rev Dr John Carson, where he was installed by the Presbytery of Ards on 1st January of that year. The current Minister, the Rev Ricky Montgomery, paid tribute to him, saying, 'members recall with affection his inspiring pulpit ministry, the pastoral care for those in need and the gracious way in which he dealt with all who were privileged to know him. He was unfailing in his encouragement and many would testify to how he brought the "fragrance of Jesus" into situations where members were experiencing difficulty or distress.' In the wider Church he was Convener of the Memorial Record Committee of the General Assembly 1959 to 1969. He retired on 30th June 1992. Outwith the Church, he was a member of the Belfast Education and Library Board for some years and a member of the Boards of Governors of a number of schools. This experience was put to continuing good use when he moved to Bangor, and became a member of the Board of the former Rathgael and Whiteabbey Management Committee where his counsel was much sought and valued. Mr McMorran married Janet Josephine McClintock on 31st October 1956 who supported him in his ministry and contributed to Church life in her own right. They had five children, Rosemary, Paul, Heather, Judith, and Andrew. To these and the wider family circle we express our sympathy and commend them to the Saviour who is the resurrection and the life.

The Rev Thomas (Tom) James Wilson, BSc, DipSW, BD, MTh, Minister of Kilmakee Presbyterian Church, Seymour Hill, Dunmurry, died on 3rd December 2015 in the sixty-second year of his age and the twenty-first year of his ministry. He was born at Magherafelt on 6th June 1954, the second of three children to William Wilson, a wholesale greengrocer, and his wife Margaret, née Clarke. He was educated at Bellaghy Primary School followed by Rainey Endowed Grammar School (1965 to 1973). He studied Biochemistry at the Ulster University from 1973 to 1976, graduating BSc. Wishing to pursue a career in social work he attended Lancaster University from 1979 to 1981, graduating with a Diploma in Social Work. He then pursued a career as a Probation Officer with the

Northern Ireland Probation Service and also utilised his social work background as a Relate Counsellor. In 1991 Mr Wilson entered Union Theological College, Belfast to study for the ordained ministry. He completed his theological studies in 1994, graduating BD. He was licensed by the Presbytery of Ballymena on 17th June 1994 and served his assistantship with the Rev SW McClintock in the Congregation of Kilbride, where he was ordained on 19th January 1995 by the Presbytery of Templepatrick. He was inducted as Associate Minister in the Congregation of Rosemary, Belfast, on 12th June 1996, by the Presbytery of North Belfast, where he assisted the Minister the Very Rev Dr John Dunlop. In the year 2000 he was called as Minister by the Congregation of Kilmakee and was installed there on 29th November by the Presbytery of South Belfast. Mr Wilson's ministry in Kilmakee was marked by his belief in, and commitment to, equipping all to serve and follow Christ and in creating opportunities for each believer to fully participate in the life and leadership of the Church. In this he was always encouraged by the members of the Kilmakee Kirk Session who faithfully supported him throughout his ministry and in particular during his illness. He served as Co-Convenor of the Addiction and Education Services Committee 2003 to 2005 and of the Adult Services Committee 2005 to 2014. In 2003 he completed an MTh with the Institute of Theology, Queen's University, Belfast, and went on to develop a ministry in spiritual direction within the wider Church. Mr Wilson had warm ecumenical associations, in particular with Dom Mark-Ephrem Nolan of the Benedictine Monastery, Rostrevor, the Jesuit community at Manresa, Dublin, and the Sisters of the Cross and Passion at Drumalis Retreat House, Larne. On 21st July 1978, he married Daphne Ann Bell at Woodschapel Parish Church and they had three children, Lauren, Hannah, and Katy. We commend these and the wider family circle to the prayers of the Church and give thanks for our brother who has fought the good fight of faith and run the race to the glory of God.

The Rev William George McConkey, MA, Minister Emeritus, Ballycarry Congregation in the Presbytery of Carrickfergus, died on 31st December 2015 in the eighty-eighth year of his age and the sixty-first year of his ministry. He was born at Killyfuddy, Newbliss, County Monaghan, on 26th February 1928, the eldest of eight children (six boys and two girls) to Thomas William McConkey, a farmer, and his wife Isabella, née Mackeral. He was educated at Killevan National school followed by Clones High School. Persuaded of his call to the ordained ministry during his final years at school, he studied at Magee College, Londonderry, and graduated BA, from Trinity College, Dublin, in 1952. He proceeded to the Assembly's College, Belfast, for his theological course which he completed in 1954. He was licensed in his home Congregation of Newbliss by the Presbytery of Monaghan on 13th June 1954 and assigned as Assistant to the Rev Ronald Craig, Minister of Woodvale Park Congregation, Belfast. The following year he received a call to be Minister of Bunrana and Burt Congregations and was ordained and installed there on 1st December 1955. In 1961 he moved to Ballycarry where he was installed on 31st May by the Presbytery of Carrickfergus and continued until his retirement on 30th September 1993. Thoughtful and reflective, Mr McConkey was always well prepared for pulpit ministry and in each of his Congregations was known to be a good listener with a pastor's heart. He started a Youth Club and also a Boys' Brigade company in partnership with

Magheramorne Presbyterian Church. In Ballycarry the local 'Churches Together' fellowship supported the work of Christian Aid and he was involved in the setting up of a community association. He engaged in further study graduating MA from his alma mater in 1961. He was supported and assisted in his ministry by his wife Anne, née Logue, whom he married on 6th April 1957 in Duncairn Gardens Church, North Belfast. Three children were born to the marriage, Rosemary, Sandra, and Karen. Coming from a farming background, Mr McConkey loved the outdoors, enjoying fishing and various sports, but there were two hobbies in particular that he maintained throughout his life. At the age of eight he began beekeeping under the guidance of an uncle. He travelled to the World Congress of the Beekeepers held in China and also Japan as the only Irish delegate on both occasions. He loved gardening, growing many plants from seed and developing a mature garden. He is survived by his wife, daughters and their families, and six of his siblings. To them and the wider family circle we express our sympathy as we give thanks for the ministry of our brother and colleague.

The Rev William Wylie McIlwrath Craig, MA, Minister Emeritus, Dromore and Drumquin Congregations, in the Co Tyrone and the Presbytery of Omagh, died on 9th January 2016 in the ninety-second year of his age and the sixty-fourth year of his ministry. He was born at Frocess, Cloughmills, Co Antrim, on 25th September 1924, one of four children (sister Edith, brothers Samuel and Robert) to Thomas Henry Craig, Principal of Frocess Primary School, and his wife Edith, née Wylie. The family attended Clough Congregation until they moved to Portrush. Mr Craig attended Dalriada High School, Ballymoney (1937-1940) followed by Ballymena Academy (1940-1943). On leaving school he worked for the Northern Ireland Road Transport Board. However, during this time, and encouraged by the Rev Robert Lennox, Minister of Clough Congregation, he felt the call of God to the ordained ministry and so, in 1944, he began study at Magee University College, Londonderry, and Trinity College, Dublin, graduating BA in 1948. A keen sportsman, he captained the 2nd XV Rugby team while at Magee. He took his theological course at New College, Edinburgh (1948-1949) and the Assembly's College, Belfast, (1949-1950). As a student he assisted at St Paul's, Galashiels, and at Inverie and the outlying small Church of Airor in the district of Knoydart, Inverness-shire (now Highland). On returning home, he was licensed by the Presbytery of Ballymena, on 2nd July 1950, and assigned as Assistant to the Rev Dr John Brooks McIlroy, Minister of McQuiston Memorial Congregation, Belfast. In 1952 he was called to the united Congregations of Clough and Seaforde where he was ordained on 28th February by the Presbytery of Down. After a ministry of ten years he emigrated to Canada where he ministered from January 1963 to December 1964 in the Presbytery of Bruce to St Andrew's Congregation, Southampton, Ontario, on the eastern shore of Lake Huron, and also at Elsinore, Ontario, a short distance inland. In January 1965 he moved to St Luke's-Knox Congregation in Finch, Crysler, to the south-east of Ottawa, in the Presbytery of Glengarry. During this period he completed an MA (1969) through Trinity College, Dublin. He re-crossed the Atlantic to Scotland in the summer of 1970 and assisted at St Ninian's Parish, Glenrothes, Fife, from September 1970 until the following year when he accepted a call to the newly united Congregations of Donoughmore and Stranorlar where he was installed as Minister by the Presbytery of Donegal on 16th November 1971. He

taught for a time in Raphoe Royal School and started a Bible Union there. Under his guidance the Donoughmore Congregation undertook extensive renovations to the meeting house in 1974. However, the Church building was destroyed by fire in 1975 due to an electrical fault. Plans were drawn up for a new sanctuary which was opened on 3rd September 1977. Mr Craig had by then moved to Clontibret Congregation (Presbytery of Monaghan) with Middletown (Presbytery of Armagh) as Stated Supply, where he was installed on 17th February 1977. His ministry in these two Congregations lasted four years until he accepted a call to minister in the united charge of Dromore and Drumquin, Co Tyrone, where he was installed by the Presbytery of Omagh on 24th June 1981. He retired on 31st December 1990. Throughout these years Mr Craig exercised an evangelical ministry, challenging his people with the call of the Gospel to repentance and faith in Jesus as Lord and Saviour and encouraging them in discipleship. He supported the work of the Faith Mission in the rural districts where he served. He went about his work quietly and diligently pastoring his Congregations with spiritual wisdom and insight. In the 1950's he served the wider Church on the Students' and Colleges Committee. In his leisure time Mr Craig enjoyed music often playing for Services while in Dromore and Drumquin. His sister and brothers pre-deceased him and we express our sympathy to his wider family circle giving thanks to God for the life and witness of our brother.

The Rev William Cowper Lynas, MA, Minister Emeritus, of Dunmurry Congregation in the Presbytery of South Belfast, died on 24th January 2016, in the ninety-third year of his age and the sixty-first year of his ministry. He was born at Belfast on 20th July 1923 the younger of two sons (his older brother was the Very Rev Dr Victor Lynas) to William Lynas, a Belfast City missionary, and his wife, Winifred Mary, née Jamison. He was brought up in connection with the Congregation of Fitzroy, Belfast, where he joined the Choir and became a Boys' Brigade officer. He attended Rosetta Primary School and Methodist College, Belfast. At Methody he played rugby for the First XV and ran for the junior and senior track teams. On leaving school he worked in the Arthur Street branch of the Belfast Savings Bank in the city. Convinced of his call to serve in the ordained ministry he studied in the evenings to prepare himself for college. He went to Magee University College, Londonderry, in 1947, where he excelled in Hebrew, and graduated BA from Trinity College, Dublin, in 1950. While in Derry he assisted the Rev WI Steele of First Derry. He proceeded to the Assembly's College, Belfast, for his theological course, and was licensed by the Presbytery of Belfast on 27th May 1952. He was assigned as Assistant to the Rev Dr David Dowling, Minister of McCracken Memorial, Upper Malone, Belfast. A couple of years later he received a call from the Congregation of Ballywillan near Portrush, where he was ordained and installed by the Presbytery of Coleraine on 28th January 1954. With his wife, Elizabeth (Betty) McBride Stevenson, a daughter of the Rev Samuel and Mrs Stevenson of Glastry Manse, Co Down, whom he married on 20th July 1951, he settled into the rhythm of congregational life and service. Their two children, Gillian and Michael, were born at Ballywillan. The young Minister gave himself to his charge energetically. He quickly identified the need to develop youth work in the Congregation and later that year Girls' Brigade and Boys' Brigade Companies were formed and a Youth Club was opened. In the winter of 1958-1959 the Church building was extensively renovated. He

also made time in his busy schedule for further study gaining an MA from his alma mater in 1958. After seven happy years there he moved to Dunmurry and was installed as Minister on 13th April 1961 by the Presbytery of Belfast. The Congregation grew over the ensuing years and in 1967, to accommodate the busy weekly Church calendar of activities, a new hall, the Davey Hall, was added to the old Trinity Hall, which had begun life as a school. Intermittently Trinity Hall was used for court sittings which made it a target for bombers in August 1971. The Congregation decided to build a new hall, named the Lynas Hall, which was officially opened in March 1973. Mr Lynas served the wider Church as Convener of the Central Ministry Fund (1973-1980) the Widows of Ministers Fund (1978-1985) and of the United Appeal Board (1992-1998). He was also Moderator of the Synod of Belfast in 1976. Mr Lynas retired on 31st March 1989. To Mrs Lynas, daughter Gillian, son Michael, and wider family circle, we extend our sympathy and prayers as we give thanks to God for the ministry of our brother.

The Rev Terence Patrick McCaughey, BA, BD, died on 9th February 2016 in the eighty-fourth year of his age and the fifty-first year of his ministry. He was born at Belfast on 17th April 1932, the youngest of six children (John Davis, William Park, James, Mary and Betty) born to John McCaughey, a grain merchant, and his wife Lizzie, née Finnegan. The family worshipped in Rosemary Street Congregation in the centre of Belfast until 1941 when the Church was destroyed in a German air-raid and the Congregation amalgamated with Ekenhead on the North Circular Road and became known as Rosemary. Mr McCaughey was educated at Larne Primary School, Larne Grammar School, and Campbell College, Belfast, from 1945. An able student, he followed in his brother John Davis' footsteps (who became Professor of New Testament at Ormonde Theological Hall, University of Melbourne, Australia, and served as Governor of the State of Victoria 1986 to 1992) to Cambridge University in 1951 and studied English Literature at Pembroke College, graduating BA in 1955. He continued his studies in the School of Celtic Studies, part of the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, completing his course in 1957. He then successfully applied for the post of lecturer in Celtic Studies at the University of Edinburgh a position he held until 1960 when he decided to read theology at New College, Edinburgh, graduating BD in 1963. He was received as a candidate for the ministry of the Church of Scotland and licensed by the Presbytery of Edinburgh on 5th May 1963. Deciding on an academic career he was appointed a Lecturer in Irish at Trinity College, Dublin, in 1963, a post he held until his retirement on 31st December 1999. In this capacity he published many articles on English and Irish Literature and Theology, too numerous to list, and moved in wider literary circles which included the poets Seamus Heaney and Ted Hughes, a friend from university days, and at whose funeral service in North Tawton, Devon, he gave the address (3rd November, 1998). He was received as a Licentiate of our Church by the General Assembly of 1964 and ordained and inducted by the Presbytery of Dublin on 5th May 1965 as Assistant to the Presbyterian Dean of Residences in Trinity College, a position he held until October 1971, though not constituted a member of the General Assembly until 1979. Much of his career was therefore taken up with the education of students and with the pastoral care of Presbyterian students at the university. He was a founder member of the Department of Religions and Theology where he lectured on St Paul and the New Testament.

His book *Memory and Redemption: Church, Politics and Prophetic Theology in Ireland (1993)* was used as part of the course on ethics and memory, and his involvement with the founding of the Irish School of Ecumenics within Trinity in 1970 reflects his enduring interest in conflict and reconciliation. He worked with a network of figures across Irish and Ulster society in promoting reconciliation in Ireland arguing for a faith ‘... that calls for the oneness of humankind, rather than focusing on social and political divisions.’ Mr McCaughey was an advocate and activist for social justice which he expressed through his membership of, and involvement with, many organisations, movements and causes. He served as Chaplain to Mountjoy Prison and worked with Prisoners Aid through Community Effort (PACE). He was a founder member of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties, was involved with the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, and served as President of the Irish Anti-Apartheid movement. He was also President of the Peace and Neutrality Alliance (PANA) which advocates the maintenance of Irish neutrality in foreign policy and a reformed United Nations, and a patron of the *People’s News* which opposes the development of the European Union as a federal super-state. He married Ohna Mackinnon MacDonald from Skye in 1965 and they have four children, Mary (Marcoux), Kevin, Sorley, Patsy. To them, Mrs McCaughey and the wider family circle, we extend our sympathy and prayers.

GENERAL COUNCIL

SECTION 2

(Wednesday afternoon 3.30 pm)

MODERATOR'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE

1. The Moderator's Advisory Committee met on three occasions during the year and transacted the business outlined below.

APPOINTMENT OF ASSESSORS

2. At the request of a number of Presbyteries, Assessors were appointed under Par 172 of the Code.

3. The Committee discussed whether it should adopt a principle that if a Kirk Session requests the Committee to appoint Assessors, it will first of all take Presbytery's views into account. Following discussion it was agreed:

That the Clerk of Presbytery should in future be informed of the appointment of Assessors arising from requests from Kirk Sessions, as well as those that arise from requests from Presbytery.

That the requesting body be required to report back to the Committee on the efficacy of the Assessors it has appointed.

LGBT RELATED ISSUES

4. The Committee noted various items of work being progressed by different groups within the Church, namely:

The Council for Church in Society's responsibility for related 'Public Square' issues;

A Task Group considering the implications of changes in the Constitution in the Republic of Ireland and how they related to the law on marriage;

The Council for Congregational Life and Witness had been tasked by the General Assembly to assist congregations in further developing positive biblical teaching with regard to marriage, family, sexuality etc.

The Moderator's Advisory Committee had been given the dual role of giving leadership firstly with regard to dialogue with the LGBT community and secondly in assisting Ministers and Congregations in both reaching out to and welcoming those with same sex attractions and related pastoral challenges.

5. While there are clear overlaps between these various remits, and therefore a need for good internal communication, the Committee agreed that is important that the different groups remain focussed on their areas of responsibility.

6. To enable progress to be made on the matters outlined in the final bullet in point 4 above, the Committee decided to recommend that the General Council transfer this remit to a dedicated Dialogue and Resources Task Group,

consisting of: Moderator and Clerk, the Very Rev Dr Rob Craig (Convener), Mr Joe Campbell, the Very Rev Princ Stafford Carson, Mrs Avril Heenan, the Revs Chris Kennedy, Bobby Liddle and Mairisine Stanfield. This Task Group would report directly to the General Council.

MATTERS REFERRED BY A PRESBYTERY

7. The Clerk tabled key recommendations from a recent Finding of a particular Presbytery Commission, and gave further information concerning the issues in question connected with the 'employment' of organists and related matters. After discussion it was agreed to recommend to the General Council that a dedicated Task Group be appointment to examine these issues and report back to the General Council.

CONSIDERATION OF RESPONSE TO INVITATION TO 1916 COMMEMORATION SERVICE

8. The Clerk reported that an invitation had been received from An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD, to a 1916 Commemoration Service. At the request of the Clerk, the Very Rev Dr Trevor Morrow had attended a meeting of a group which is organising the event. Discussion took place on the principle of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland being represented at a 1916 Commemoration event, and then on whether PCI should be represented at the particular event being held in Glasnevin Cemetery on Sunday 3rd April 2016, the Sunday after Easter Sunday. Dr Morrow was invited to speak and addressed the Committee. He tabled and spoke to a document 'A Service of the Word for a Commemoration of the Easter Rising 1916' which had been previously circulated. It was noted that there would be three sequential and separate elements conducted by Jewish, Muslim and Christian leaders and that the General Assembly has previously agreed in principle, following a report from the Doctrine Committee, that it was possible to be represented at these types of events.

9. After a full discussion, it was agreed that in principle the Presbyterian Church in Ireland should be represented at an appropriate 1916 Commemoration event. After further discussion, it was agreed that the Presbyterian Church in Ireland should be represented at the event planned for Glasnevin Cemetery on the Sunday following Easter Sunday.

OTHER BUSINESS

10. At the request of the Clerk, and to assist the Charities Legislation Task Group, the Committee discussed and offered opinion on the issue of the continuing membership of Retired Ministers in Presbytery. This would be passed onto the Task Group to assist their deliberations.

11. In light of his appointment as Convener of the Republic of Ireland Panel of the Council for Church in Society, it was agreed that Dr Trevor Morrow be invited to sit and deliberate on the Moderator's Advisory Committee until the next General Assembly, when his position would be regularised.

TREVOR D GRIBBEN, Convener

DIALOGUE AND RESOURCE TASK GROUP

12. In the Autumn of 2015 the Moderator's Advisory Committee established the Dialogue and Resources Task Group (DRTG) by way of seeking a Biblical and pastoral response to the complex and often painful situations which are confronting PCI members, families, ministers and congregations in respect of homosexuality.

13. During the course of the year the DRTG has been exploring several avenues of investigation. The Convener and three members of the Task Group spent a fact-finding afternoon meeting with a leading representative of Living Out. (www.livingout.org). Living Out might be described as a Forum which espouses an evangelical and celibate understanding of same sex matters.

14. The Convener and three members of the Task Group spent another fact-finding afternoon meeting with a leading representative of the True Freedom Trust (www.truefreedomtrust.co.uk). True Freedom Trust is an evangelical organisation also espousing the celibate understanding of same sex matters.

15. The Convener and two members of the Task Group have held an initial meeting with some local people who hold the view that the Christian Faith and a same-sex relationship are not incompatible. In the coming months it is hoped that there will be a limited number of future meetings to engage in a discussion around two books which espouse contrary theological opinions on same-sex relationships.

16. The DRTG is currently planning to hold a series of regional conferences in the autumn 2016. With the help of suitably qualified facilitators it is hoped that such conferences will be both of interest and help to Ministers who are often the first within a Congregation invited to offer pastoral support to an individual or family. Later in the coming year it is hoped that further assistance will be made more widely available.

ROB L CRAIG, Convener

MARRIAGE IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND TASK GROUP

17. The Task Group held a number of meetings, including a valuable discussion in Ballyalbany with ministers who are registered solemnisers of marriage in the Republic of Ireland. At the first meeting it was noted that the remit given by the General Assembly was to "consider all of the issues surrounding the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's ongoing involvement in the solemnisation of marriage in the Republic of Ireland, along with how this may relate to Northern Ireland". While this is a wide remit, the context was clearly the impending changes to legislation following the referendum on marriage in the Republic of May 2015. The Task Group limited its discussions as to how those legislative changes may affect Ministers who conduct marriages in the Republic.

18. The initial thinking of the Group was greatly helped by a paper prepared by the Very Rev Dr Trevor Morrow on historical, theological and pastoral factors involved in the solemnisation of marriage. It is clear that historically the involvement of the Church in conducting marriages was long before any involvement of the State. For the sake of order in society and good government the State then decided to recognise and register marriages conducted by the Church. In fact the Presbyterian Church in Ireland struggled to receive such recognition. When a Minister solemnises a marriage, therefore, it is as part of their pastoral role in the Congregation, not as an agent of the State. This position may not be recognised by everyone, but the Task Group is of the view that it should be strongly defended by the Church.

19. In fact it clearly underlies the Government's thinking behind the changes in legislation, in that those who are registered as solemnisers on the nomination of a particular denomination or religious body may only conduct a marriage using a "form of ceremony" agreed by the denomination and approved by the An tArd-Chláraitheoir. Historically, while there are various forms of service available to Presbyterian Ministers and some approved by the General Assembly or one of its Boards, there has been great freedom for a Minister to use his or her own language in conducting a marriage. The Task Group recommends that the General Assembly now instructs that a short statement be included in every marriage solemnised according to the form of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and approved by An tArd-Chláraitheoir. The wording which is recommended to be included in an overture anent Par 85(2) states: "Since the beginning of creation God, in his gracious purpose, provided marriage as the accepted way in which a man and a woman may come together as husband and wife. This is the only basis on which marriage can take place within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland."

20. Some concern has been expressed about amendments to the two declarations required to be made under the Republic's legislation. The Task Group has been assured that the government does not intend to amend the list of civil impediments referred to in the first declaration and indeed has not done so. What must be included in the second declaration, accepting one another as husband and wife, has been altered to permit the use of the word "spouse" but in correspondence the then Minister for Justice and Equality has stated, "Crucially, nothing in the section as amended requires any change to a form of ceremony in which a woman makes a declaration accepting a man as her husband, and a man makes a declaration accepting a woman as his wife".

DONALD J WATTS, Convener

GENERAL COUNCIL

SECTION 3

(Wednesday afternoon 4.30 pm)

CHARITIES LEGISLATION TASK GROUP

1. During the year the Charities Legislation Task Group met formally on seven occasions, with a significant number of additional meetings of small groups to consider a range of matters.

2. The task of **facilitating the registration of all Northern Ireland based Congregations with the Charity Commission (CCNI)** has proved to be substantial. This work has included detailed negotiations and discussions with CCNI (including the agreement of standard ‘purpose’ and ‘public benefit’ statements for PCI), the drawing up of guidance notes for Congregations, the organisation and delivery of regional training events and the task of responding to countless queries and, regrettably, having to seek to counter some potentially harmful and misguided assertions by a few individuals.

3. Following the decisions taken at the 2015 General Assembly, **an initial letter was sent on 9th July 2015** to all Ministers and Clerks of Session of Congregations in Northern Ireland and to all Clerks of Presbytery with Congregations in Northern Ireland. This gave important preparatory information for the registration of Congregations and Presbyteries.

4. **A meeting was held to brief Presbyteries** on the registration process on Wednesday 9th September 2015. Three representatives from each Presbytery with Congregations in Northern Ireland were invited and detailed information was presented regarding the registration process to be followed in both Congregations and Presbyteries. Dates were agreed for Regional Training Events to be held throughout Northern Ireland. **A second preparatory letter** was then sent on 25th September 2015 to all Ministers and Clerks of Session of Congregations in Northern Ireland, providing necessary information regarding the training events and registration process.

5. A set of **Consolidated Guidance Notes** was issued to all Congregations in December. This was followed up by number of additional e-mails to all Ministers, seeking further to assist Congregations and give added clarity, especially with regard to the issue of why all Elders are Charity Trustees and the issue of indemnity.

6. **Presbyterian Congregations are charities**, and they were charities before the Charities Act came into force. The Charities Act requires all charities to register with the Charity Commission by giving to the Commission prescribed information about the Charity, including the names of those persons responsible for the general control and management of the charity. The Charities Act calls such persons “charity trustees”. In the Presbyterian system of Church government, the Kirk Session is the body with general control and management of the life and witness of the Congregation. The Code in Par 34 states, “The Kirk Session is

the governing body of a Congregation in its Christian calling....". Hence, the General Assembly has agreed that Par 35(e) should state, "The Kirk Session shall act as the charity trustees of the Congregation....". The legal position, both in the law of the land and the law of the Church, is clear – members of Kirk Session are the charity trustees of their Congregation. Therefore members of Kirk Session don't have to decide to become charity trustees, they are charity trustees – the process of registration with the Charity Commission (NI) is simply formally registering that stated position.

7. Some have stated erroneously that each Congregation has been formed into a trust managed by the Elders acting as trustees and that Elders are being required to sign a trust deed. This is simply incorrect and perhaps points to a misunderstanding of the role of the Kirk Session (as charity trustees) and the role of those acting as 'holding', or 'bare', trustees for the Congregation. (Holding, or bare, trustees are those who have the responsibility to legally receive and hold the property belonging to the Congregation. They have no active managing role and simply follow the instructions of the Congregation, often through its Kirk Session or Congregational Committee e.g. regarding the transfer of property. In the Presbyterian Church in Ireland each Congregation's holding trustees has to be either the Education Board of the Presbytery or three or more named voting members of the Congregation – see Code Par 241). What Elders are being asked to sign is a declaration of their name and address and that there is no reason why they cannot be a charity trustee. The issue of registering as a company or companies limited by guarantee has also been mistakenly recommended by some. Firstly, this again is predicated on a confusion of the role of charity trustees and holding trustees and secondly it is simply not permissible under the constitution of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The Roman Catholic Church has sought to use a variance of this approach at central and diocesan levels, but this is possible only because of a very different form of Church government, with centralised episcopal authority having ultimate oversight in that Church. Any suggestion that either a Presbytery or 'Church House' should have centralised day to day control of the property, finances, ministry and mission of Congregations is the very antithesis of what it is to be Presbyterian!

8. As stated above, the whole issue of **personal liability** and indemnity has caused concern for some. This issue is covered in some detail the Consolidated Guidance Notes. There it is noted that, following a decision of the General Assembly in 2004, the former Board of Finance and Personnel issued guidance dealing with the potential liability of members serving on 'committees' within a Congregation (including the Kirk Session and Congregational Committee). In that guidance it was recommended that a resolution be passed indemnifying members and that an insurance policy be then taken out to insure the potential risk. As part of the preparation for registration with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland the Charities Legislation Task Group has reviewed and updated the 2004 guidance and recommended that, even if Congregations had acted on the 2004 guidance, all Congregations action (or re-action) the recommended steps. It is important to also note that the responsibilities carried by members of Kirk Session are largely unchanged. **The General Assembly Solicitor has therefore advised that personal liability is not increased simply because of this new designation as charity trustees.**

9. At the time of writing, five **Regional Training Events** have been held, with the outstanding one planned for Omagh on Monday 9th May 2016. These evenings have been very well attended, with to date only one Congregation not being represented. Unfortunately CCNI plan to install a new online application system during the middle of April 2016 and this has resulted in necessary alterations to the PCI guidance notes for the online system, along with some changes of the 'call forward' dates for a small number of Presbyteries.

10. The **application for registration for the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland** has been successfully completed. The **Designated Religious Status** sections of the Charities Act NI (2008) had been commenced on 1st January 2016, and an application for designated religious status has been submitted. This one application will cover all PCI Congregations, Presbyteries and the General Assembly and it is hoped that this will be successfully processed by CCNI shortly. The **Charities Act (Designated Religious Charities) Order 2016** was progressed through the NI Assembly, with representatives of the Churches being called to give evidence to the DSD Committee. It came into force on 1st March 2016 and further protects designated religious charities, such as PCI, from direct state interference.

11. **Current permanent membership of Presbytery of 'Retired Ministers'** – A paper was tabled by the Clerk and considered by the Task Group. This had been drawn up after consultation with the Moderator's Advisory Committee, Presbytery Clerks and a number of former Moderators. Following discussion and amendment, an updated paper with two options was agreed for presentation to the General Council (see Appendix 1).

12. Guidance regarding **the new relationship between Kirk Sessions and Congregational Committees** has been progressed to final draft stage by the Task Group, along with some additional overtures to further clarify the new relationship and these are presented to the General Council for consideration (see Appendix 2). The Task Group agreed that, as far as possible, additional necessary work flowing from the requirements of charity registration should be referred to the appropriate PCI body for action e.g. the Finance Panel would be responsible for issuing guidance regarding the presentation of accounts etc. It was further agreed that the Finance Panel would be asked to deal with the Charity Commission's Consultation on Charity Reporting and Reporting Guidance. That Panel would also progress any necessary changes to the Code relating to 'auditing' vs 'examining' accounts etc.

13. The Task Group also considered the issue of **Elders who ultimately refuse to register as charity trustees**. Its recommendations are included in Appendix 3 for consideration by the General Council. At a subsequent meeting (in late April / early May) the Task Group will be considering some outstanding issues. These include: The annual report of the Kirk Session; Registration of Presbyteries, Education Boards and other bodies. With permission of the General Council, the Task Group would seek to report on this small number of issues directly to the 2016 General Assembly through Supplementary Reports.

14. A paper was tabled from the General Assembly Solicitor regarding **legislation in the Republic of Ireland** along with a draft letter from the Clerk and Financial Secretary to be sent to all Congregations in that jurisdiction. It was however agreed to seek a meeting with the Charities Regulatory Authority (CRA) for the Republic of Ireland to clarify some matters, prior to circulating this letter.

The Financial Secretary had submitted a list of all Congregations in RoI to the CRA. The Task Group also confirmed that, in line with the decisions of the 2015 General Assembly, the trustee bodies in RoI would be the same as in NI i.e. Kirk Session and Presbytery.

CHARITIES LEGISLATION TASK GROUP APPENDIX 1

RETIRED MINISTERS AND MEMBERSHIP OF PRESBYTERY

A. Introduction

1. The process of charity registration has brought to the fore a number of quite complex issues for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Mostly these challenging issues have not been because of some draconian new requirements being imposed upon PCI by the Charity Commission (NI), but rather have been because the process has brought into focus issues of governance that had ‘room for improvement’ irrespective of the requirements of civil law.

2. The General Assembly has decided that the charity trustees for Presbytery shall be the members of Presbytery and this is now part of the Code (see Par 70(d)). A problem however exists because of the automatic membership of Presbytery of all retired Ministers right up to either their removal through some judicial process or resignation from the office, or their removal through death. This means that a retired Minister who either does not attend (through choice), or is unable to attend (say through long-term illness, greatly advanced age or even simply living very far away) still remains a full voting member of Presbytery.

3. In many senses this always has been a problem in pure governance terms, however now because of the requirement of all members of Presbytery to be active to fulfil their role as charity trustees, it presents a problem for which a solution is required. The time-scale is tight, in that in practical terms any changes to the Code need to be processed at the 2016 General Assembly.

B. Towards a possible solution:

4. The Clerk of Assembly consulted on the issue with the Moderator’s Advisory Committee, at a meeting of Presbytery Clerks and at an informal gathering of some former Moderators with an acknowledged understanding of Church law. It was noted that full membership of Presbytery is required for membership of Commissions, including for instance vacancy convenerships etc. From these meetings a report was brought to the Charities Legislation Task Group and following discussion it was agreed to bring the following options to the General Council for further discussion, followed by report to the 2016 General Assembly.

OPTION 1:

5. At retirement, all Ministers automatically continue to be full members of their Presbytery and of the General Assembly, on the understanding that they are able and willing to participate as such, especially in Presbytery. They will be designated Minister Emeritus.

6. Annually Presbytery will be required to review the position of each Minister Emeritus under their care. Normally there will be no change of status, however this annual review will provide an opportunity for:

- (a) a Minister Emeritus to request that the Presbytery release them from the responsibilities of full membership of Presbytery (and consequently of the General Assembly);
- (b) the Presbytery, at its own initiative, to release a Minister Emeritus from the responsibilities of full membership of Presbytery (and consequently of the General Assembly). Presbyteries should only take the initiative to release a Minister Emeritus from the responsibilities of full membership of Presbytery in extreme cases, usually when the Minister Emeritus is no longer physically or mentally able to fulfil those responsibilities or where a Minister Emeritus has failed to attend Presbytery, without valid reason, for a period of 12 months.

7. A Minister Emeritus released from their responsibilities of full membership of Presbytery (and consequently of the General Assembly) would be designated 'Minister Emeritus (Released)', or other suitable title, and would have the rights of a Minister without Charge i.e. would continue under the care of Presbytery with the right to sit and deliberate (without voting rights) at both Presbytery and the General Assembly.

8. **Note:** Administratively this option would require Presbyteries annually to review the position of each Minister Emeritus, clarifying if they wish to remain a full member of Presbytery and if they are deemed able to fulfil the related responsibilities.

OPTION 2:

9. At retirement, all Ministers automatically cease to be full voting members of their Presbytery and of the General Assembly, and would have the rights of a Minister without Charge i.e. would continue under the care of Presbytery with the full rights to sit and deliberate (but without voting rights) at both Presbytery and the General Assembly. They will be designated Minister Emeritus.

10. A Minister Emeritus appointed to a Presbytery Commission or appointed as Clerk of Presbytery, shall become a full member of the Presbytery (with voting rights) during their tenure of that Presbytery Commission or Clerkship.

11. A Minister Emeritus who is a nominee from Presbytery, or a nominee of the Nominations Committee, to a Commission of the Assembly shall become a full member of the General Assembly and of their Presbytery (with voting rights in both) during their tenure of that Assembly Commission.

12. **Note:** Administratively this option would require Presbyteries to add (and at the appropriate time remove) a Minister Emeritus to full membership of Presbytery when that standing is necessary under the law of the Church.

CHARITIES LEGISLATION TASK GROUP APPENDIX 2

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN KIRK SESSION AND CONGREGATIONAL COMMITTEE

1. Following on from the change in relationship between Kirk Sessions and Congregational Committees, as agreed at the 2015 General Assembly, there is a need to both further define the agreed delegation of responsibility in the Code and issue guidance as to its practical outworking.

Delegation of Responsibility

2. **It is recommended that** the following changes in the Code be made to further define the delegation of responsibility from the Kirk Session to the Congregational Committee and to remove the unused option of having a Board of Deacons instead of a Congregational Committee:

- Par 16 (3) be amended as follows (new section underlined):
“The Ruling Elder is appointed to watch for souls and to exercise government and discipline in conjunction with the Teaching Elder. This shall include the oversight of the care of those in need and the management of the temporal affairs of the Congregation, with direct responsibility for these two matters delegated to the Members of the Congregational Committee.”
- The current Par 16 (4) be deleted and replaced with:
“Members of the Congregational Committee are appointed to fulfil the biblical role of deacons by discharging the duties delegated to them of caring for those in need and managing the temporal affairs of the Congregation”
- Par 47 (1) be deleted and replaced with:
“The duties of the Congregational Committee, delegated to it by Kirk Session, shall be to care for those in need and to manage the temporal affairs of the Congregation, and be accountable to Kirk Session.”
- Par 51 (1) be deleted and replaced with:
“Any member of the Congregational Committee or any member of the Congregation who is dissatisfied with any decision of the Congregational Committee may, after notice in writing to the Congregational Committee, ask the Kirk Session to review that decision. Any member of the Congregational Committee or any member of the Congregation dissatisfied with the decision of the Kirk Session following such review may after notice in writing to the Kirk Session petition the Presbytery against that decision.”
- Par 52 of the Code be deleted.

GUIDANCE REGARDING THE EXERCISE OF DELEGATED RESPONSIBILITY

3. The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland now clearly states that the Kirk Session shall “act as the charity trustees of the Congregation and be responsible for the Congregation’s compliance with the requirements of charities legislation in Northern Ireland and/or the Republic of Ireland as appropriate;” (Code Par 35(e)). It also states that the Kirk Session shall, “ensure that the Congregational Committee fulfils its duties as delegated to it by the Kirk Session and complies with the decisions of Kirk Session;” (Code Par 35(f)).

4. The duties delegated to the Congregational Committee by the Kirk Session are outlined in Par 47(1) of the Code (in its amended form above), namely, “*The duties of the Congregational Committee, delegated to it by Kirk Session, shall be to care for those in need and to manage the temporal affairs of the Congregation, and be accountable to Kirk Session.*” These duties are expanded upon in Par 47(2) of the Code.

5. The Congregational Committee shall therefore continue to have day to day responsibility for the temporal affairs of the Congregation as outlined in Par 47 of the Code. However, it will be accountable to the Kirk Session for the exercise of those responsibilities, as it is the Kirk Session which is ultimately responsible for “*the Congregation’s compliance with the requirements of charities legislation in Northern Ireland and/or the Republic of Ireland as appropriate;*” (Code Par 35(e)).

6. While the Kirk Session should not as a body micro-manage the work of the Congregational Committee (all Elders are ex-officio members of the Congregational Committee and can attend and be involved in the detailed work in that forum) it should have oversight of it. **Therefore the following guidelines are recommended:**

- (a) The annual report of the Congregational Committee should be presented to the Kirk Session for its consideration, with the Kirk Session (as the Charity Trustees) being the body which now formally approves the accounts prior to their submission to the Congregation’s Annual General Meeting for their adoption.
- (b) During the year, the draft minutes of each meeting of the Congregational Committee should be formally submitted to the Clerk of Session. The agenda for each stated meeting of Kirk Session should include a standing item ‘Congregational Committee’, at which the Kirk Session should formally note the draft minute, with by exception, only very significant issues being discussed when necessary. The Kirk Session should not seek to redo the work of the Congregational Committee, nor reopen ongoing day to day matters that have been decided by the Congregational Committee and are clearly within its delegated authority. However, the Kirk Session may in certain circumstances, when it feels an important decision of the Congregational Committee is significantly out of step with the overall mission and ministry of the Congregation, refer that matter back to the Congregational Committee and require it to be further considered, or in extremis overturn that decision.

7. **It is recommended** that the following amendment to Par 257(2)(a) of the Code be made to enact the changes outlined above (changes underlined):

257(2)(a) The annual report of the Congregational Committee shall include a full statement of accounts, which shall be submitted to the Kirk Session for approval and then to the Congregation for adoption.

CHARITIES LEGISLATION TASK GROUP APPENDIX 3

ELDERS UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO REGISTER AS CHARITY TRUSTEES

1. In the Consolidated Guidance Notes issued in December 2015 one of the appendices addressed the issue of the role of the Kirk Session as the charity trustees of a Congregation, along with the related issue of Elders unable to act as charity trustees at point of registration. The following was stated:

FURTHER GUIDANCE REGARDING CHARITY TRUSTEES OF A CONGREGATION

- (a) There have been a number of queries regarding the necessity of all Elders being registered as charity trustees for a Congregation. The following is the position of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland:
 - (i) The Code Par 35(e) clearly states that:

35. The Kirk Session shall

(e) act as the charity trustees of the Congregation
 - (ii) The Code Par 25(1) defines the Kirk Session thus:

25. (1) The Kirk Session shall consist of the ordained Minister or Ministers and the Ruling Elders of the Congregation.....
 - (iii) The Code therefore clearly places a duty upon every member of Kirk Session to act as a charity trustee of the Congregation. (For absolute clarity this includes the Minister, or Interim Moderator, along with any ordained Associate Minister and all ruling Elders in the Kirk Session. It does not include anyone who may ‘sit and deliberate’ with the Kirk Session e.g. Licentiate Assistants, Deaconesses etc.)
- (b) Further, the General Assembly Solicitor also advises: “The Kirk Session is the body responsible under the Code for the oversight of the Congregation and its activities; it is therefore the body which has the general control and management of the Congregation. The persons who are “charity trustees” within the meaning of the Charities Act are those to whom is entrusted the general control and management of the charity. Thus as a matter of law the members of Kirk Session are the Charity Trustees for the Congregation, and Par 35(e) of the Code is therefore doing no more than reflecting the legal position.”

GUIDANCE REGARDING ELDERS UNABLE TO ACT AS CHARITY TRUSTEES AT POINT OF REGISTRATION

A. AN INTERIM ARRANGEMENT – ELDER TEMPORARILY RELEASED FROM DUTIES

- (a) Under the current Par 25(1) of the Code there already exists a mechanism to temporarily release an Elder from the duties of the eldership in a Congregation (see under-lined sections):
- 25. (1)** The Kirk Session shall consist of the ordained minister or ministers and the ruling elders of the congregation except that a ruling elder may be given permission by the Kirk Session not to carry out the duties of the eldership for a specified time. All members, including the Moderator, are entitled to propose, speak to and exercise equal votes, except that the Moderator shall have no deliberative but only a casting vote. Where a ruling elder has been temporarily released from the duties of the eldership in the Congregation for a specified time, that elder shall not act as a member of the Kirk Session and shall not be entitled to attend, speak or exercise a vote in the Kirk Session.
- (b) When this happens the Elder, temporarily, is no longer an active member of the Kirk Session.
- (c) Therefore, with regard to an Elder who is temporarily unable to act, for a reason deemed acceptable, the Kirk Session should resolve to temporarily release the Elder from the duties of the eldership for (stating the specified time) due to (stating the reason).
- (d) Once this resolution has been passed, that Elder does not need to be registered with the Charity Commission because, during this temporary period, the Elder shall not act as a member of the Kirk Session. As the Code states, they shall not be entitled to attend, speak or exercise a vote in the Kirk Session and hence will not be acting as a Charity Trustee during that temporary period.
- (e) If and when the reason for the temporary release from duties has been resolved (e.g. an Elder who has been seriously ill recovers) the Elder can resume their duties and should then added to the Charity Trustees of the Congregation, through the process provided on the website of the Charity Commission (NI).

B PERMANENT ARRANGEMENT - ELDER EMERITUS STATUS GRANTED

- (a) Under Par 33(3) of the Code an Elder may permanently retire from the duties of the eldership:
- 33. (3)** A ruling elder who has reached the age of 65, or is in special circumstances, may retire from their duties in a Congregation with the consent of the Presbytery, who may if it so wishes, in consultation with the Kirk Session, deem the Elder to be an ‘Elder-Emeritus’ of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.
- (b) Once this has happened, that Elder does not need to be registered with the Charity Commission because they will no longer be a member of

the Kirk Session. They will not be entitled to attend, speak or exercise a vote in the Kirk Session and hence will not be acting as a Charity Trustee.

C. PERMANENT ARRANGEMENT – AN ELDER RESIGNS FROM THE DUTIES OF THE ELDERSHIP

- (a) Under Par 33(4) of the Code an Elder may resign from the duties of the eldership:

33. (4) A Ruling Elder may resign his duties in a Congregation or his office of eldership in the Presbyterian Church with the consent of the Presbytery.

- (b) Once this has happened, that Elder does not need to be registered with the Charity Commission because they will no longer be a member of the Kirk Session.

2. The Consolidated Guidance Notes however did not address how to deal with the issue of **new Elders** being added to the Kirk Session and secondly how to deal with current Elders who refuse to register and choose not to take any of the options outlined above. After due consideration by the Charity Legislation Task Group **it is recommended that** that these issues should be addressed as follows:

Regarding new Elders

- (a) The simplest way to deal with this is to add a clause into the Code at the section dealing with the election of new Elders. This should both require the Presbytery to acquaint an Elder elect with the requirements of charity trusteeship and also obtain a signed Charity Trustee Declaration. **It is recommended that** the following changes (underlined) be made in Code Par 180 to covers these points:

180. (1) The name of every ruling elder elect shall be reported to the appointed Presbytery commission, who, in line with General Assembly guidelines, shall confer with the elder elect respecting their acquaintance with divine truth, their personal faith and character, their sense of the responsibilities and duties of the office, including their responsibility as a charity trustee of the congregation and their gifting and availability for the exercise of that office.

(2) During a period prior to ordination elders elect shall receive a course of instruction, of not less than six sessions, in the doctrines of the Church as set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith and in the life and duties of the elder.

(3) The Presbytery commission, being satisfied on these matters, and having confirmed that a Charity Trustee Declaration has been completed, shall report thereon to Presbytery or shall themselves proceed to ordain those approved, if this lie within the terms of their appointment.

A similar clause should be inserted into the section of the Code dealing with co-option. The following is a suggested amendment (underlined) to Code Par 181(1):

181. (1) **The co-option of a ruling elder**, certified as such from one congregation to another, or of a minister not in active duty, or of a ministerial member of the local Presbytery not in charge of a congregation, may be decided upon by the Kirk Session with the approval of the congregation and the sanction of the Presbytery. The Presbytery should confirm that the ruling elder is aware of their responsibility as a charity trustee of the congregation and that a Charity Trustee Declaration has been completed.

Regarding current elders who refuse to register and choose not voluntarily step down

- (b) The challenge here is to remove such Elders from membership of the Kirk Session without the necessity for a decision to be taken by the Presbytery, which would be open to appeal through the courts of the Church. Therefore, **it is recommended that** the following new sub-paragraph be added to the Code (becoming a new Par 33 (2), with subsequent existing sub-paragraphs renumbered):

33. (2) *In the case where a ruling elder fails to complete a Charity Trustee Declaration, by a date set by Presbytery, that elder shall be deemed to have resigned from the duties of the eldership in their congregation, unless otherwise resolved by Presbytery.*

For completeness the following change to the Code (underlined) is recommended in relations to the installation or induction of Ministers:

211. Before proceeding with any ordination or installation service, the Presbytery (or Presbytery commission in charge) shall –

.....

(4) be satisfied that notice has been duly published in the congregation, that (where appropriate) a Charity Trustee Declaration has been completed, and that there is no remaining impediment to the ordination or installation.

JOHN HUNTER, Convener
TREVOR GRIBBEN, Secretary

COMMUNICATIONS REVIEW TASK GROUP

1. The Rev Philip Thomson resigned as Convener of the Task Group in the autumn and the Rev Graeme Kennedy was appointed as Convener in his place. Thanks are recorded to Mr Thompson for his work, especially in establishing the direction of travel for the Task Group as it began its work.

2. Over the past year the group has continued its review of communications policy, focussing on the organisational values which should inform our 'corporate identity' and guide all of our communications. The organisational values were presented to the General Council and were adopted for internal staff use in informing our approach to communication.

3. It has also been reviewing the current regular publications produced by our Church in the form of the three main magazines – *Presbyterian Herald*, *ReachOut* and *Wider World*. The group reported on its work to the General Council and it was agreed that *Wider World* should remain as a publication targeted at PW members while the other two publications should merge into one new publication to be known as *Presbyterian Herald*, with the last editions of *ReachOut* and the present format of *Presbyterian Herald* being those of December/January 2016, and the first edition of the merged magazine being that of February 2017.

4. The General Council also accepted the group’s recommendation that a small editorial advisory group be established with immediate effect to:

- support and help the editor of the current *Presbyterian Herald* and the future merged magazine;
- develop an ongoing relationship with the editor;
- be available for the editor to contact when faced with a decision regarding content of a complex or highly sensitive nature;
- provide opinion alongside that delivered through the editor’s line-management.

That group has already been established.

5. The Task Group also recommended to the Council that a Creative Production Panel be set up to set ongoing priorities for the Creative Production Department and to oversee outstanding tasks from the Communications Review Task Group as well as general departmental issues. This was accepted and the Support Services Committee is to appoint the Panel.

GRAEME KENNEDY, Convener

HISTORICAL ARCHIVING TASK GROUP

1. The Historical Archiving Task Group has met twice since the last General Assembly.

2. **Strong Room** – All the Synod and almost all the Presbyterian records have been transferred to the care of the Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland and catalogued. It is intended that all the transferred material will be properly catalogued. Some congregational records have also been transferred. There are some records of the Synod of Ulster which would be better conserved by the Historical Society. A resolution to give permission for their transfer to the Society’s care is appended. It should be noted that all ‘live’ documents such as congregational deeds remain in the Strong Room. Once all the material designated for transfer has gone, the Strong Room will be emptied and cleaned, and the temperature control examined and renovated if necessary. Subsequent to the cleaning, material that is appropriate for the Strong Room will be catalogued, returned and placed in appropriate storage boxes.

3. **Secure Room, former IT store and financial records** – The rooms on the first floor used as an IT store have been cleared. The shredding/archiving of old records, in the first-floor Secure Room, mostly financial, has been completed, although it may be that further material for shredding will be identified by the Financial Secretary.

4. **Advice for Presbyteries** – Consideration is being given to drawing up advice for Presbyteries on the archiving of material.

JIM STOTHERS, Convener

GUYSMERE REDEVELOPMENT TASK GROUP

1. In light of the ongoing work which was being carried forward by the Finance and Staffing Commission, it was not necessary for the Guysmere Redevelopment Task Group to meet during the last session.

TREVOR GRIBBEN, Convener

GENERAL COUNCIL

SECTION 4

(Thursday morning 11.15 am)

SUPPORT SERVICES COMMITTEE

1. At the time of writing the Support Services Committee had met on two occasions. Both meetings considered reports from its Finance, HR and Property Panels and it's IT and Creative Production Task Groups. The Committee's report to the General Assembly summarises the work of its Panels and the Task Groups.

FINANCE PANEL

2. The meeting of the Panel on 1st October reviewed the projected accounts for the various assessment funds for 2015, considered and agreed budgets and assessment rates for 2016. The Committee took into account the decision of the 2015 General Assembly to incorporate an element (£1,158) of the old "bonus" (£1.518) (now referred to as the Central Ministry Fund payment) into stipends from 1st January 2016, with the provision of a new "nil rate" assessment band to compensate congregations for the additional cost. It was noted that some adjustments were necessary to ensure, as far as possible no additional cost or benefit to congregations e.g. in the case of joint charges. The Committee also agreed a reduction in the employer's pension contribution rate from 27.5% to 24.0% following the recent actuarial valuation of the Pension Scheme (2009). As a consequence of these decisions the Committee was able to reduce the overall level of assessment on Congregations in 2016, although it noted that the benefit will be partially offset by the change in employers NIC rates and the withdrawal of the national insurance contracting out rebate from 1st April 2016. The Committee also agreed an increase in the Sterling and Euro Basic Ministerial Minima of 1% for 2016. The proposed rates of assessment for 2016 are as follows:

Assessment Band	Assessable Income (£)		Assessment Rate
	From	To	
1	0	10,999	0.00%
2	11,000	64,999	14.50%
3	65,000	129,999	10.75%
4	130,000	194,999	7.25%
5	195,000	259,999	3.50%
6	260,000	and above	0.00%

and that the amounts collected through the assessment system be allocated as follows:

Assessment Fund	Projected Allocation for 2016 £	Projected Allocation for 2016 %
Central Ministry Fund	1,700,000	38.78%
Retired Ministers Fund	750,000	17.10%
Widows of Ministers Fund	300,000	6.84%
Prolonged Disability Fund	25,000	0.57%
Incidental Fund	700,000	15.96%
Church House Repairs Fund	370,000	8.44%
Special Assembly	25,000	0.57%
Ministerial Development Fund	100,000	2.28%
Sick Supply Fund	15,000	0.34%
Students Bursary Fund	400,000	9.12%
TOTAL	4,385,000	100.00%

3. At a further meeting in October the Panel considered an outstanding matter from the Tyrone Memorial Review Report to the 2014 General Assembly. The Report had noted the need to review the remuneration of Ministers in Assembly Buildings and in Union Theological College in the light of the changes to stipend arrangements for Ministers in Congregations agreed at the 2014 General Assembly. The Panel noted that:

The agreed stipend arrangements for ministers in Congregations did not limit the maximum stipend that a Congregation could agree to pay their Minister.

All posts in Assembly Buildings and Union College are subject to agreed job evaluation arrangements.

All posts in Assembly Buildings and Union College are advertised and open to application from Ministers in Congregations meeting the eligibility criteria.

The Panel concluded that there is no need to make any changes to the present financial arrangements for ministers working in Assembly Buildings or Union Theological College.

4. At its March meeting the Committee agreed to recommend an amendment to the section of the Code dealing with the percentage entitlement of the Basic Ministerial Minimum (which now included the annual bonus) to avoid additional cost to the Retired Ministers' Fund and the Widows' of Ministers Fund (an overture is appended). It also agreed to include a provision in the accounts of the Ministerial Development Fund of £120k in respect of the continuing build up of accrued but unclaimed sabbatical leave.

5. The 2016 budgeted expenditure for the Incidental Fund is detailed in an appendix (see Support Services Committee Appendix 2) and an appropriate resolution is attached (see resolution x). Tables summarising the annual statistical returns for 2015 are appended (see General Council appendix x).

6. The Committee noted the new reporting and accounting requirements recently issued by the Charity Commission and agreed that a subcommittee should prepare advice in the form of templates for Congregations. The Committee also agreed that references in The Code to “audit” should be amended to “audit or independent examination” to ensure that Congregations were not required to have a higher level of scrutiny of their accounts than that required under charities legislation.

7. The Committee agreed that approval should be given to the pre-65 retirements of the Revs Ian McKee (Aughnacloy and Ballymagrane), Dr Roger Purce (Groomsport), George F McKeown (Rathcoole) and D N Gray (Portaferry) under the provisions of Par 223 of the Code (resolution appended).

8. At its meeting on 14th April the Finance Panel reviewed the draft 2015 accounts of the General Assembly and agreed to submit them to the General Council with a recommendation that they be approved by the Council, subject to any changes that might need to be made following discussions with the auditors. The Panel drew the General Council’s attention to a number of deficits arising in 2015 some of which need to be addressed by the Council concerned.

9. The Panel reviewed the arrangements for the re-imbursment of expenses for attendance at the General Assembly and at Board and Committee meetings as agreed by the General Assembly in 2001. It agreed, other than updating of rates and to reflect present governance structures that the arrangements were still appropriate and agreed to present them to the General Assembly for approval. (see Support Services Committee Appendix 6).

10. Finally the Panel noted the summaries of the annual statistical returns from Congregations and Presbyteries for 2015 which are appended and encourages Councils to review these. (see Support Services Committee Appendices 3 and 4)

HR PANEL

11. The Committee welcomed new policies agreed by the Panel in a number of important areas including: Time Off in Lieu and Sessional Working; Flexible Working; Paternity and Adoption Leave. It also discussed the implications of the introduction of the National Living Wage and noted the continuing review of the contract with Peninsula Business Services.

12. The Committee agreed in principle to the introduction of an appraisal system for executive and administrative staff in Assembly Buildings and spent some time exploring the challenges of developing and operating a fair system. Following the completion of task lists for all staff, the appraisal system is due to be introduced in 2017 with appropriate training of all those involved.

PROPERTY PANEL

13. The Committee agreed to more regular inspections of the properties owned by the Retired Ministers’ House Fund, not least in order to ensure that all statutory requirements are in place. It welcomed the Panel’s wish to publicise the Fund to Ministers and noted the Panel’s intention to explore how changes in personal circumstances might need to be taken into account in the future granting of assistance to those who were already beneficiaries of the Fund. It also agreed to the Panel’s decision to commission annual inspections of the stone work of Assembly Buildings for consideration of necessary remedial work.

14. At its October meeting the Committee noted the purchase of video equipment to improve conferencing facilities, with further investment agreed at its March meeting for the updating of the AV/Live Streaming Facilities in the Assembly Hall. Both meetings welcomed the progress of hall bookings, including the use of seminar rooms. Conferencing continues to generate substantial income – over £80k in 2015.

15. Finally, the Committee noted the fact that the retail units in the Mall were fully let at the end of March, albeit through a number of short term licence agreements which generate lower returns. The Committee awaits the conclusions of the Task Group's review of the use of Assembly Buildings.

IT TASK GROUP

16. The Committee is very conscious of the importance to the day to day running of the Church of its IT Department. It welcomed the progress made during the year in stabilising its workload and investing for the future with new equipment and staff, aided by consultants. Proposals have been agreed for prioritising the work of the Department and mitigating risk by upskilling the IT Support Officers. It noted the need to develop new policies for cloud storage and social media and welcomed the production of a think piece on the latter by a Panel member, which was referred to the new Creative Production Panel (when established) for early consideration, given the significance of the issues therein for communication policies and practices across the Church.

CREATIVE PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT

17. The Committee noted the accounts of the Creative Production Department and agreed that the Convener and Deputy Clerk, supported by staff in the Department, should submit the Creative Production budget for 2017 to the United Appeal Committee.

JOHN HUNTER, Convener

SUPPORT SERVICES COMMITTEE APPENDIX 1

RATES AND ALLOWANCES FOR 2016

a. Ministerial Minimum

	Northern Ireland		Republic of Ireland	
	2016	2015	2016	2015
	£	£	€	€
Basic Ministerial Minimum	25,280	23,884	38,777	37,007
After 1 years' service	25,533	24,123	39,165	37,377

After 2 years' service	25,786	24,362	39,553	37,747
After 3 years' service	26,039	24,601	39,941	38,117
After 4 years' service	26,292	24,840	40,329	38,487
After 5 years' service	26,545	25,079	40,717	38,857
After 6 years' service	26,798	25,318	41,105	39,227
After 7 years' service	27,051	25,557	41,493	39,597
After 8 years' service	27,304	26,796	41,881	39,967
After 9 years' service	27,557	26,035	42,269	40,337
After 10 years' service	27,810	26,274	42,657	40,707
After 11 years' service	28,063	26,513	43,045	41,077
After 12 years' service	28,316	26,752	43,433	41,447
After 13 years' service	28,569	26,991	43,821	41,817
After 14 years' service	28,822	27,230	44,209	42,187
After 15 years' service	29,075	27,469	44,597	42,557
After 16 years' service	29,328	27,708	44,985	42,927
After 17 years' service	29,581	27,947	45,373	43,297
After 18 years' service	29,834	28,186	45,761	43,667
After 19 years' service	30,087	28,425	46,149	44,037
After 20 years' service	30,340	28,664	46,537	44,407

b. Family Grants

	2016	2015
Birth to 10 yrs	£357 (€1,039)	£354 (€1,029)
11 to 15 yrs	£538 (€1,642)	£533 (€1,626)
16 yrs and over		
– At school	£808 (€3,036)	£800 (€3,006)
– At university	£2,688 (€5,064)	£2,661 (€5,014)
Bands (joint incomes), Reductions		
– Nil up to	£28,729 (€43,422)	£28,445 (€42,992)
– Up to (£1 for every £5)	£38,650 (€58,405)	£38,267 (€57,827)
– Above (£1 for every £2)	£38,650 (€58,405)	£38,267 (€57,827)

c. Retired Ministers Fund, Widows of Ministers Fund and Prolonged Disability Fund

Retired Ministers Fund maximum retirement pension for 2016 is £12,061

Widows of Ministers Fund maximum annuity for 2016 is £6,633

Prolonged Disability Fund maximum grant for 2016 is £12,130

SUPPORT SERVICES COMMITTEE APPENDIX 2

INCIDENTAL FUND

BUDGETED EXPENDITURE FOR YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2016

PAYMENTS TO OR ON BEHALF OF COUNCILS

(i) General Council

General Work	5,000	
General Assembly Priorities – Themes	5,000	
Assembly Arrangements	20,000	
Church Relations Committee		
– Irish Council of Churches	21,100	
– Irish Inter-Church Meeting	11,700	
– Conference of European Churches	5,100	
– Comm Protestant Churches Europe	1,300	
– World Comm Reformed Churches	13,300	
– General Church Relations	2,300	84,800

(ii) Council for Church and Society

General Work incl conferences		10,000
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(iii) Linkage Commission

General Work	8,000	
Church Architecture Committee	8,500	16,500

Moderator expenses allowance		28,000
Printing for General Assembly		15,000
Postage		6,500
Travel General Assembly & Councils etc		8,000
Allowance to Congregations re Conveners		8,400
Legal fees		30,000
Costs of General Secretary's Department	329,214	
Support Services Charges (Finance, Personnel, IT and Payroll)	97,000	
UK Borders Agency	1,000	
Presbyterian Historical Society	22,250	
Youth Link	10,500	
Churches Legislation Advisory	2,500	
Peninsula Employment Law & Health & Safety	17,300	

TOTAL		<u>686,964</u>
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**SUPPORT SERVICES COMMITTEE
APPENDIX 3
ANNUAL STATISTICAL RETURNS**

**TABLE ONE
PERSONS AND AGENCIES**

	2014	2015	Increase	Decrease
Retired Ministers	234	236	2	0
Ministers in Active Duty	384	380	0	4
Retired Missionaries	15	15	0	0
Missionaries in Active Duty	39	40	1	0
Total Ministers and Missionaries	672	671	0	1
Licensings during year	11	19	8	0
Congregations	545	539	0	6
Total Families	98,919	97,731	0	1,188
Persons of All Ages	230,068	225,228	0	4,840
Contributors to FWO or Stipend	76,734	75,321	0	1,413
Baptisms	1,460	1,429	0	31
Admitted to Lord's Table for First Time	2,087	1,806	0	281
Communicants	100,834	98,674	0	2,160
Attended at Least One Communion during year	61,466	60,794	0	672
Ruling Elders in Kirk Session	6,198	6,039	0	159
Number on Rolls in Sunday School and Bible Classes (Note 1)	40,934	42,062	1128	0

Note 1 - from 2011 includes numbers enrolled in childrens and youth ministries under control of Kirk Sessions

TABLE TWO
CONGREGATIONAL INCOME

	2014		2015		% Difference	
	£	€	£	€	N.I.	R.of I.
Assessable Income (gross)	34,767,152	3,550,233	35,438,668	3,870,382	1.9%	9.0%
Building Fund etc	16,090,829	1,625,301	16,634,008	1,057,501	3.4%	-34.9%
Missions and Charities	7,318,977	492,546	7,525,324	524,321	2.8%	6.5%
Raised from other sources	5,979,166	704,902	6,760,124	784,191	13.1%	11.2%
Organisational Income	6,295,338	224,986	6,015,307	247,004	-4.4%	9.8%
Total Receipts	70,451,462	6,597,968	72,373,431	6,483,399	2.7%	-1.7%

TABLE THREE
CONGREGATIONAL EXPENDITURE

	2014		2015		% Difference N.I.	R.of I.
	£	€	£	€		
Paid to ministers, other salaries and wages, allowances to ministers and others	18,119,432	1,505,174	18,253,221	1,576,085	0.7%	4.7%
Payments under Assembly Assessments	6,669,880	713,755	6,743,170	772,452	1.1%	8.2%
Building, Repairs etc.	14,652,699	1,119,169	16,527,363	1,208,836	12.8%	8.0%
United Appeal Schemes	3,075,248	219,272	3,209,481	254,934	4.4%	16.3%
Supplementary Schemes						
Other Religious and Charitable Objects	7,119,115	761,916	7,421,670	700,931	4.2%	-8.0%
Organisations	6,120,627	217,804	5,855,896	207,414	-4.3%	-4.8%
General Expenses	11,266,699	1,457,806	11,100,315	1,386,515	-1.5%	-4.9%
Total Payments	67,023,700	5,994,896	69,111,116	6,107,167	3.1%	1.9%

TABLE FOUR
CONGREGATIONAL FUND BALANCES

	Opening 2015		Closing 2015		% Difference	
	£	€	£	€	N.I.	R. of I.
Unrestricted Funds	23,015,628	2,188,293	24,820,247	2,337,326	7.8%	6.8%
Restricted Funds	80,094,957	7,178,235	82,525,237	7,566,994	3.0%	5.4%
Total Fund Balances	103,110,585	9,366,528	107,345,484	9,904,320	4.1%	5.7%

TABLE FIVE
MINISTERS' INCOME AND ALLOWANCES (SEE NOTES)

	2014	2015	
	£	£	% Difference
Total Ministerial Income			
(Active Duty - Note 2)	11,150,217	11,490,633	3.1%
Stipend Paid	9,588,327	9,873,163	3.0%
Allowances			
Light, Heat, etc			
Ministerial Duties			
Total	2,745,739	2,671,236	-2.7%

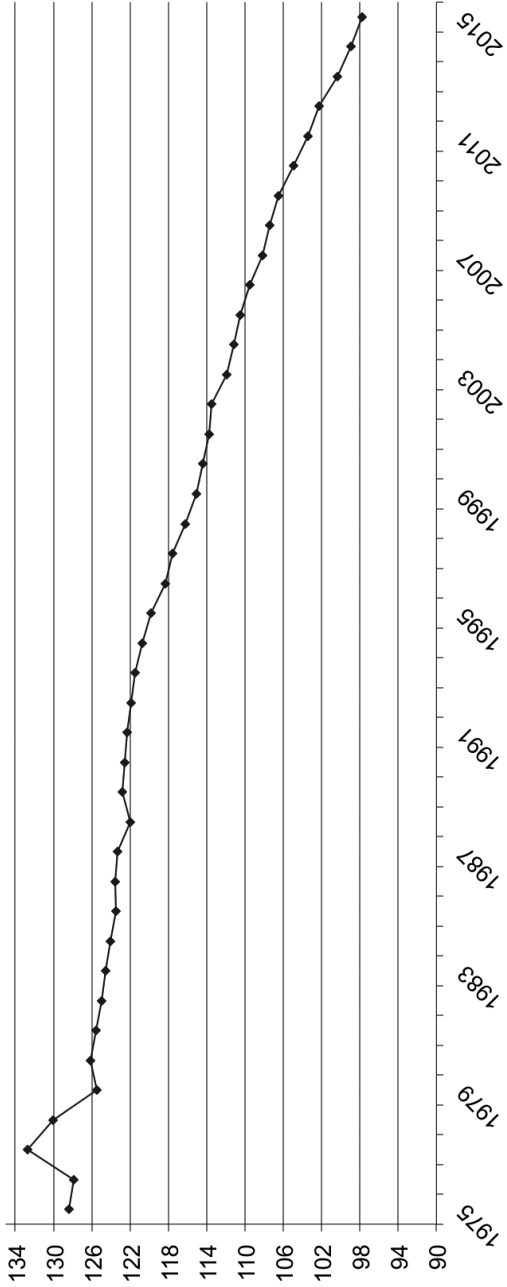
Note 1 Figures for the Republic of Ireland have been converted into £STG using the average value of the Euro for the relevant year (£1/€1.3780)

Note 2 This refers only to 344 ministers in charge of congregations, excluding Assistants, Chaplains, Missionaries, Professors, Administrative Officers and Ministers in recognised service in special work.

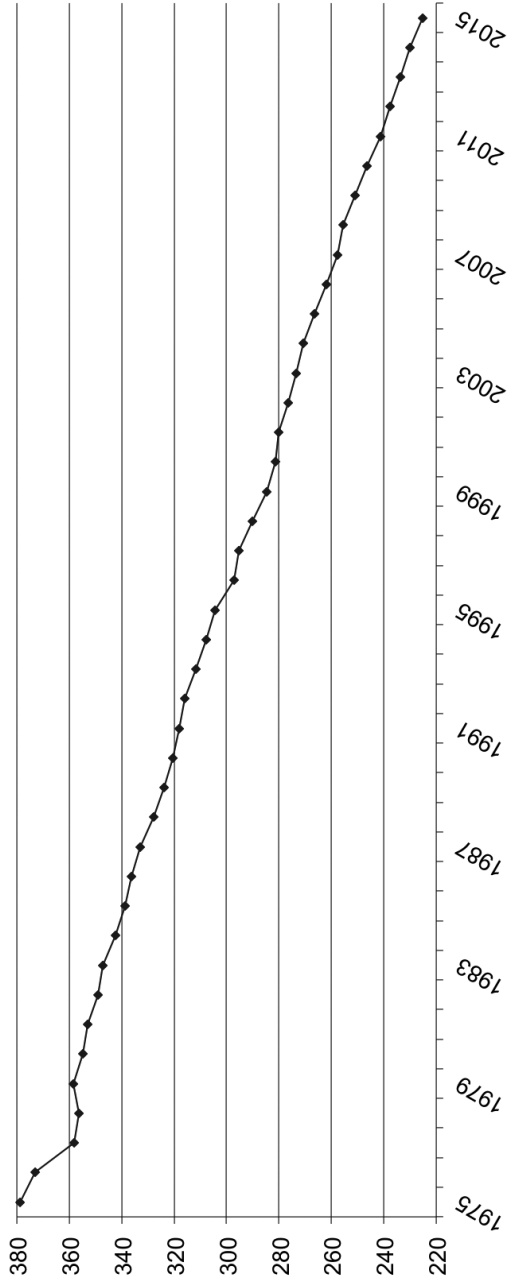
TABLE SIX
PERSONS

	2014	2015
Persons who are aged 18 and under	40,918	40,324
Average attendance at Sunday Worship - Morning	74,111	73,276
- Evening	17,629	17,317

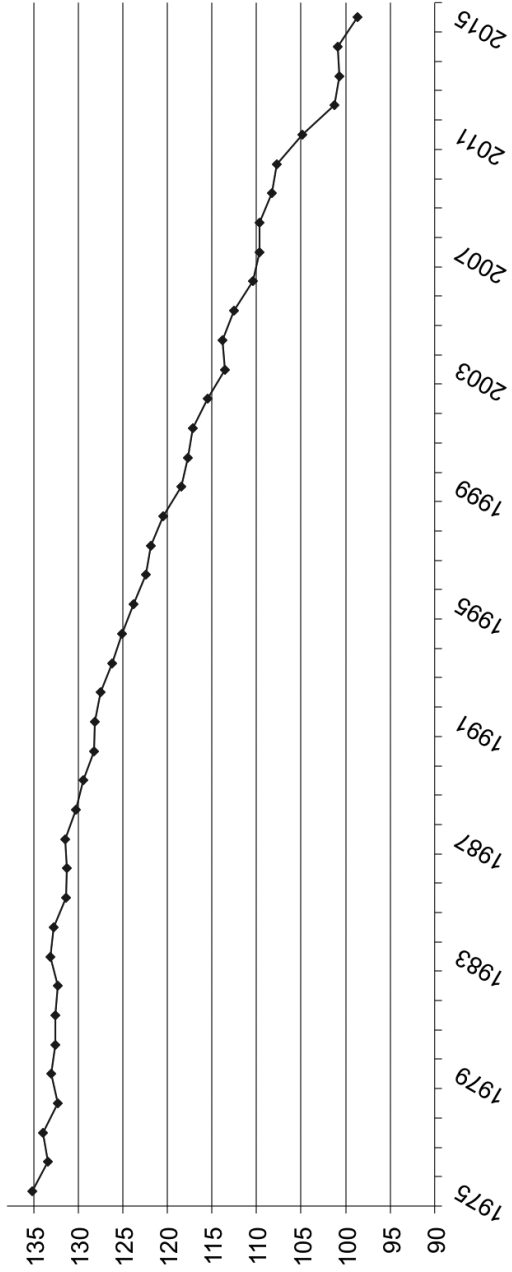
FAMILIES ('000)



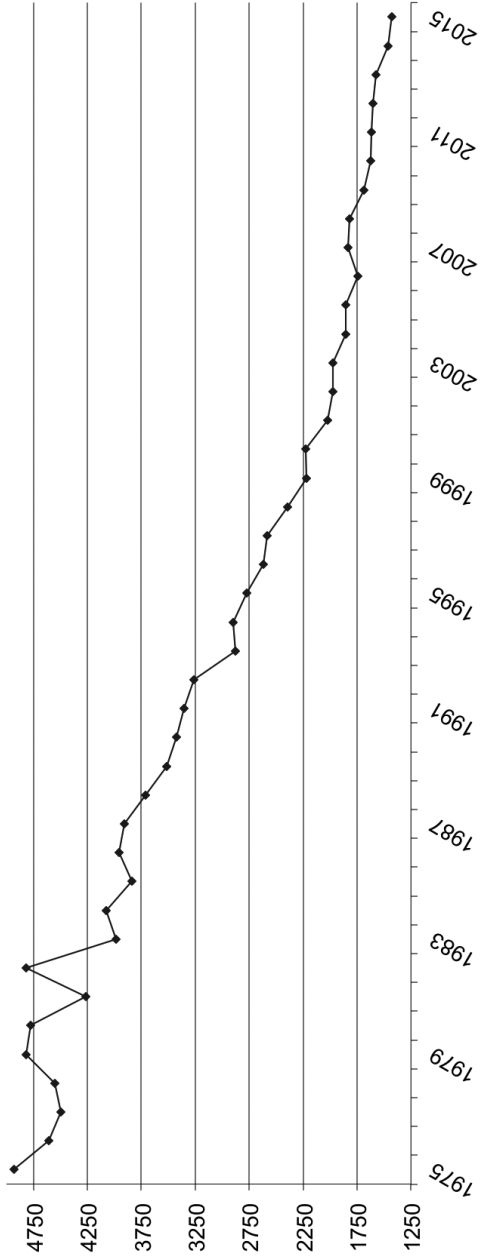
PERSONS ('000)



COMMUNICANTS ('000)



BAPTISMS



SUPPORT SERVICES COMMITTEE APPENDIX 4

SUMMARY OF PRESBYTERY RETURNS FOR YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2015

	Opening Balance	Cl Bal 31.12.14	[----- INCOME -----]		[----- EXPENDITURE -----]						Surplus (Deficit)	Closing Balance	
			Assessment	Other	Presbytery	Clerk	Staff	Other	Insurance	Other			Total
			Congregations	Total Income									
1 Ards	15,989	15,989	17,939	802	18,741	(8,896)	(5,972)	(243)	(2,723)	(17,834)	907	16,896	
2 Armagh	4,685	4,685	11,064	4	11,068	(9,388)	(300)	(212)	(1,133)	(11,033)	35	4,720	
3 Ballymena	8,129	8,129	18,209	5,408	23,617	(11,549)	(3,560)	(212)	(8,486)	(23,807)	(190)	7,939	
4 Belfast North	2,378	2,378	18,676	4,155	22,831	(10,348)	(5,480)	(859)	(7,594)	(24,281)	(1,450)	928	
5 Belfast South	15,905	15,905	13,751	2,072	15,823	(8,470)	(7,050)	(212)	(4,961)	(20,693)	(4,870)	11,035	
6 Belfast East	138,932	138,932	20,120	90,138	110,258	(10,299)	(1,900)	(212)	(168,326)	(180,737)	(70,479)	68,453	
7 Carrickfergus	7,445	7,445	12,085	403	12,488	(9,085)	(575)	(132)	(3,222)	(13,014)	(526)	6,919	
8 Coleraine & Limavady	39,024	39,024	12,802	540	13,342	(7,762)	(897)	(212)	(2,413)	(11,284)	2,058	41,082	
9 Derry & Donegal	35,889	35,889	22,463	23,796	46,259	(12,004)	(956)	(132)	(31,835)	(44,927)	1,332	37,221	
10 Down	28,680	28,680	10,135	109	10,244	(6,647)	(1,000)	(222)	(5,281)	(13,150)	(2,906)	25,774	
11 Dromore	3,984	3,984	13,283	4,630	17,913	(8,788)	(1,800)	(212)	(5,047)	(15,847)	2,066	6,050	
12 € Dublin & Munster	47,946	47,946	22,226	26,010	48,236	(10,068)	(21,908)	(746)	(11,344)	(44,066)	4,170	52,116	
13 Iveagh	15,139	15,140	13,212	10,623	23,835	(9,190)	(500)	(212)	(8,571)	(18,473)	5,362	20,501	
14 € Monaghan	52,007	52,007	5,265	39,873	45,138	(2,300)	(2,498)	(559)	(21,475)	(26,832)	18,306	70,313	
15 Newry	5,623	5,623	10,093	1,245	11,338	(7,773)	(300)	(132)	(2,259)	(10,464)	874	6,497	
16 Omagh	14,240	14,240	11,111	1,069	12,180	(7,627)	(1,785)	(212)	(2,235)	(11,859)	321	14,561	
17 Route	148,234	148,234	11,972	9,586	21,558	(9,248)	(350)	(212)	(6,174)	(15,984)	5,574	153,808	
18 Templepatrick	19,359	19,359	18,265	3,681	21,946	(8,268)	(2,768)	(294)	(8,912)	(20,242)	1,704	21,063	
19 Tyrone	4,693	4,693	11,868	18	11,886	(9,307)	(1,000)	(212)	(948)	(11,467)	419	5,112	
Sterling	508,328	508,328	247,048	158,279	405,327	(154,649)	(36,193)	(4,134)	(270,120)	(465,096)	-59,769	448,559	
Euro	99,953	99,953	27,491	65,883	93,374	-12,368	-24,406	-1,305	-32,819	-70,898	22,476	122,429	

SUPPORT SERVICES COMMITTEE APPENDIX 5

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT STAFFING

STERLING SALARY SCALES OF STAFF IN POST IN ASSEMBLY BUILDINGS ON 1st JANUARY 2016.

EXECUTIVE POSTS

Scale 1 (£23,901 - £28,397)

IT Support Manager, (ITD)
Presbyterian Women Support Officer (CL&W)

Scale 2 (£26,992 - £32,470)

Property Support Officer (0.8 post) (FSD)
Children's Development Officer (CL&W)
Finance Manager (FSD)
Assistant Residential & Supported Services Manager (CSW)
Creative Production Support Officer (Editor) (CPD)
General Secretary of PW (CL&W)
Finance Manager (FSD)
Creative Production Support Officer (Press and Web) (CPD)
Payroll & Assessment Manager (FSD)
Youth Development Officer (CL&W)
"Taking Care" Programme Co-ordinator
Young Adults Development Officer (CL&W)

Scale 3 (£30,201 - £36,809)

Mission Support Officer (Member Care) (MD)
Head of Creative Production (CPD)
Programme Development Officer (CL&W)
Public Affairs Officer (GSD)
Training Development Officer (CL&W) (higher salary protected)
Building Manager (PSD)

Scale 4 (£33,287 - £41,586)

Senior Finance Manager (FSD)
Head of Personnel (PD)
IT Development & Support Manager (ITD)
Residential & Supported Service Manager (CSW)

Scale 6 (£39,532 - £48,162)

Deputy Clerk of Assembly & Assistant General Secretary
 Secretary of the Council for Mission in Ireland
 Secretary of the Council for Social Witness
 Secretary of the Council for Global Mission
 Secretary of the Council for Congregational Life and Witness

Scale 7 (£44,854 - £57,697)

Clerk of Assembly and General Secretary
 Financial Secretary

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RELATED POSTS**Scale 1 (£13,604 - £15,711)**

Telephonist (0.4 post) (PSD)

Scale 2 (£14,637 - £16,928)

Administrative Assistant (0.68 post) (Sales Ledger) (FSD)
 Personnel Assistant (0.74 post) (PD)
 Administrative Assistant, PW (CL&W)
 Administrative Assistant (GSD)
 Administrative Assistant (Job Share) (MD)
 'Taking Care' Administrator (CSW)
 Administrative Assistant (0.7 post) (FSD)
 Handyperson (PSD)
 Personnel/Administrative Assistant (0.8 post) (PD/CSW)
 Assistant Receptionist & Telephonist (PSD) (higher salary protected)

Scale 3 (£16,426 - £18,992)

Senior Personnel Assistant (PD)
 Senior Administrative Assistant (job share 1.2 post) (CSW)
 Senior Administrative Assistant (0.5 post) (MD)
 Deputy Buildings Manager (PSD)
 Senior Administrative Assistant, PW (CL&W)
 Information Officer/Receptionist (0.6 post) (PSD)
 Senior Administrative Assistant (Partnerships)
 Senior Administrative Assistant (Member Care) (MD)

Scale 4 (£18,611- £21,433)

Payroll & Administrative Assistant (1.77 posts) (FSD)
 Senior Administrative Assistants (x 2 job share) (CL&W)
 Senior Communications Assistant (Press & Web) (0.6 post) (CPD)
 Senior Administrative Assistant (0.6 post) (FSD)
 Senior Communications Assistant (Pub) (0.6 post) (CPD)
 Senior Administrative Assistant (CL&W)

Scale 5 (£20,363 - £23,508)

Senior Creative Production Technician (CPD)
 Personal Assistant and Senior Administrative Assistant (MD)
 Assistant Accountant (FSD)
 Senior Personnel Administrator (PD)
 Personal Assistant & Senior Administrative Assistant (job share) (GSD)
 IT Support Officer x 2 (ITD)
 Financial & Administrative Assistant (0.74 post) (FSD)
 IT Support & Development Officer (0.8 post) (ITD)

Scale 5 (Enhanced) (£22,488 - £25,707)

Personal Assistant & Office Supervisor (CL&W)
 Personal Assistant & Office Supervisor (MD)
 Personal Assistant & Office Supervisor (CSW)

Scale 5 (Enhanced pt 25-33) (£22,488 - £26,992)

Senior Personal Assistant & Office Supervisor (GSD)

STERLING SALARY SCALES OF STAFF IN POST IN OTHER LOCATIONS ON 1st JANUARY 2016

EXECUTIVE POSTS**Scale 2 (£26,992 - £32,470)**

College Registrar/Bursar, Union College
 College Librarian, Union College
 Minister/Ministry Co-ordinator, Kinghan Church (CSW)
 Project Manager, Willow Brook, (CSW)
 Chaplain in Residence (MD)
 University Chaplain UUJ, (MD)

Scale 4 (£33,287 - £41,586)

Dean of Ministerial Studies & Development (CTM)

Scale 5 (£36,809 - £44,854)

Senior Lecturer in Biblical Studies and Director of Post-Graduate Studies,
 Union College

Scale 6 (£39,532 - £48,162)

Professor of Old Testament, Union College
 Professor of Church History, Union College
 Professor of New Testament Studies, Union College
 Professor of Practical Theology, Union College
 Professor of Systematic Theology, Union College
 (All Professors higher salary protected)

Scale 7 (£44,854 - £57,697)

Principal of Union Theological College

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RELATED POSTS**Scale 1 (£13,604 - £15,711)**

Clerical Officer (5 p/t) OPS (CSW)

Receptionist (Term Time – part time), Union College

Scale 2 (£14,637 - £16,928)

Clerical and Resource Officer, Nightlight, (MD)

Clerical Officer - Carlisle House (part time) (CSW)

Clerical Officer, (1 FT & 2 PT) OPS (CSW)

Clerical Officer, Kinghan Church (part time) (CSW)

Custodian, Union College (CTM)

Library Assistant (part time), Union College

Scale 3 (£16,426 - £18,992)

Marriage & Guidance Co-ordinator (CSW)

Administrative Assistant (part time), Union College

Nightlight Development Officer (2 posts) (MD)

Senior Clerical Officer (part time), Carlisle House (CSW)

Senior Secretary, Union College (0.6 post)

Scale 4 (£18,611 - £21,433)

Administrator, Derryvolgie (MD)

Senior Secretary, (2 posts) Union College

Deputy Librarian, Union College

Scale 5 (Enhanced) (£22,488 - £25,707)

Assistant Chaplain, QUB (CSW)

Resident Manager, Tritonville Close (Euro Scale) (CSW)

SUPPORT SERVICES COMMITTEE APPENDIX 6

TRAVELLING EXPENSES

1. GENERAL ASSEMBLY

1.1 Mileage Allowance

- A mileage allowance of 15p (22c) per mile can be claimed for one return trip to the Assembly.
- An additional 1p (1c) per mile can be claimed for each additional person travelling in the same car who is also attending the Assembly.

1.2 Train or Bus Fare

- A claim for the cost of standard travel by train or bus or both, as with the mileage allowances, may be made for one return journey.

1.3 Travel Over 200 Miles

- Where a member has travelled more than 200 miles **to** the Assembly (one way) a claim may be submitted for twice the car allowance rate (in effect 30p (44c) per mile). This amount is to cover whatever means of transport has actually been used.

1.4 Daily Allowance

- Each member attending the morning and afternoon sessions on any particular day can claim a daily allowance of £5 per day.
- Where more than 60 miles has been travelled to the Assembly an additional £5 per day may also be claimed.

2. COUNCIL, COMMITTEE, PANEL AND TASK GROUP MEMBERS

2.1 Mileage Allowance

- An allowance of 15p (22c) per mile may be claimed for travel to and from meetings.
- And additional 1p per mile can be claimed for each additional person travelling in the same car who is also attending the Meeting.

2.2 Train or Bus Fare

- Standard class fares will be reimbursed on the presentation of the appropriate receipts.

2.3 Travel Over 200 Miles

- Where a member has travelled more than 200 miles **to** a meeting (one way) a claim may be submitted for twice the car allowance rate (in effect 30p (44c) per mile). This amount is to cover whatever means of transport has actually been used.

2.4 Car Parking

- Where a Council, Committee, Panel or Task Group member attends more than 10 meetings in any one year car parking will be reimbursed on presentation of valid receipts.
- Where such a claim is made, the first claim should be for the previous 10 parking receipts. Subsequent receipts may be claimed on an individual basis per meeting attended.

3. HONORARY ASSEMBLY CONVENERS

- Travelling expenses may be claimed on the same basis as for Council, Committee, Panel and Task Group members.
- In addition other costs incurred in connection with the fulfilment of the duties of the position will be fully reimbursed.

COMMERCIAL USE OF ASSEMBLY BUILDINGS TASK GROUP

1. Last year the General Assembly passed the following resolution: ‘That the Commercial Use of Assembly Buildings Task Group be requested to present options to the General Council with a view to the Council bringing a definite recommendation to the 2016 General Assembly for decision.’ (Minutes page 45, Resolution11)

2. The Task Group has met seven times since then. It has divided the work into two areas: the Reception Area and the Mall.

3. **Reception Area:** Consideration had been given by the Panel whose work the Task Group inherited to the use of the Reception Area for an exhibition/display on Presbyterianism. Thinking on this has developed into an exhibition/display of the history and the contemporary life, work and witness of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. A small sub-group was established by the Task Group to look at the detail of this. Membership includes representatives of the Council for Mission in Ireland, and the Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland and someone with expertise in creative expression. Meetings have taken place with a tourism consultant and the Ulster-Scots Agency and, at the request of the Council, a design consultancy has been engaged to provide a worked-up and costed design. While we do not have a definite figure yet, estimates indicate that it will be a small proportion of the cost on any work done on the rest of the ground floor. There are exciting possibilities for the use of this space as a means of communicating something of what our Church is to tourists from far and near, to people who work in the city, and to our own members. The Task Group will ensure that prominence is given to the contemporary life, work and mission of PCI and that there are opportunities for communicating the Gospel within a quality and attractive exhibition.

4. **The Mall:** Following the remit of last year, the Task Group now brings three options for the Mall area to the Assembly for decision, with a definite recommendation. It should be noted that this information is commercially sensitive and should be used with discretion.

5. The **various options** follow, with a summary of costs (Commercial Use of Assembly Buildings Appendix 1), a projected income and expenditure account (Commercial Use of Assembly Appendix 2), and plans of Options 2 and 3.

OPTION 1 – DO NOTHING

OTHER THAN THE REQUIRED MAINTENANCE WORKS AND CONTINUE TO OPERATE THE MALL ON PRESENT ARRANGEMENTS

1.1 PROJECTED COSTS

	£
Essential Maintenance	160,000
Smoke Extraction	15,000
Other related works	135,000
SUB TOTAL	310,000
VAT & Fees	90,000
TOTAL	400,000

1.2 FINANCING

Based on recent accounts the running of “Assembly Buildings” (which includes income from internal office rents, the letting of Fisherwick Buildings, Conferencing income and the running of the Mall) is generating a cash surplus (around £30k in 2014 and £60k in 2015). The contribution each of the aforementioned sources makes to the overall surplus depends on how certain costs are apportioned. However, a review of the figures would indicate that if the Mall is closed that the surplus from running “Assembly Buildings” would increase to circa £80k per annum confirming that the Mall is operating at a loss (see Appendix 2).

The above maintenance works will have to be funded either from any “surplus” generated by the operation of Assembly Building or by extending the congregational assessment for the refurbishment works for a short period (approx. 1 year).

1.3 PROS

- (i) Does not commit the Church to any further expenditure (other than maintenance works) at a time when there is still an outstanding overdraft from the earlier refurbishment works of circa £3.8m. It is projected this will not be paid off until 2026.
- (ii) The Mall has shown reasonable occupancy in recent months and it may be possible to secure longer tenancies (the current tenancies tend to be on a licence rather than lease basis).
- (iii) The sense of occupancy in the Mall has a positive impact in terms on those who use the building on a regular basis.

1.4 CONS

- (i) The potential issue of Sunday trading **in the Mall** remains and current trends may mean that it is an issue which the Church will be under increasing pressure to deal with either from within or without.
- (ii) The Mall is making a loss. Many rentals are on short term basis and a very low service charge inclusive rents have been agreed in order to secure units.
- (iii) To keep the Mall running requires staff time and marketing and the use of external agents to manage lease renewal, tenant queries and service charges.
- (iv) Does not address the lack of exhibition and break out space which will be necessary to grow conferencing income.
- (v) The opportunity to bring back into the Church's own use the exiting retail space would be lost until next lease renewals.

(Note: the Task Group has been advised that a tenant has a right to renew their lease unless they are in breach of their obligations e.g. they have failed to make their lease payments. Therefore, it is not possible to close the Mall without the Church having a scheme in place demonstrating how it intends to use the space. The sole purpose of the figures in Appendix 2 Option 1 is to show that the Mall is making a loss)

OPTION 2 – THE HYBRID OR PARTIAL SCHEME

AS PER OPTION 3 BUT EXCLUDING THE REFURBISHMENT OF RETAIL UNITS FOR OFFICE USE.

2.1 COSTS

Total including essential and non-essential maintenance	938,190
VAT	187,638
TOTAL	1,125,828

2.2 FINANCING

Additional income will be generated from:

- (i) the letting of an additional retail unit (Area 6 – in old entrance via Upper Queens Street) say £15,000;
- (ii) the possible letting of the Area 1 (labelled as Pres Church Use – this is the old Family Books space) to a third party sympathetic to the ethos of the Church; it is anticipated that, if let any tenant will be responsible for the fit out and that any income will be on a “commission” or “profit” basis; initially it is assumed this would be nil;
- (iii) the new conferencing facilities, say £20,000 per annum. It is anticipated that to significantly grow conference income a marketing/ conference manager would need to be appointed. A significant increase in conference income would be required to cover this additional cost. At this stage it is not being proposed that such a person be appointed.

Based on the present annual assessment income for the Church House Repair Fund it would take approx. 3 years to clear the additional debt.

2.3 PROS

- (i) Issues relating to the management of Sunday trading **in the Mall** would not arise.
- (ii) Mall management and service charge issues would be removed.
- (iii) Additional exhibition and breakout space would be provided which would improve the conferencing offering.
- (iv) Is less expensive than option 3, but still provides the opportunity to convert retail units to offices at a future date if considered viable.
- (v) The existing retail units can be used to provide temporary storage for conferences e.g. for set up or could also be used for temporary pop-up exhibition. (The glass fronts could be covered with decals or blinds if necessary).
- (vi) Visit Belfast is supportive of this option.
- (vii) The unallocated space could be brought back into the Church's use.

2.4 CONS

- (i) To grow conferencing income may require additional staffing or marketing resources.
- (ii) The additional cost would have to be funded by extending the current assessment on congregations.
- (iii) Sunday trading issues would remain with Retail units which had direct street access but these are in Fisherwick Buildings which, other than for temporary accommodation, have never been used by the Church.

OPTION 3 – THE “FULL” SCHEME

CARRY OUT THE COMPLETE REFURBISHMENT OF THE GROUND FLOOR TO INCLUDE ADDITIONAL CONFERENCING FACILITIES, ADD A NEW RETAIL UNIT AND CONVERT REMAINING RETAIL UNITS FOR OFFICE USE

3.1 PROJECTED COSTS

Total including essential and non-essential maintenance	1,310,903
VAT	262,181
TOTAL	1,573,084

3.2 FINANCING

Additional income will be generated from:

- (i) the letting of an additional retail unit (Area 6 – in old entrance via Upper Queens Street, labelled as Retail Unit) say £15,000.

- (ii) the additional office space. Say 3 units of 500 sq ft each at £7 per square foot which is £10,500.
- (iii) the possible letting of Area 1 (old Familybooks space) to a third party sympathetic to the ethos of the Church. It is anticipated that, if let, any tenant will be responsible for the fit out and that any income will be on a “commission” or “profit” basis. Initially it is assumed this would be nil.
- (iv) the new conferencing facilities, say £20,000 per annum. It is anticipated that to significantly grow conference income that a marketing / conference manager would need to be appointed. A significant increase in conference income would be required to cover this additional cost. At this stage it is not being proposed that such a person be appointed.

Based on the present annual assessment income for the Church House Repair Fund it would take a further 4 to 5 years to clear the additional debt.

3.3 PROS

- (i) Issues relating to the management of Sunday trading **in the Mall** would not arise (although it may be that access to Office units would be required for certain permitted purposes on Sundays).
- (ii) Mall management and service charge issues would be removed.
- (iii) Additional exhibition and breakout space would be provided which would improve the conferencing offering.

3.4 CONS

- (i) The Church’s position on Sunday opening of offices would need to be agreed.
- (ii) To grow conferencing income may require additional staffing or marketing resources.
- (iii) The additional cost would have to be funded by extending the assessment on congregations.
- (iv) Sunday trading issues would remain with Retail units which had direct street access but these are in Fisherwick Buildings which, other than for temporary accommodation, have never been used by the Church.
- (v) There is a development risk in that the Church will be expending around £450k (i.e. the cost difference in cost between option 2 and 3) without the security of long term tenants.

GENERAL COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

6. The options have been presented to the General Council. On purely financial grounds the returns under Options 2 and 3 would probably not justify the proposed level of expenditure. However there is a window of opportunity to bring the Mall back into the Church’s own use and to some extent at least help address issues which could arise re Sunday trading in the Mall. It protects the Church from fluctuation in demand for retail space, provides a platform to grow the conferencing business and will reduce the administration involved in the management of the Mall. The Council feels that to achieve this, it is not necessary to incur the expenditure entailed in Option 3. Areas that may be left void could, for example, be fitted out and used by a third party at no cost to the Church.

7. Accordingly the General Council recommends that Option 2 be adopted and a suitable resolution is appended.

8. General Assembly may wish to take into consideration the fact that Options 2 and 3 open up the possibility of the use of Area 1 by the Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland. It should be stressed that it would be necessary to explore various issues in depth. The possibility has only recently been suggested to the Society and things are not at a stage where they could give an agreement even in principle. More detailed conversations would be necessary before the Society could give a clear response. Such conversations are likely to go on past the 2016 General Assembly.

JIM STOTHERS, Convener

COMMERCIAL USE OF ASSEMBLY BUILDINGS TASK GROUP

APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF COSTS

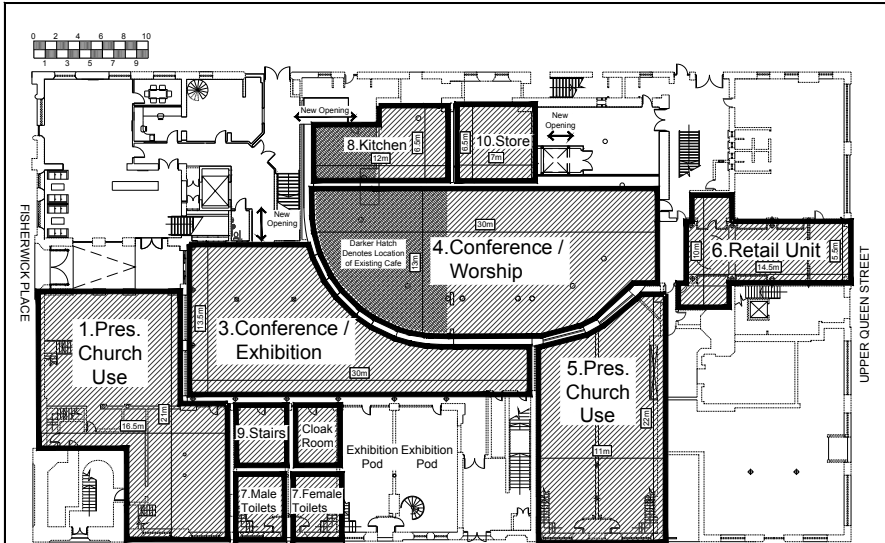
	OPTION 1: Do nothing	OPTION 2: Partial Scheme	OPTION 3: Full Scheme
Area 2 – Exhibition Pods (Op 2)/ Offices (Op 3)	–	–	184,030
Area 3 – Conference/ Exhibition	–	103,400	103,400
Area 4 – Conference/Worship	–	199,100	199,100
Area 5 – Pres. Church Use (Op 2)/Offices (Op 3)	–	–	154,800
Area 6 – Retail Unit	–	45,600	45,600
Area 7 – Toilet Fit Out	–	66,000	66,000
Area 8 – New Kitchen	–	58,500	58,500
Area 9 – Stairs	–	49,500	49,500
Area 10 – Store	–	30,800	30,800
SUB-TOTAL	–	552,900	891,730
Essential Repairs			
- Glazed Roof Repairs	40,000	40,000	40,000
- Boiler etc	120,000	110,000	110,000
Smoke Extraction	15,000	15,000	15,000
Other related works	135,000	135,000	135,000
SUB-TOTAL	310,000	300,000	300,000
TOTAL (excl. VAT)	310,000	852,900	1,191,730
Fees (say 10%)	(est) 23,333	85,590	119,173
	333,333	938,190	1,310,903
VAT – 20%	66,667	187,638	262,181
GRAND TOTAL	400,000	1,125,828	1,573,084

COMMERCIAL USE OF ASSEMBLY BUILDINGS TASK GROUP

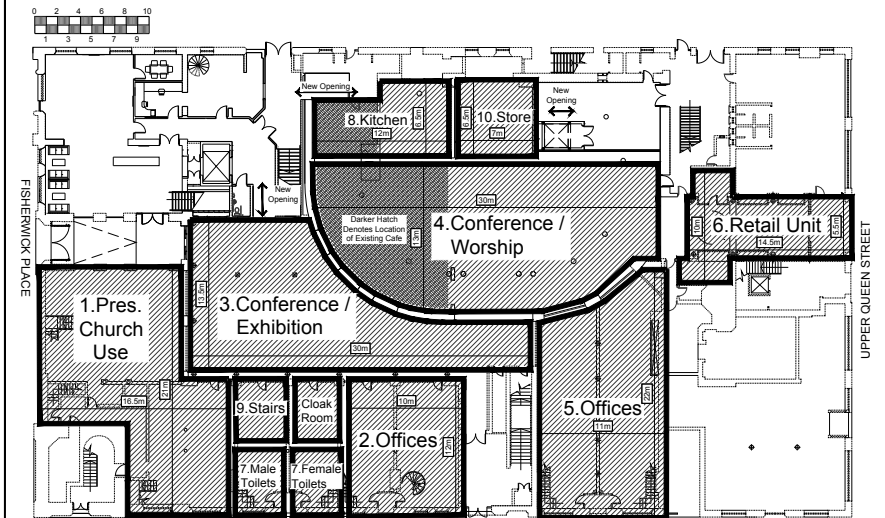
APPENDIX 2

PROJECTED INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT (EXCLUDING REPAYMENT OF REFURBISHMENT COSTS)

	2014 Accounts £	2015 Accounts £	Closing Mall Retail Projection £	Option 2 (Part) Projection £	Option 3 (Full) Projection £
INCOME					
Internal Rent Charges	271,755	297,158	297,000	297,000	298,000
Commercial Lettings	205,166	199,660	133,740	148,740	159,240
Conference Income	83,917	84,147	85,000	105,000	105,000
Sundry Income	100	466			
	560,938	581,431	515,740	550,740	562,240
EXPENDITURE					
Wages and Salaries	131,439	162,810	160,000	160,000	160,000
Property Services and Running Costs	322,395	273,924	194,000	194,000	194,000
Insurance	37,980	36,417	35,000	35,000	35,000
Support Services charge	21,383	34,428	37,520	37,520	37,520
Printing and Sundries	6,943	5,768	7,000	7,000	7,000
Telephone	778	663	1,000	1,000	1,000
Audit	1,600	1,500	1,600	1,600	1,600
Bad debts	5,521	2,616			
Bank Interest	2,479	1,366			
	530,518	519,492	436,120	436,120	436,120
Surplus (Deficit) Before depreciation	30,420	61,939	79,620	114,620	126,120



OPTION 2



OPTION 3

UNITED APPEAL COMMITTEE

1. The Committee wishes to express its thanks to the all Congregations who supported the United Appeal in the year 2015. When contributions for the 2015 Appeal were closed at the end of January 2016 £3,170,683 had been received from congregations towards the 2015 Appeal of £3,325,000. Once late contributions for the 2014 Appeal and some trust income and donations were taken into account the total income in 2015 was £3,331,911 which is slightly above the target.

2. The Committee is pleased to be able to pay in full the proposed allocation of grants to Councils for the year 2015.

3. Of the 542 Congregations, 344 Congregations met or exceeded their target of honour, 175 Congregations failed to meet their target and 23 have made no contribution to date.

4. In the past the former United Appeal Board appealed to Congregational Committees to change their habits and remit the Appeal donations as they were received. We regret to report that the majority of 2015 donations were received by the Financial Secretary's Department in December 2015 and January 2016. Congregations should be aware that the United Appeal is distributed to the Mission Councils on a regular basis, spread throughout the year. In order for United Appeal to meet its obligation to fund the running the Mission Councils and prevent them from going into overdraft, a substantial United Appeal cashflow reserve has to be maintained. A lesser reserve would be necessary if Congregations did not hold on to United Appeal donations until the year end. The Committee appeals to Congregational Committees to please remit United Appeal donations as they receive them.

5. A number of years ago the United Appeal Board took the decision to introduce a phased reduction in the use of reserves. Reserves in 2015 were reduced by £174,685. In order to restrict the level of 2016 Appeal it was previously agreed to release £171,900 from reserves. The Committee realises it will not be possible to continue to use reserves at this rate and is seeking to bring the level of the Appeal and grants to Councils into line.

6. The Promotions Panel has endeavoured to make material available to Congregations. Despite its excellent work many Congregations remain somewhat ignorant of the work of the Appeal and its rationale to advance the cause of Christ at home and overseas. The Committee earnestly appeals to Ministers to promote the work of the General Assembly Councils through the use of the United Appeal for Mission resources: the 'Mission Together' leaflets, United Appeal articles in ReachOut and the Presbyterian Herald magazines and the range of excellent downloadable resources on the PCI website. These are designed to keep members continually updated and informed.

7. The United Appeal Committee only came into operation on 1st January 2015. The Finance and Staffing Commission previously agreed that it would not be possible to undertake the United Appeal budgeting process as normal in March/April 2015 and therefore agreed that for 2016 Councils would receive an inflationary uplift on their 2015 grants. The Commission also agreed that the 2016 Appeal to Congregations should increase by 2.25% over the 2015 Appeal i.e. from £3,325,000 to £3,400,000.

8. The United Appeal Committee resumed the normal budgeting process with Councils presenting budget requests for 2017. The requests received from Councils for 2017 totalled £3,902,243. This compared to the proposed level of grants for 2016 (as reported to the General Assembly last year and as shown on Schedule II) of £3,527,600. The Committee met with representatives of all Councils to discuss their request and agreed to recommend to the General Council grants for 2017 of £3,610,000 i.e. £292,243 less than the requests received – see Schedule IV. In recommending this amount the Committee considered the level of the Appeal to Congregations for 2017. The Committee is also very aware that the present practise of using reserves to cover the shortfall between the level of the Appeal and the grants awarded to Councils cannot continue. The Committee agreed to recommend to the General Council that the Appeal for 2017 be set at £3,460,000 (see Schedules III and IV) which is a 1.78% increase on the 2016 Appeal of £3,400,000. The shortfall between the level of the Appeal for 2017 of £3,460,000 and the level of grants to Councils of £3,610,000 is to be funded by some income from donations and trust funds but also through the release of £112,000 from reserves – see Schedule IV. The Committee is planning to reduce the use of reserves over the next four years and this will have implications for the level of grants awarded and/or the level of the Appeal. The General Council approved the Committee's recommendation for submission to the General Assembly.

9. The Committee thanks the Financial Secretary's Department for their assistance in every area of the United Appeal's work.

10. The Committee is committed to the need of a United Appeal Sunday, and a suitable resolution is appended. The first Sunday in March is recommended as United Appeal for Mission Sunday. This date is chosen as it is close to the February Presbyteries when the Spring 'Mission Together' leaflets are distributed.

DAVID IRVINE, Convener

UNITED APPEAL COMMITTEE**SCHEDULE I**

Presbytery	Contributing Families 2014	Assessable Income 2014 £	United Appeal 2016 £
Ards	7,360	3,359,198	316,599
Armagh	3,664	2,122,985	178,211
Ballymena	6,984	3,373,014	308,899
Belfast North	4,486	2,055,149	193,322
Belfast South	3,056	1,823,259	151,042
Belfast East	5,271	3,069,547	257,079
Carrickfergus	4,620	1,944,443	191,230
Coleraine and Limavady	5,335	2,560,152	235,213
Derry and Donegal	4,804	1,934,316	194,844
Down	4,408	1,791,514	179,544
Dromore	4,683	2,163,350	202,632
Dublin and Munster	1,099	1,336,142	85,420
Iveagh	3,486	1,621,610	151,351
Monaghan	1,080	639,212	53,144
Newry	2,260	1,189,655	104,446
Omagh	3,335	1,458,174	140,535
Route	3,417	1,479,065	143,307
Templepatrick	3,899	1,633,215	161,031
Tyrone	3,487	1,638,679	152,153
	76,734	37,192,697	3,400,002

50% of the allocation for 2016 has been based on contributing families and 50% on Assessable Income. Assessable Income for Congregations in the Republic of Ireland have been converted to euro on the basis of the average exchange rate for 2014 of 1.2406.

UNITED APPEAL COMMITTEE**SCHEDULE II**

	2016 £
MISSION IN IRELAND	1,071,900
GLOBAL MISSION	920,700
TRAINING IN MINISTRY	349,000
CONGREGATIONAL LIFE AND WITNESS	730,000
SOCIAL WITNESS	195,300
CREATIVE PRODUCTION	260,700
	<hr/> 3,527,600
Income from donations etc	-38,000
Release from reserves	-89,600
	<hr/> 3,400,000

UNITED APPEAL COMMITTEE**SCHEDULE III**

Presbytery	Contributing Families 2015	Assessable Income 2015 £	United Appeal 2017 £
Ards	7,093	3,466,868	320,135
Armagh	3,625	2,137,937	180,215
Ballymena	6,857	3,486,081	315,585
Belfast North	4,389	2,132,682	197,524
Belfast South	2,881	1,834,866	149,382
Belfast East	5,084	3,258,737	264,553
Carrickfergus	4,472	1,967,026	191,918
Coleraine and Limavady	5,149	2,558,534	234,292
Derry and Donegal	4,803	2,064,667	203,949
Down	4,323	1,852,402	183,298
Dromore	4,554	2,236,518	206,023
Dublin and Munster	1,131	1,332,905	86,424
Iveagh	3,390	1,624,879	151,550
Monaghan	1,048	629,171	52,604
Newry	2,735	1,259,081	119,917
Omagh	3,184	1,516,832	141,919
Route	3,372	1,466,683	143,963
Templepatrick	3,794	1,650,366	161,985
Tyrone	3,437	1,672,010	154,767
	75,321	38,148,245	3,460,003

50% of the allocation for 2017 has been based on contributing families and 50% on Assessable Income. Assessable Income for Congregations in the Republic of Ireland have been converted to euro on the basis of the average exchange rate for 2015 of 1.3780.

UNITED APPEAL COMMITTEE**SCHEDULE IV**

	2017 £
MISSION IN IRELAND	1,050,000
GLOBAL MISSION	1,000,000
TRAINING IN MINISTRY	375,000
CONGREGATIONAL LIFE AND WITNESS	740,000
SOCIAL WITNESS	245,000
CREATIVE PRODUCTION	200,000
	<hr/> 3,610,000
Income from donations etc.	-38,000
Release from reserves	-112,000
	<hr/> 3,460,000

GENERAL COUNCIL

SECTION 5

(Thursday morning 11.15 am)

CHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE

1. The Church Relations Committee met three times during the year and reports as follows:

Irish Council of Churches and Irish Inter-Church Committee

2. The Executive Committee of the Irish Council of Churches met on a regular basis throughout the year and carried forward the ongoing work of the Council. The AGM was held on Thursday 7th April 2016 in Christchurch Cathedral, Dublin. The new President, Bishop John McDowell of the Church of Ireland, took over from the outgoing President, the Rev Dr Donald Watts. The AGM also marked the end of Mervyn McCullagh's time as ICC Executive Officer. Mervyn and his wife Raing are going to Sri Lanka, under the auspices of the Methodist Church in Great Britain and Ireland, to work alongside the local Council of Churches.

3. The Irish Inter-Church Committee met at different points throughout the year. The Irish Inter-Church Meeting held an overnight conference on Thursday 22nd and Friday 23rd October 2015 in Portarlinton in the Republic of Ireland, on the theme of '*Missional Challenges in the Rights-based Society*'. The Moderator and the Committee Convener had led the PCI delegation and everyone agreed that it was a very worthwhile meeting.

Conversations with the Church of Ireland

4. During the year ongoing discussions were held with the Church of Ireland, following on from an initial meeting in 2015. It was agreed that it would be useful to hold further meetings to discuss areas of mutual concern, namely:

- Sharing good practice as to how PCI and CofI Congregations could work together in practical ways in local communities.
- Sharing the different approaches of the two denominations to 'linkages' i.e. how two or more PCI Congregations are linked together, and the CofI equivalent.
- Practical collaboration in ministry and mission in areas where both denominations were in a minority situation.
- Exploring how our two Colleges might develop positive relationships e.g. student exchanges.

5. At the time of writing a meeting is planned in Assembly Buildings for the morning of Thursday 5th May, with the PCI delegation made up of representatives of the Church Relations Committee, the Council for Congregational Life and

Witness, from the Council for Mission in Ireland, the Linkage Commission and Union Theological College.

Relationships with other Churches in Ireland

6. It was noted that PCI had no formal relationship with many of the newer Churches in Ireland, nor indeed, other than relationships through the ICC, with some of the smaller denominations (e.g. the Baptist Association of Churches). Following some discussion on practical ways of moving forward, the Committee plan to consider a paper on the matter at its next meeting.

Relationship with the Church of Scotland

7. Following an initial meeting between the Clerk of Assembly and the Principal Clerk of the Church of Scotland, the Very Rev John Chalmers, it was agreed that it would be useful for senior representatives from each denomination to meet. A delegation from the Church of Scotland travelled to Belfast on Friday 19th February 2016 and the respective delegations were as follows:

- PCI – The Very Rev Dr Rob Craig (General Council Convener), the Rev Trevor (Clerk), the Very Rev Dr Roy Patton (GA Business Committee Convener) and the Rev John Brackenridge (Church Relations Convener)
- CofS - The Very Rev John Chalmers (Principal Clerk), the Rev Derek Browning (Assembly Arrangements Convener), the Rev Alison McDonald (Ecumenical Relations Convener) and the Very Rev Sheilagh Kesting (Ecumenical Relations Officer).

8. The meeting had been cordial and both the historic nature of the relationship between the two Churches and its ongoing reality had been affirmed. It was recognised that a degree of strain on that relationship had been experienced over the last number of years, with a focus on the CofS decisions in relation to the position of Ministers in same sex relationships and the very different view taken by PCI. This culminated in the decisions of the 2015 CofS General Assembly on this matter, its wide reporting in Ireland and the resultant decision of the 2015 PCI General Assembly not to send a delegation to the 2016 CofS General Assembly.

9. It was noted that this was the only decision taken by the PCI regarding its relationship with the CofS and that normal relationships through various Councils, Conveners and staff were continuing. PCI would also be inviting the CofS to send a delegation to its 2016 General Assembly. It was noted that PCI would be unable to send any kind of delegation to the 2016 CofS General Assembly, even as observers.

10. It was recognised by all present that both Churches valued their relationship and that efforts should be made to enable it to continue to develop, even recognising the ongoing strain due to previous, and potentially future, decisions in the CofS regarding the matter of concern.

11. It was agreed that the delegations should report back to the relevant bodies in both denominations, recommending that the natural ongoing contacts and collaborations between Councils, Conveners and staff be encouraged and developed where appropriate and that it would be useful for representatives of both denomination's Church Relations Committees to meet in the autumn of 2016 to discuss ongoing relationships.

12. Following discussion in the Committee it was agreed that these recommendations be accepted and reported to the General Council. This was subsequently agreed by the General Council and an appropriate resolution is appended for consideration by the General Assembly.

Relationship with the Free Church of Scotland

13. The Committee noted the resolution of the 2015 General Assembly, namely:

“That in exploring new relationships with other Churches, the possibility of a stronger relationship with the Free Church of Scotland be investigated.”

14. Following informal discussions between representatives of the two denominations, a meeting had taken place on Monday 14th December 2015, when a small group from the Free Church had travelled to Belfast to meet representatives from PCI. PCI was represented by the Moderator, Clerk, the Very Rev Dr Rob Craig (General Council Convener), and the Rev John Brackenridge (Church Relations Convener). The Free Church was represented by the Rev David Meredith (Mission Director), the Rev Alasdair Macleod (Chair of Ecumenical Relations) and the Rev David Robertson (Moderator).

15. The meeting had been cordial and many areas of mutual interest between the two Churches were noted. The Free Church was a relatively small denomination, with approx. 12,000 members in 110 Congregations in Scotland, arranged in 5 Presbyteries. It was also noted that:

- PCI has an ongoing relationship with the Church of Scotland and it was recognised that this should not preclude a parallel relationship with the Free Church i.e. such relationships for PCI would not be mutually exclusive.
- While PCI had a clearly stated theological position regarding ordination, in that both men and women were eligible for ordination on the same basis to both the ruling and teaching eldership, in the Free Church only men were eligible for ordination. It was recognised that for some in PCI this posed a difficulty though it was acknowledged that PCI already related to other denominations with similar theological positions as the Free Church took on this issue.
- PCI was a member of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), while the Free Church was not. The Free Church was however a member of the World Reformed Fellowship and the International Conference of Reformed Churches. A number of denominations in these bodies were also connected to WCRC.
- The Free Church wished to widen its ecumenical reach and pursue meaningful relations with Churches in the UK and beyond, especially Churches from within our Presbyterian tradition. The Free Church 2015 General Assembly had agreed to instigate and pursue ecumenical relationships with the Presbyterian Church of Ireland.
- It would not be appropriate to consider full interchangeability of ministry between the two denominations as PCI did not have that form of relationship with any other denomination and also the issue of ordination of women in PCI would make that undesirable from the Free Church’s perspective.

- Invitations to attend each other's General Assemblies could be one form of expressing a new relationship. Likewise contact between appropriate respective groupings in the two Churches could be developed e.g. relating to mission, or ministry or public square matters. The two respective theological colleges could also develop contacts.

16. It was agreed at the meeting that both delegations would report back to their respective Church Relations Committees. It was noted that some decisions would require approval at General Assembly level e.g. formal invitation to attend each other's Assemblies.

17. Following discussion in the Committee it was agreed that the Church Relations Committee would recommend to the General Council that the General Assembly should be asked to note the worthwhile meeting which had taken place and welcome a natural development of a relationship with the Free Church of Scotland through areas of mutual interest in the Councils of our respective Assemblies. This was agreed by the Council and an appropriate resolution is appended for consideration by the General Assembly.

World Communion of Reformed Churches

18. The Rev Cheryl Meban continues to serve on the Executive Committee of WCRC and reports to the Committee on the work of the Council. She and the Clerk attended a meeting of the European Council WCRC in Zürich from 3rd to 6th March 2016, hosted by the Swiss Reformed Churches.

19. The next full Council meeting of WCRC (held every seven years) will take place in Leipzig, Germany, 29th June to 7th July 2017, recognising the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. PCI will be entitled to send three delegates and the Committee also recommended to the General Council that an amount of £2,000 should be gifted to a Partner Church to assist with their costs in sending a delegation. A suitable resolution is appended.

20. As part of the WCRC Council's business in 2017 there is likely to be a proposal to associate the World Communion of Reformed Churches with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) which was signed by the Catholic and the Lutheran Churches in 1999. An accompanying 'signing statement' would be attached. Each member Church, including PCI, will shortly be asked to indicate whether they would be in favour of this step or opposed to it. The General Council agreed that the view of the Doctrine Committee be sought regarding the WCRC's JDDJ proposal.

Conference of European Churches & Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe

21. Contact continues to be kept with both of these bodies of which PCI is a member. While both the Church of Ireland and Methodist Churches have members on CEC bodies, PCI currently does not. Over the next year, the Committee will be considering how meaningful contact can best be maintained.

General

22. The Committee has been examining its remit and seeking to find ways to better enable Church relations to develop both at denominational and local level. It was noted that most Councils of the Assembly cooperate with relevant

bodies in other Churches and at local level most Congregations cooperate in a range of ways with Christian Churches of other denominations. However, it was also noted that there was much that could be done to encourage such cooperation and partnership in mission and ministry.

JOHN BRACKENRIDGE, Convener

ORGANISTS AND EMPLOYMENT TASK GROUP

23. The General Council appointed a Task Group following a report from a Commission of a Presbytery concerning a difficult situation in a Congregation within its bounds relating to the employment of an organist. The Task Group's remit was to examine both the general issue of the employment of organists etc and the related provision of support for Kirk Sessions generally in personnel matters.

24. The Task Group had before it a report from the Presbytery Commission and it also asked individuals to draw up papers on a number of related issues. It also had some direct input regarding the kind of issues of concern. It should be noted that the Task Group was not formally examining nor considering the matters in the Presbytery in question, but rather attempting to discern and address the wider general issues that particular situation presented.

25. Following detailed discussion and deliberation, the Task Group made the following comments and recommendations, all of which were adopted by the General Council:

- (a) The difficulty of balancing the role a Kirk Session as an employer over against its role in the spiritual oversight of a Congregation was noted as an unavoidable consequence of the tensions that sometimes exist between the different responsibilities of a Kirk Session.

Recommendation: That the Linkage Commission, through its Auxiliary Ministry and Additional Pastoral Personnel Panels, and in consultation with the Head of Personnel, draw up guidance as to how a Kirk Session should deal with employment issues generally e.g. the employee not being present when matters affecting their employment are discussed, even if they are an Elder etc.; the support given by the General Assembly's appointed HR support provider, their own insurer's provision of DAS insurance, the possible recourse to their own solicitor etc.

- (b) The need for the appropriate indemnity cover and HR support for Kirk Sessions is vitally important. 'Non-advice dependent' insurance cover is preferable, in that this would not bind Kirk Sessions into following every detailed aspect of the advice offered. This allowed for other opinions to be taken account of (e.g. Solicitor's advice), while not invalidating insurance cover. Such insurance could be free-standing or linked to an 'HR advice contract', in which the 'business needs' of the Kirk Session in their role in leading the Congregation should be to the fore. It was also noted that it is important that any HR provider would give advice on what a Kirk Session could do and not just what a Kirk Session should not do.

Recommendation: That the HR Panel of the General Council, noting the relevant comments in this report, be asked to draw up the specification for a new PCI Congregational HR Support Tender document (to include PCI specific requirements) and proceed to tender for services.

- (c) It was agreed that there is a need to ensure all organists (or other similar people) who receive any form of remuneration have a contract in place, before any future difficult issues arise.

Recommendation: That the Linkage Commission, through its Auxiliary Ministry and Additional Pastoral Personnel Panels, be given responsibility for rolling this out for all new and existing posts where an organist (or other similar person) is clearly an employee i.e. receives any form of monetary remuneration regardless of what it is called. This would be done in conjunction with the new HR Provider and PCI's Head of Personnel.

Recommendation: That some basic guidance should be provided for a situation where the main organist etc is clearly a volunteer e.g. draft 'Outline of Role' and 'Basis of Understanding' documents would be useful.

- (d) During particularly difficult situations, active and visible (i.e. on the ground) HR support and advice is important, as is access to appropriate legal advice if required.

Recommendation: That HR attendance 'on the ground' should be an option in any new HR contract (at an additional charge to the Congregation) and that a list should be drawn up, and made available to Kirk Sessions, of Solicitors' firms that could provide necessary employment advice in difficult situations.

Recommendation: That, in the most difficult situations, the Clerk of Assembly should be able to authorise the involvement of PCI's Head of Personnel – this would be in a limited way only i.e. liaising with the HR provider and/or assessing if legal input was needed. The resourcing implications for the PCI Personnel Department should be clearly monitored by the Clerk in conjunction with the Convener of PCI's HR Committee.

- (e) Arising from experience it was agreed that it is important to clarify the role of a Presbytery in such matters which, although often being in the realm of employment can nonetheless have a much wider effect on a Congregation.

Recommendation: That a Kirk Session should inform Presbytery if an employment dispute is reaching a difficult stage which is affecting the wider life of the Congregation. The Presbytery would have no formal role in the employment dispute, though should be available to offer support (e.g. pastoral support and/or informal mediation) where that would be helpful. The Moderator's Advisory Committee should also inform a Presbytery if it receives a request to appoint assessors to a Kirk Session.

Recommendation: That the Linkage Commission take steps to require Presbytery Vacancy Commissions to ensure all employment matters in a Congregation are in order, or a process to bring them into order is at an advanced stage, before a new Minister is installed.

- (f) It was noted that in some situations individuals may seek to appeal through the courts of the Church, having firstly failed to get satisfaction in the context of employment.
- (g) Recommendation: That the longstanding position be affirmed, that if a Presbytery Commission has to be formed, to look at wider matters arising from an employment dispute, that the Commission's work should be put on hold until any related civil law matter had reached a conclusion.

Recommendation: That the Judicial Commission examine the law of the Church, and take steps to amend it if necessary, to ensure the pure employment issues should not be able to be appealed through the courts of the Church i.e. a second Church process should not run after the employment process had reached its conclusion in the pure employment aspects of any matter.

26. The Clerk of Assembly, on behalf of the General Council, has written to each of the bodies referred to in the recommendations, asking them to carry forward the agreed tasks.

MICHAEL A BARRY, Convener
THE CLERK, Secretary

DOCTRINE COMMITTEE

Being Human

27. The Doctrine Committee continued throughout the year to work on the "Being Human" project described in previous reports. The theological issues and practical implications arising from this topic are complex and intricate, and while some work has been completed, more time and effort is needed to undertake the necessary study and research before a full report could be presented.

28. There already exists a considerable amount of published material in this area that may be useful to us. In 2003, the Church of England's Doctrine Commission published a report entitled "Being Human" which is very helpful. However we recognise that the situation has changed considerably since the publication of that report. There is also a range of papers published by The Kirby Laing Institute for Christian Ethics at www.klice.co.uk and the Cambridge Papers published at www.jubilee-centre.org which may be of interest to those seeking guidance in specific areas.

29. However, there is a need for current and contemporary issues to be addressed locally and more urgently. The Committee believes that one way to do this would be to offer a series of lectures/seminars in these areas, and that this could be undertaken by the Faculty of Union College in co-operation with the Church and Society Committee, possibly working under *The Church in the Public Square* banner. The material from these sessions could be recorded and made available on-line, and the written papers published electronically. The Committee believes that it is important not only to seek to provide a resource for the Church's Ministers and members, but to engage with professionals working in areas which are directly affected by current trends and changes.

30. The Principal has discussed this possibility with the Faculty, and there is a readiness on the part of the Faculty to facilitate this development, and strong agreement that this would be an effective way to proceed.

Topics to be covered might include:

- Secular and Biblical Views of Humanity
- Gender and Sexuality
- The Beginning and the End: Human Life at the Margins
- Human Rights

31. The Committee discussed a number of options as to the timing and frequency of these seminars, and in consultation with *The Church in the Public Square* steering group a programme of seminars is currently in process of being finalised for Monday evenings in September, October and November at Union College.

Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification by Faith

32. The World Communion of Reformed Churches will be holding their Council meeting in Leipzig in Germany from 27th June to 7th July 2017 and PCI's delegation will be appointed at the 2016 General Assembly. As part of the Council's business in 2017 there is likely to be a proposal to associate the World Communion of Reformed Churches with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) which was signed by the Catholic and the Lutheran Churches in 1999. An accompanying 'signing statement' would be attached. Each member Church, including PCI, will shortly be asked to indicate whether they would be in favour of this step or opposed to it.

33. As a result, the General Council, using its powers to act when necessary on behalf of the General Assembly between meetings, passed the following resolution: "*That the view of the Doctrine Committee be sought regarding the WCRC's JDDJ proposal.*" The Doctrine Committee will seek to report on this issue by the early autumn.

Inter-Faith Services

34. The General Council also agreed to ask the General Assembly to request the Doctrine Committee to draw up guidelines for our leaders and members when they are invited to take part in worship with others of a non-Trinitarian faith and report to the 2017 General Assembly. If this request is approved by the General Assembly, this will be another issue for the Doctrine Committee to consider in the next twelve months.

35. In each of these important areas, the Doctrine Committee continues to discharge its task of responding to requests from the General Assembly for help and guidance.

J STAFFORD CARSON, Convener

GENERAL BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL

The Clerk reports:

36. During the past session a number of pieces of ad-hoc work was carried out by the General Council.

THE POSITION OF MINISTERS WITH REGARD TO MEMBERSHIP OF A CONGREGATION

37. The General Council appointed small group to consider the following two questions for which clarity was needed:

- In the situation where a Minister is retired, can they be on the communion roll of the Congregation in which they worship i?
- Likewise can a Minister of a Congregation be on the communion roll?

38. During discussion in the group the following points were noted:

- Ministers will have been communicant members on a communion roll prior to ordination.
- There is no reference to ordination removing them from the roll. The Code is explicit about when membership of Presbytery, Kirk Session, etc. ceases. Nothing is said about a Minister's membership of a Congregation ceasing.
- Being a member of a higher court is no barrier to being on the roll of a Congregation, as is demonstrated by Presbytery representative Elders, and the Presbytery roll of Ministers is nowhere described as an alternative communion roll which would supersede a congregational roll.
- Therefore the Code clearly permits Ministers to be members on the communion roll of a Congregation.
- Retired Ministers may be members of a Congregation according to Code Par 31(3) and members of the Congregation are – if they are in full communion – on the communion roll according to Code Par 41(1).

39. The group therefore concluded that the Code therefore logically implies that it is permissible for Ministers to be communicant members of Congregations.

40. The General Council received this report and agreed that it be included in the Council's report to the General Assembly, with an appropriate resolution requesting that it be noted by the Assembly.

THE POSITION OF PRESBYTERY EDUCATION BOARDS

41. The General Council appointed a small group to consider the question of the wisdom of continuing to provide 19 different versions of holding trustees for Congregations within PCI (for those Congregations who wish to use such holding trustees rather than having three or more of their own members appointed to fulfil this responsibility) i.e. 19 separate Presbytery 'Education Boards'.

42. The group noted that more than one Presbytery Clerk has raised concerns about Presbytery Education Boards. The legislation under which the Education Boards function has been in existence for over 100 years. Over time, irregularities have crept in, for example, due to changes in Presbytery bounds,

and, it is clear, there is room for improvement regarding the practice of some Education Boards.

43. Following lengthy discussion, including the consideration of a range of 'anomalies', the group concluded that the system of Presbytery Education Boards is potentially no longer fit for purpose. The group also noted that in the case of some Congregations with named individual trustees, the number at times fell below three (as required by Code Par 241) without any immediate remedial action being taken. The group further noted that in some Congregations the deeds of properties were either not intact or on occasions were missing.

44. The General Council agreed, on the recommendation the group that the General Assembly be requested to instruct all Presbyteries to carry out a survey of all Congregations, using a provided pro-forma, to ascertain:

- Who are their Holding Trustees? (Presbytery Education Board or list of current named Trustees)
- Are there deeds for all congregational property?
- Where are the deeds held?

and report the outcome to the Clerk of the Assembly by 31st December 2016. A suitable resolution is appended.

45. The General Council appointed a 'Holding Trustee Task Group' to consider the results of the Presbytery returns and also to consider the wisdom, or otherwise, of having one consolidated 'PCI Holding Trustee Body' (rather than separate 'Presbytery Education Boards') for those Congregations who wish to avail of it. The membership of the Task Group is: Moderator and Clerk (Secretary), the Rev Robert Herron OBE (Convener), the Very Rev Dr Ivan Patterson, the Revs Joseph Andrews and Stuart Finlay; Mrs Avril Heenan, the General Assembly Solicitor, the Deputy Clerk and the Financial Secretary. The Task Group will report to the General Council, and through it to the 2017 General Assembly, with recommendations.

THE ISSUE OF GENDER REASSIGNMENT

46. This matter was highlighted during the work of the Republic of Ireland Marriage Task Group. The General Council agreed that this issue, along with the related transgender and transsexual issues, be referred to the Dialogue and Resources Task Group for its consideration, with the Task Group being given power to seek additional support on this issue and/or co-opt additional members.

MARKING THE 500TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE REFORMATION

47. During 2017 many significant events will be held to mark the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. On 2nd and 3rd February 2017 Union Theological College will be holding a special 'Luther Conference' and it is likely the Presbyterian Historical Society will be marking the anniversary in some way. The question has been asked if PCI wish to hold any other events to mark this significant anniversary, with particular reference to the central doctrine of justification? The actual 'Reformation Day' will be on Tuesday 31st October 2017.

48. The General Council agreed that the following Task Group be appointed to proactively consider the holding of an appropriate Reformation Anniversary Service on Tuesday 31st October 2017 (or other more suitable date) in the

Assembly Hall and report directly, with appropriate resolution(s), to the 2016 General Assembly: Moderator and Clerk, the Rev David Johnston (Convener), the Very Rev Principal Stafford Carson, the Revs Karen Campbell and Jonathan Boyd (with power to co-opt).

THE USE OF CONGREGATIONAL PROPERTY BY OUTSIDE BODIES

49. A small group appointed met and considered if the General Assembly, or one of its Councils or Committees, need to issue clear guidance to Congregations with regard to a Policy for the use of the Halls etc by external people or groups. The small group concluded that this was an important matter and that rather than every Congregation getting its own legal and other advice, it would be beneficial if guidance could be given by the General Assembly, through its General Council, and a pro-forma policy (and related documents) drawn up. It was recognised that the related subjects of Entertainment Licences and Health and Safety should also be considered.

50. The General Council agreed that a Task Group be appointed to carry this forward this piece of work, as follows: Moderator and Clerk; Deputy Clerk (Convener); the Revs Adrian McLernon, Tom Conway, Mr John Hunter CB, Mr John Francey; the General Assembly's Solicitor and the Financial Secretary; plus power to co-opt one additional member. The Assembly is being requested to authorise the General Council to receive the Report of this Task Group and implement its decisions as necessary.

FOR INFORMATION

PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IRELAND

The Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland is not under the jurisdiction of the General Assembly. This report, which was submitted to the General Council on 16th March 2016, is for information only.

The Very Rev Dr John Lockington reports:

1. The Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland reports that 2015 has been an exceptionally busy year, both as regards its programme of activities and publications, and also regarding the operation of the Society itself.

2. As well as our regular lecture programme, we have experimented this year with one or two extra events of a less structured kind. This included a visit to the 174 Trust where we saw the splendid restoration of the former Duncairn Church, as well as learning about the ground-breaking work being undertaken by the Trust itself. We also had a most interesting tour of Belfast City Cemetery. We hope this year to include a symposium on the First World War, and a visit to Magee College. Our annual Field Trip took us to Counties Monaghan and Cavan, and this year we are planning a trip to Newtownabbey and South East Antrim. In addition to our *Bulletin*, this year saw the publication of three booklets, including a reprint of David Stewart's *The Scots in Ulster*, Leslie McKeague's lecture on the Irish Temperance pioneer, *Anne Jane Carlile*, and an extended work by Prof Bill Addley on *Dr Jack Weir*.

3. The important question of how we as a Society relate to the structures of the Presbyterian Church was covered by legislation at the General Assembly in 2015. As a result, this Report has been drawn up by an annual meeting of the Office-bearers and the six General Council appointees on the Society's Council. A representative has been appointed by the General Council to supervise its interest in our Society, and will present an annual report to the Council, which will form the basis of a report to the Assembly. This representative is currently the Very Rev Dr John Lockington.

4. The Society has been successful in obtaining Charity Status, but this has involved a great deal of administrative work, including the appointment of the full Council as Charity Trustees. This in turn will necessitate some changes in our Constitution. One such change will be before our Annual General Meeting in March, and some further changes, together with some more general tidying up of the Constitution will be proposed at a later date.

5. In recent times a survey financed by the Ministerial Advisory Group Ulster Scots Academy (MAGUS) has made us aware that the Strong Room in Assembly Buildings has become unsuitable for the storage of documents.

6. Not only was it overcrowded, but cold, damp and mildew combined to produce conditions which were to the detriment of items stored there. The society is glad to have been able to offer to take care of Synod, Presbytery and Congregational archive material heretofore stored in Assembly Buildings. Since 2010 the Society has rented premises on the ground floor of 26 College Green from Union Theological College. This has proved inadequate for our needs, including housing properly all the material transferred from Assembly Buildings, and has made it impossible for us to expand our work, or to display even a selection of the many historical artefacts committed to our care. The Society has now been presented with an opportunity to move into the rest of No. 26. This move, which is important both to Union College and ourselves, is however dependent on a substantial increase to our grant from the Finance Panel. We are presently seeking to put our case to the Panel, and hope to have this matter agreed as soon as ever possible.

7. It looks as if the MAGUS grants that made possible very useful work for the Society are now coming to an end. In the last year this enabled us to redesign the Society's website. Some problems remain with this, but we have been able to put in place a front end for the digitised images of Presbyterian magazines, to make available all past issues of *The Bulletin* over five years old and the Presbyterian Roll of Honour, as well as a facility to order publications on-line. MAGUS has also financed a project in which we have been involved by which the Ulster Historical Foundation are about to produce in Folder/Poster format a historical map of Presbyterianism in the historic nine Ulster Counties.

8. As a result of the survey of archives already carried out under MAGUS support, we have been able to transfer almost all the Presbytery and Synod records already referred to, and a great many Congregations have now transferred their historic records to our custody. We have also been approached about the possible display of some historic materials in the reception area of Assembly Buildings, and this possibility is being explored with the appropriate Task Group.

9. The Society is also grateful to individuals and Congregations who entrust historic items to the care of the Society. This year we received historical papers from the family of the late Rev Dr WD Bailie, and from the estate of the

Very Rev Dr Jack Weir, as well as a framed photograph of the Rev Dr Charles Davey.

10. It was a particular pleasure to be associated with the excellent celebrations in October that marked the 150th Birthday of the Magee Campus of Ulster University, and to hear warm tribute paid to the Presbyterian Church for our pioneering role in University education in the North-West, and to the interest of our Society in marking this important anniversary.

11. The Society continues to share information with other organisations, agencies, and blogs which will help to raise our profile, and publicise our publications.

12. In the limited time available at Council meetings we have begun a conversation about the future direction of our Society, and how best to publicise its work. We are planning to hold a Day Conference of Council in a few months time to consider these important matters. Among other matters we are hoping to produce a short DVD about the work of the Society for our website, and for wider publicity purposes.

13. We are delighted that a body known as Heritage Experience Limited has recently produced a DVD of the hugely successful TV series about our Church called *An Independent People*, and we will be helping to publicise it among our members.

14. The Society is most grateful to all those who do voluntary work on its behalf, those who deliver lectures and write booklets, articles and reviews, and most of all to our Librarian and Archivist, Valerie Adams, whose work is quite outstanding.

15. We would appeal again for new members, and for the steady support of all our members in attending lectures and events, buying our publications, and introducing our Society to others. We would encourage every Presbytery to appoint an Historical Agent, and to promote our events and publications whenever and however they can. We continue to be grateful to the few Congregations who directly support our work. If every Congregation were to make us an annual donation, however small, it would transform our finances, and enable much more useful work to be done.

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

1. The Nominations Committee met on 16th November 2015 and 18th April 2016.

2. During the year, in accordance with the resolution passed by the General Assembly last year (Minutes page 62, Resolution 20), the changes in Direct Presbytery Nominees by Presbyteries have been agreed and implemented immediately.

3. Only the General Assembly may make other appointments to Councils and Committees. There have been several resignations during the year and others are deemed to have retired due to failure to attend under Code Par 270(4). Suggestions for replacements have been made by Council Conveners and Secretaries. These have been taken into consideration and individuals approached to fill the vacancies. The Committee intends to meet again before the General

Assembly so that it can agree on names to nominate. The full membership of all Councils, Commissions and Committees will be tabled at the Assembly in the form of a booklet. Those whose names are underlined will be new appointments since the last General Assembly.

4. The Committee notes that one Council reports that an attempt to involve younger members has almost totally failed. To quote: “Despite their having put their names in the original pool, there has been marked non-attendance at meetings by these folks. This is a conundrum we haven’t been able to crack... we have chosen not to try to re-populate the Committees from that demographic this time around for fear of repeated failure which leaves Committee attendance and capacity significantly diminished.” The Committee is also aware of the difficulty of striking an appropriate gender balance in some Councils and Committees. Mostly this is due to the balance of the names coming as Direct Presbytery Nominees which reflects the balance of the various Presbyteries. The Committee does, however, where it is in its own gift, seek to address any imbalance in the nominations it makes.

5. The Structures Review document of 2014 includes this: “The Nominations Committee would be allowed to consider other names, if necessary, to provide a balanced Council or Committee, or to provide relevant expertise.” The Committee has given some thought to how it may do this more effectively and will make some changes to the information it requests from Conveners and Secretaries concerning names they wish to put forward for membership, and to how that information is processed.

6. During the year the Committee considered how it might change the system for refreshing the ‘pool’ of Presbytery, PW and SPUD nominations next time round and will discuss that further in the autumn.

7. One Council Convenership falls vacant at this Assembly, that of the Council for Training in Ministry. The Committee advertised the post, a panel interviewed and recommended the appointment of the Rev NJ McCullough in the place of the Rev JNI McNeely. Mr McCullough is being nominated to the Assembly.

The Rev Trevor Gribben writes:

8. Four Committee Convenerships fall vacant. One of those is that of the Nominations Committee itself. Thanks are due to the Rev Tony Davidson for the invaluable work he has done since the inception of the Committee, and in particular in overseeing the process of the initial populating of the Councils and Committees. He is being nominated for membership of the Judicial Commission and for that reason has offered his resignation. An advertisement has been placed for this post.

9. The other vacant Committee Convenerships are:
- Leadership Development Committee under the Council for Global Mission (succeeding Miss M Kane);
 - Strategy for Mission Committee under the Council for Mission in Ireland (a new Committee which is subject to being established by the Assembly);
 - Global Mission Involvement Committee under the Council for Congregational Life and Witness (succeeding the Rev CI Dickson).

These also have been advertised: in the Presbyterian Herald, on the PCI website, and by notification to all active Ministers. However, due to time constraints, the Convenership of the Global Mission Involvement Committee could not be advertised in the Herald.

10. Interview Panels have been appointed and it is intended that the Committee will meet to receive recommendations and then bring nominations to the Assembly in a supplementary report.

11. Resolutions for the vacancies for the various Convenerships are appended, along with one authorising the full membership listed in the booklet.

TONY DAVIDSON, Convener

GENERAL COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS

Resolutions - General Assembly Business Committee (Initial Section – 9.30am Tuesday morning):

1. That the Draft Order of Business for the 2016 General Assembly be approved.

2. That the ‘Guide to Assembly Procedure’ (yellow pages) be approved, including the amended speaking times, with the appropriate General Assembly Standing Orders suspended.

3. That a grant of £20,000 be made from the Incidental Fund to the Arrangements Panel of the General Assembly Business Committee.

4. That the Initial Report of the General Assembly Business Committee be received.

Resolutions - General Council (Section 1 – 9.45am Tuesday morning):

5. That the General Assembly encourage all Congregations to pray for, and send delegates to, ‘Everyday Disciples’, the Residential General Assembly being held at the Ulster University, Coleraine from Monday 21st-Thursday 24th August, 2017.

6. That the portion of the report on engagement between Presbytery and Congregations be sent down to Presbyteries for comment and report back to the Convener of the Engagement and Consultation Task Group by 31st December 2016.

7. That as part of the Review of Consultations process, the General Assembly approve a pilot of the new scheme be run in two Presbyteries in 2017.

8. That Section 1 of the Report of the General Council (with the exception of the General Assembly Business Committee) be received.

Resolutions - General Council (Section 2 – 3.30pm Wednesday afternoon):

9. That the Republic of Ireland Marriage Task Group be thanked and discharged.

10. That Section 2 of the Report of the General Council be received.

Resolutions - General Council (Section 3 – 4.30pm Wednesday afternoon):

11. That Option ____ (insert 1 or 2) in the report of the Charities Legislation Task Group, Appendix 1 - 'Retired Ministers and Membership of Presbytery', be adopted.

12. That the recommendations in the report of the Charities Legislation Task Group, Appendix 2 - 'The Relationship between Kirk Session and Congregational Committee', be adopted.

13. That the recommendations in the report of the Charities Legislation Task Group, Appendix 3 - 'Elders unable or unwilling to register as Charity Trustees', be adopted.

14. That the General Assembly grant permission for the transfer of Synod of Ulster records to the care of Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland.

15. That Section 3 of the Report of the General Council be received.

Resolutions - General Council (Section 4 – 11.15am Thursday morning):

16. That approval be given to the pre-65 retirements of the Revs D N Gray (Portaferry), Ian McKee (Aughnacloy and Ballymagrane), George F McKeown (Rathcoole) and Dr Roger Purce (Groomspoint), under the provisions of Par 223 of the Code.

17. That the 2016 budgeted expenditure of the Incidental Fund (as set out in Support Services Appendix 2) be approved.

18. That the Assessment rates for 2016 be as set out in the report and that the rate of assessment for the Pension Fund be set at 24.0% of stipend paid in the year.

19. That the General Assembly adopt Option 2 in the report of the Commercial Use of Assembly Buildings Task Group ('The Hybrid or Partial Scheme').

20. That the United Appeal for 2017 be as set out on the Schedules of the report of the United Appeal Committee.

21. That the General Assembly encourage all Congregations to make use of the available United Appeal for Mission promotional materials and to mark the first Sunday in March (or other suitable Sunday) as United Appeal for Mission Sunday.

22. That Section 4 of the Report of the General Council be received.

Resolutions - General Council (Section 5 – 4.45pm Thursday afternoon):

23. That the General Assembly note the worthwhile meeting which has taken place between representatives of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Church of Scotland; that the natural ongoing contacts and collaborations between Councils, Conveners and staff be encouraged and developed where appropriate; and that representatives of both denomination's Church Relations Committees be encouraged to meet in the autumn of 2016 to discuss ongoing relationships.

24. That the General Assembly note the worthwhile meeting which has taken place between representatives of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Free Church of Scotland and welcome a natural development of a relationship with the Free Church of Scotland through areas of mutual interest in the Councils of the respective Assemblies.

25. That the Clerk, the Revs John Brackenridge and Cheryl Meban be appointed to represent the Presbyterian Church in Ireland at the 26th General Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches in Leipzig, Germany, from 29th June to 7th July 2017, with the General Council authorised to appoint alternates if necessary; and that a gift of £2,000 be made to a Partner Church, identified through the Council for Global Mission, to assist with their attendance at the Council.

26. That the General Assembly note the report regarding the position of Ministers with regard to membership of a Congregation.

27. That the General Assembly instruct all Presbyteries to carry out a survey of all Congregations, using a provided pro-forma, to ascertain:

Who are their Holding Trustees? (Presbytery Education Board or list of current named Trustees)

Are there deeds for all congregational property?

Where are the deeds held?

and report the outcome to the Convener of the Holding Trustees Task Group by 31st December 2016.

28. That the General Council be authorised to receive the report of the Congregational Property Letting Task Group on behalf of the Assembly, with power to implement its recommendations.

Resolutions – Nominations Committee (Friday morning):

29. That the resignation of the Rev JNI McNeely as Convener of the Council for Training in Ministry be accepted, that he be thanked for his services, and that the Rev NJ McCullough be appointed in his place.

30. That the resignation of the Rev AD Davidson as Convener of the Nominations Committee be accepted, that he be thanked for his services, and that _____ be appointed in his place.

31. That the resignation of Miss M Kane as Convener of the Leadership Development Committee be accepted, that she be thanked for her services, and that _____ be appointed in his place.

32. That _____ be appointed as Convener of the Strategy for Mission Committee.

33. That the resignation of the Rev CI Dickson as Convener of the Global Mission Involvement Committee be accepted, that he be thanked for his services, and that _____ be appointed in his place.

34. That the nominations to the General Assembly Commissions, Councils and Committees (as tabled by the Nominations Committee) be approved.

35. That the report of the Nominations Committee be received.

Resolutions - General Assembly Business Committee (Second Section – 11.45am Friday morning)

36. That for all subsequent General Assemblies, the General Council be given authority to bring together the non-controversial resolutions of all General Assembly Councils into one consolidated resolution, having taken account of the views of those Councils.

37. That for all subsequent General Assemblies, if a written request from ten or more members of Assembly is lodged with the Clerk on or before the day

prior to that scheduled for debate on the one consolidated resolution, then the item(s) specified in the written request will be removed from the consolidated resolution and considered as separate resolution(s).

38. That the General Assembly agree in principle that Option ____ (insert 1(a) or 1(b) or 2(a) or 2(b) or 3) should be adopted for the timing of stated General Assembly meetings.

39. That Second Report of the General Assembly Business Committee be received.

OVERTURES TRANSMITTED TO THE 2016 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OVERTURE RELATING TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL

PRIORITIES COMMITTEE

(Tuesday Morning – after Section 1 of General Council Report)

Anent Par 272(6)(c) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 272(6)(c) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

- (c) draw up priorities for the work of the General Assembly:
 - in discussion with the Presbyteries and other Councils, recommend priorities to the General Assembly.
 - through a suitable Council Reference Panel, independent of other Councils and reporting directly to the General Council;
 - report whether each Council is focussed on the remit allocated to it by the General Assembly;
 - report that the work of the Councils takes cognizance of the priorities agreed by the General Assembly;
 - approve, on behalf of the General Council, all new projects and/or staffing posts, following the scheme agreed from time to time by the General Council;
 - report that the United Appeal allocations are consistent with the remit of Councils and reflective of priorities agreed by the General Assembly.

OVERTURES RELATING TO THE COUNCIL FOR TRAINING IN MINISTRY

(Wednesday Morning – after Council for Training in Ministry Report)

GROUP 1: NEW ACADEMIC STAFFING STRUCTURE

Anent Par 72(e), 74, 132(5), 134(3), 201(1), 202(7) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 72(e), 74, 132(5), 134(3), 201(1), 202(7) of the Code the word “deaconesses” be deleted and the words “deaconesses, senior lecturers” substituted in its place.

Anent Par 309(1) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 309(1) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

309. (1) The Assembly's normal direction and control of its Union Theological College shall be exercised in general through its Council for Training in Ministry and in particular through a Management Committee as prescribed in the governing statute and appointed from time to time by the General Assembly. (*See Par 275(2)*)

Anent Par 309(3) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 309(3) of the Code, the word "or lecturer" be deleted.

Anent Par 309(3) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 309(3) of the Code, the words "the College" be deleted and the words "Union Theological College" be substituted in their place.

Anent Par 309(4) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 309(4) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(4) Each senior lecturer shall be appointed by the Council for Training in Ministry. If he is a minister or licentiate of the Church he shall be called by the Council and, on presentation of his credentials of ministerial standing, be ordained and installed or installed by the Presbytery with which his congregational connection lies. Otherwise, he shall be commissioned and inducted or inducted by the Presbytery with which his congregational connection lies. In either case such service shall be held in Union Theological College with the Convener of the Council and the Principal also taking part.

Anent Par 309(5) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 309(5) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(5) Each lecturer (as distinct from senior lecturer) shall be appointed by the Council for Training in Ministry. If he is a minister or licentiate of the Church he shall be called by the Council and, on presentation of his credentials of ministerial standing, be ordained and inducted or inducted by the Presbytery with which his congregational connection lies, with the Convener of the Council and the Principal of Union Theological College also taking part. Otherwise, he shall be appointed by the Council only after it is satisfied that he evidences an understanding of, and commitment to, working within the Christian ethos and doctrinal framework of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland as outlined in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

(6) Part-time or temporary lecturers shall be appointed by the College Management Committee as occasion may require. Should a vacancy in a chair or senior lectureship occur during the College session, the Committee, on the recommendation of the Faculty, shall make provision for discharge of the duties.

(7) A professor who retires with the leave of the General Assembly shall be known as Professor Emeritus and have the same status as a minister retired from active duty in a congregation.

(8) A senior lecturer or lecturer who is a minister and who retires with the leave of the General Assembly shall be known as Senior Lecturer or Lecturer Emeritus and have the same status as a minister retired from active duty in a congregation.

(9) A senior lecturer who is not a minister and who retires with the leave of the Council for Training in Ministry shall be known as Senior Lecturer Emeritus.

GROUP 2: TO UPDATE THE CODE IN LINE WITH PREVIOUS DECISIONS OF ASSEMBLY

Anent Pars 214(1),(2)&(7), 217(8)(a) and 275(1)(a) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Pars 214(1),(2)&(7), 217(8)(a) and 275(1)(a) of the Code, the words “Director of Ministerial Studies” be deleted and the words “Dean of Ministerial Studies and Development” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 214(3) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 214(3) of the Code, the word “required” be deleted and the words “required, prior to which the Kirk Session of the applicant’s congregation will complete a questionnaire” substituted in their place.

Anent Pars 214(4),(5), 215(1),(4),(6)&(7), 216, 217 and 218 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Pars 214(4),(5), 215(1),(6),(7), 216, 217 and 218 of the Code, the words “Board of Christian Training” be deleted and the words “Council for Training in Ministry” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 214 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 214 of the Code new paragraphs (2)&(3) be inserted as follows:

(2) Applications will only be accepted from candidates who will not yet have attained the age of 55 years on the projected date of their eligibility for a call.

(3) Applicants should normally have successfully completed the Accredited Preachers Course by the time of interview by the Council for Training in Ministry, and subsequent paragraphs renumbered.

Anent Par 215(1) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 215(1) of the Code, the reference “Par 282(2)(a)” be deleted and the reference “Par 275(3)(a)” be substituted in its place.

Anent Pars 215(4), 217(6)(b) and (8)(a),(b)&(d) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Pars 215(4), 217(6)(b) and (8)(a),(b)&(d) of the Code, the word “Board” be deleted and the word “Council” substituted in its place.

Anent Par 215 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 215 of the Code, paragraph 4 be deleted and new paragraphs (4),(5)&(6) inserted in its place(with current paragraphs (5)-(7) renumbered) as follows:

(4) Where an application is declined by a Presbytery the applicant may lodge an appeal with the Clerk of the General Assembly within ten days.

(5) Where intimation is given that a Presbytery nomination has not been sustained by the Council for Training in Ministry, the Presbytery concerned may request a review of the decision by the Council.

(6) Where intimation is given that the review has upheld the original decision not to nominate, the Presbytery may lodge an appeal with the Clerk of the General Assembly within 28 days.

Anent Par 216(2)(a) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 216(2)(a) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(2) (a) To interview each candidate and confer with him/her on his/her motives for seeking the office of the ministry, such interview to take place prior to the March/April meeting of the Council in order to provide for review of the Council’s decision, if requested by Presbytery, in time for the following General Assembly.

Anent Par 216(6) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 216(6) of the Code, the word “Board” be deleted and the words “Council; and where appropriate, and not withstanding a Presbytery’s right to terminate, to recommend to the General Assembly termination of candidature” substituted in its place.

Anent Par 216(7) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 216(7) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(7) To co-operate with the Presbyteries in supervising the life, conduct and work of all students, and where any of the life, work or conduct of a student is considered unsatisfactory by Presbytery, to provide four assessors to deal with the matter by way of admonishment, censure, suspension or termination of candidature.

Anent Par 217(2) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 217(2) of the Code, the words “but under 40” be deleted.

Anent Pars 217(8)(d) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 217(8)(d) of the Code, the word “Committee” be deleted and the word “Panel” substituted in its place.

Anent Par 217(3) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 217(3) of the Code be deleted and subsequent sub-paragraphs renumbered.

Anent Par 218(2)(b) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 218(2)(b) of the Code, the words “Academic Board” be deleted and the word “Faculty” substituted in their place.

Anent Pars 218(2)&(3) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 218(2)&(3) of the Code, the words “Assignment Committee” be deleted and the words “Assignments Panel” substituted in their place.

GROUP 3: TERMINATION OF LICENTIATE ASSISTANTSHIPS**Anent Par 219A of the Code**

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 219A of the Code, the words “Assignment Committee” be deleted and the words “Assignments Panel” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 219A(iii) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 219A(iii) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(iii) An appointment as a licentiate assistant may be terminated by agreement; or by the Council for Training in Ministry; or by two months’ notice given by the licentiate assistant, or the Minister, or the Kirk Session, subject to approval of the Assignments Panel.

Anent Par 219A of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 219A of the Code, a new paragraph (iv) be added as follows:

(iv) Where an appointment as a licentiate assistant has been terminated, the Council for Training in Ministry shall either make a new appointment or request that the appropriate Presbytery bring a recommendation to the General Assembly for the withdrawal of licence.

GROUP 4: DEACONESSES

Anent Par 303(3) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 303(3) of the Code, the words “Board of Mission in Ireland” be deleted and the words “Council for Mission in Ireland” substituted in their place.

Anent Pars 303(4)(c) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 303(4)(c) of the Code, the words “Board of Mission in Ireland” be deleted and the words “Council for Training in Ministry” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 303(4)(d) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 304(4)(d) of the Code, the words “as approved by the Board in consultation with the Board of Christian Training” be deleted and the words “and probationary period, as approved by the Council for Training in Ministry” substituted in their place:

Anent Par 304 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 304 of the Code be deleted and the following be substituted in its place:

304. (1) The Council for Mission in Ireland shall determine the number of deaconesses required to be trained in any given period.

(2) The procedures for enquiry and application to be considered as a candidate for the office of deaconess shall be as determined jointly by the Council for Mission in Ireland, the Council for Training in Ministry, and Presbyterian Women.

(3) Following commendation by the Kirk Session and Presbytery with which she is connected, the Council for Training in Ministry may, after interview, accept an applicant as a candidate for the office.

(4) Presbyterian Women together with the Council for Mission in Ireland shall be responsible for the training fees and allowances for candidates, upon such scale and conditions as the Council shall determine.

OVERTURE RELATING TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND MARRIAGE TASK GROUP

(Wednesday Afternoon - after Section 2 of General Council Report)

Anent Par 85 of the Code

It is hereby Overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 85 of the Code the following sub-paragraph be added as sub paragraph (2) and the subsequent sub-paragraphs renumbered:

(2) Marriage under the form and discipline of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland shall include the following statement: “Since the beginning of creation God, in his gracious purpose, provided marriage as the accepted way in which a man and a woman may come together as husband and wife. This is the only basis on which marriage can take place within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.”

OVERTURES RELATING TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL

CHARITIES LEGISLATION TASK GROUP

(Wednesday Afternoon - after Section 3 of General Council Report)

GROUP 1: DEFINITION

Anent Par 137 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 137 of the Code, after the words ““bounds” means in relation to a Presbytery or congregation, the bounds assigned by the Assembly to that Presbytery or congregation as the case may be;” the following be inserted:

“charity trustees” means in relation to the Assembly, a Presbytery, or a Congregation those persons who, within the terms of the relevant legislation from time to time in force in, respectively, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and in so far as such legislation may apply to such body, are the charity trustees for that body;

GROUP 2: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN KIRK SESSION AND CONGREGATIONAL COMMITTEE

Anent Par 16(3) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that to Par 16(3) of the Code the following sentence be added at the end: “This shall include the oversight of the care of those in need and the management of the temporal affairs of the congregation, with the direct responsibility for these two matters delegated to the the Congregational Committee.”

Anent Par 16(4) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 16(4) be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(4) Members of the Congregational Committee are appointed to fulfil the biblical role of deacons by discharging the duties delegated to them of caring for those in need and managing the temporal affairs of the congregation.

Anent Par 47(1) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 47(1) be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(4) The duties of the Congregational Committee, delegated to it by Kirk Session, shall be to care for those in need and to manage the temporal affairs of the congregation, and be accountable to Kirk Session.

Anent Par 51(1) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 51(1) be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

51.(1) Any member of the Congregational Committee or any member of the congregation who is dissatisfied with any decision of the Congregational Committee may, after notice in writing to the Congregational Committee, ask the Kirk Session to review that decision. Any member of the Congregational Committee or any member of the congregation dissatisfied with the decision of the Kirk Session following such review may after notice in writing to the Kirk Session petition the Presbytery against that decision.

Anent Par 52 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 52 be deleted.

Anent Par 257(2)(a) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 257(2)(a) of the Code, after the words “submitted to” the words “the Kirk Session for approval and then to” be inserted.

GROUP 3: ELDERS UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO REGISTER AS CHARITY TRUSTEES**Anent Par 180(1)**

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 180(1) of the Code, the first use of the word “office” be deleted and the words “office, including their responsibility to act as a charity trustee of the congregation” substituted in its place.

Anent Par 180(3)

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 180(3) of the Code, after the words “these matters,” the words “and having confirmed that a Charity Trustee Declaration has been completed,” be inserted.

Anent Par 33

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 33 of the Code, a new sub-paragraph (2) be added as follows (and subsequent paragraphs renumbered):

(2) In the case where a ruling elder fails to complete a Charity Trustee declaration by a date set by Presbytery, that elder shall be deemed to have resigned from the duties of eldership in their congregation, unless otherwise resolved by Presbytery in exceptional circumstances.

Anent Par 211(4)

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 211(4) of the Code, the word “congregation” be deleted and the words “congregation, that (where appropriate) a Charity Trustee Declaration has been completed,” substituted in its place.

GROUP 4: RETIRED MINISTERS**OVERTURES NECESSARY IF OPTION 1 RELATING TO RETIRED MINISTERS IS CHOSEN****Anent Pars 61 and 97 of the Code**

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Pars 61 and 97 of the Code, the words “consent of the Assembly” be deleted and the words “consent of the Assembly, apart from those designated Minister Emeritus (Released)” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 61 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 61 of the Code the following sub-paragraph be inserted after sub-paragraph (h):

- (i) any ruling elder holding office as Clerk;
- and the subsequent sub-paragraph renumbered (j).

Anent Par 62 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 62 of the Code, the words “ministers without charge under their care” be deleted and the words “those under their care designated Minister Emeritus (Released) or Minister without Charge” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 72 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 72 of the Code the following sub-paragraphs be inserted after paragraph (g):

(h) subject to Rules (*See Pars. 220-223, 225 and 226*), accept the retirement of a minister, whom it shall designate as Minister Emeritus;

(i) annually review the position of each Minister Emeritus and following each review may release a retired minister from the responsibilities of full membership of Presbytery (and thereby also of the General Assembly), whom it shall then designate as Minister Emeritus (Released). A decision to so release is appropriate when there is:

- (i) a request from the Minister Emeritus; or
 - (ii) a lack of capacity to fulfil the responsibilities of membership of Presbytery; or
 - (iii) a failure to attend Presbytery for a period of twelve months without appropriate reason.
- and the subsequent sub-paragraphs renumbered.

Anent Par 81(6) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 81(6) of the Code, the words “minister emeritus” be deleted and the words “Minister Emeritus or Minister Emeritus (Released)” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 97(h) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 97(h) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(h) ministers or ruling elders who are ex-officio members of the General Assembly in virtue of their appointment as:-

(i) Conveners and Secretaries of each of the Assembly’s Standing Commissions, Councils and Committees;

(ii) Clerks of Presbytery;

(iii) Two of the Trustees of the General Assembly, being ruling elders, appointed annually by the Trustees;

Anent Par 97(j) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 97(j) of the Code, the word “direct” be deleted.

Anent Par 98 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 98 of the Code, the words “ministers without charge under the care of Presbyteries” be deleted and the words “those under the care of Presbyteries designated Minister Emeritus (Released) or Minister without Charge” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 128(1) of the Code

It is hereby overtured that Par 128(1)(b) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(b) One person (being a minister or ruling elder) nominated by each Presbytery.

Anent Par 225(2) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 225(2) of the Code, the words “minister emeritus” be deleted and the words “Minister Emeritus or Minister Emeritus (Released)” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 261(1)(b) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 261(1)(b) of the Code, after the word “retired”, the words “(indicating whether Minister Emeritus or Minister Emeritus (Released))” be inserted.

Anent Par 261(2) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 261(2) of the Code, after the words “retired ministers”, the words “(indicating whether Minister Emeritus or Minister Emeritus (Released))” be inserted.

Anent Par 263(1) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 263(1) of the Code, after the word “retirements”, the words “(indicating changes of designation from Minister Emeritus to Minister Emeritus (Released))” be inserted.

OVERTURES NECESSARY IF REVISED OPTION 2 IS CHOSEN (retired ministers no longer full voting members of Presbytery unless required by Presbytery or are ex officio members of Assembly)

Anent Par 61 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 61 of the Code the following paragraph be inserted after paragraph (h):

- (i) any minister or ruling elder holding office as Clerk; and the subsequent paragraph renumbered.

Anent Par 61(a) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 61(a) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

- (a) the ministers in active duty of the congregations assigned to it by the Assembly;

Anent Par 61(c) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 61(c) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

- (c) chaplains to the Forces, ordained ministers and elders serving under the Council for Global Mission and other ministers serving under any Assembly Council in special work outside Ireland who have been installed or inducted to their charge by Presbytery.

Anent Par 61(e) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 61(e) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

- (e) such retired ministers as the Presbytery requires for membership of a Presbytery Commission, for the duration of that appointment.

Anent Par 61(h) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 61(h) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place.

- (h) ministers or ruling elders under its jurisdiction who are ex-officio members of Assembly;

Anent Pars 62 and 98 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Pars 62 and 98 of the Code, after the word “invite”, the words “retired ministers and” be inserted.

Anent Par 97(a) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 97(a) of the code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

- (a) the ministers in active duty of the congregations connected with it.

Anent Par 97(c) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 97(c) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(c) chaplains to the Forces, ordained ministers and elders serving under the Council for Global Mission and other ministers serving under any Assembly Council in special work overseas.

Anent Par 97(h) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 97(h) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(h) ministers or ruling elders who are ex-officio members of the General Assembly in virtue of their appointment as:-

- (i) Conveners and Secretaries of each of the Assembly's Standing Commissions, Councils and Committees;
- (ii) Clerks of Presbytery;
- (iii) Two of the Trustees of the General Assembly, being ruling elders, appointed annually by the Trustees;

Anent Par 97(j) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 97(j) of the Code, the words "Such elders as are direct nominees" be deleted and the words "Such retired ministers and ruling elders as are nominees" substituted in their place.

Anent Par 97(e) of the Code

It is hereby overtured that Par 97(e) of the Code be deleted and subsequent paragraphs renumbered.

Anent Par 128(1) of the Code

It is hereby overtured that Par 128(1)(b) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(b) One person (being a minister or ruling elder) nominated by each Presbytery.

Anent Par 223 of the Code

It is hereby overtured that in Par 223 of the Code a new paragraph be added:

(6) A minister who has retired with the proper consents is deemed to be Minister Emeritus of the congregation(s) or special work from which he has retired.

Anent Par 226(a) of the Code

It is hereby overtured that in Par 226(a) of the Code the words "Minister-Emeritus of the congregation; and shall in virtue of such enrolment be a member

of the superior courts of the Church.” be deleted and the words “Minister Emeritus of the congregation.” substituted in their place.

GROUP 5: CHARITIES LEGISLATION OVERTURES ON THE BOOKS

Anent Par 105 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that Par 105 of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

105. The Assembly and only the Assembly -

- (a) may enact, alter or abrogate a law of the Church or prescribe rules;
- (b) may amend, rescind or reverse its own sentences, decisions or resolutions;
- (c) may decide the Church’s general policy on co-operation or joint action with other Churches and authorise congregations, Presbyteries, councils or committees of the Church to participate in joint projects in accordance with such Scheme or on such terms as the Assembly may from time to time determine (See Par 60).

(d) shall delegate to the General Council such powers and decisions as are required in order for the Assembly to comply with the requirements of charities legislation in Northern Ireland and/or the Republic of Ireland as appropriate.

Anent Par 70 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that following Par 70(c) of the Code a new paragraph be added:

(d) act as the charity trustees and be responsible for its compliance with the requirements of charities legislation in Northern Ireland and/or the Republic of Ireland as appropriate.

Anent Par 35 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that following Par 35(d) of the Code a new paragraph be added:

(e) act as the charity trustees and be responsible for the congregation’s compliance with the requirements of charities legislation in Northern Ireland and/or the Republic of Ireland as appropriate;

(f) ensure that the Congregational Committee complies with the decisions of Kirk Session;

(g) after considering the grounds for disqualification for being a charity trustee under charities legislation in Northern Ireland and/or the Republic of Ireland as appropriate, refer to Presbytery the consideration of removal from office in the congregation of a ruling elder.

Anent Par 47(1) & (2) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that Par 47(1) & (2) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in their place:

(1) **The duties of the Congregational Committee, delegated by the Kirk Session**, shall be to take care of the poor and administer the temporal affairs of the congregation, and be accountable to the Kirk Session.

(2) Those duties shall include -

(a) administering all funds belonging to the congregation, or held by trustees for its use and apply these funds for the purposes for which they have been created or contributed;

(b) administering all other property of the congregation, take care to maintain and insure it and take steps to gather funds needed for these purposes;

(c) having charge of the letting or allocating of seating accommodation in the Church building;

(d) regulating conditions under which the Church premises, halls or rooms are used, subject to decisions of the Session;

(e) promoting the interests of the Central Funds and Missions of the Church;

(f) be responsible for appointing or dismissing the sexton;

(g) managing the graveyard;

(h) having power to borrow against any congregational property, with any security required being given by the Congregational Trustees on the instruction of the Congregational Committee and to authorise up to six members of the Congregational Committee to sign any associated documents required by the lender; and

(i) carrying out such other functions as may be prescribed.

OVERTURES RELATING TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL

SUPPORT SERVICES COMMITTEE

(Thursday Morning after Section 4 of General Council Report)

GROUP 1: RELATED TO ‘AUDIT’

Anent Pars 46(h), 240(1) and 272(11)(b) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Pars 46(h), 240(1) and 272(11)(b) of the Code, the words “independent examiners or” be inserted before the word “auditors”.

Anent Par 46(h) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 46(h) of the Code, the words “in accordance with the requirements of charity law” be inserted after the word “accounts”.

Anent Par 59(2)(a) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 59(2)(a) of the Code, the words “independent examination or” be inserted before the word “audit”.

Anent Pars 76(e), 240(4), 258(b) and 310(3) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Pars 76(e), 240(4), 258(b) and 310(3) of the Code, the words “independently examined or” be inserted before the word “audited”.

Anent Par 137 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 137 of the Code the words ““audit” and “auditors”, when used in relation to a congregation, mean respectively the independent inspection of the accounts and financial statements, and the persons appointed to carry out such an inspection;” be deleted and the following inserted after the words “educational purposes;”:

““independent examination” or “audit” and “independent examiners” or “auditors”, when used in relation to a congregation, mean respectively the independent inspection of the accounts and financial statements, and the persons appointed to carry out such an inspection;”

Anent Par 240(1) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 240(1) of the Code, the words “examined or” be inserted before the word “audited” and the words “independent examiners or” be inserted before the word “auditoes”.

GROUP 2: RELATED TO RMF & WMF**Anent Par 321(1) of the Code**

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 321(1) of the Code, the words “of one-half of the current Basic Ministerial Income or at such other percentage which may be determined by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the General Council, directly or through its appropriate Committee.” [sic] be deleted and the words “agreed from time to time by the General Council, on the recommendation of its appropriate Committee.” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 326(1)(b) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 326(1)(b) of the Code, the words “of 27.5% of the current Basic Ministerial Income” be deleted and the words “agreed from time to time by the General Council, on the recommendation of its appropriate Committee” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 326(1)(c) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 326(1)(c) of the Code, the words “27.5% of the Basic Ministerial Income” be deleted and the words “the rate agreed from time to time by the General Council, on the recommendation of its appropriate Committee.” substituted in their place.

OVERTURES RELATING TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL

GENERAL BUSINESS

(Thursday Afternoon - after Section 5 of General Council Report)

A. CHANGES CONSEQUENT ON PREVIOUS GENERAL ASSEMBLY DECISIONS

GROUP 1: Board becomes COUNCIL

Anent Pars 182(1)&(2), 200(3)&(4), 201(1), 219(3)(b)(ii), 220(2)(a), 223(4), 228(2) 247(3), 300(1)(a)-(d),(2),(3)&(6), 302(2)(d)&(e), (3)(b)&(4)(b)&(c), 306(2), 316(2) and 321(3) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Pars 182(1)&(2), 200(3)&(4), 201(1), 219(3)(b)(ii), 220(2)(a), 223(4), 228(2), 247(3), 300(1)(a)-(d),(2),(3)&(6), 302(2)(d)&(e),(3)(b),&(4)(b)&(c), 306(2), 316(2) and 321(3) of the Code, the word "Board" be deleted and the word "Council" substituted in its place.

Anent Pars 146, 148(1) and 152(2)(d) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Pars 146, 148(1) and 152(2)(d) of the Code, the word "board" be deleted and the word "council" substituted in its place.

Anent Pars 200(3), 202(3), 238(4), 302(3)(c), 306(3), 308(5)(ii) and 308(8) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Pars 200(3), 202(3), 238(4), 302(3)(c), 306(3), 308(5)(ii) and 308(8) of the Code, the word "Boards" be deleted and the word "Councils" substituted in its place.

GROUP 2: DELETE REFERENCE TO SYNOD

Anent Par 241(a) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 241(a) of the Code, the words "or Synod" be deleted.

GROUP 3: GENERAL COUNCIL SPECIFIC

Anent Par 200(2) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 200(2) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(2) Calls to work under the Assembly may be made directly by the Assembly, or remitted to their General Council to act on the same basis on behalf of the Assembly. Such calls and appointments shall be certified to the Presbytery with which the minister is to be associated as a member, who shall if appropriate forthwith arrange for his installation or induction. (*This applies particularly to certain Assembly Buildings and Union Theological College appointments.*)

Anent Par 223(3) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 223(3) of the Code, the words “Board of Finance and Personnel by the Committee on Pensions and Assessments” be deleted and the words “General Council by the Support Services Committee” substituted in their place.

GROUP 4: COUNCIL FOR TRAINING IN MINISTRY SPECIFIC

Anent Pars 193(1), 198(2), and 207(2) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Pars 193(1), 198(2), and 207(2) of the Code, the words “Board of Christian Training” be deleted and the words “Council for Training in Ministry” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 193(1)(a)(ii) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 193(1)(a)(ii) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

all licentiates who have served the Church for two years after licence, and who have obtained a certificate from the Council for Training in Ministry that their period of probation has been completed satisfactorily, provided that they have not been serving in the congregation immediately prior to or at any time during the vacancy. Those licensed in May, June or July shall be eligible from 1st September in the qualifying year.

Anent Par 198(1) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 198(1) of the Code, the words “Assignment Committee of the Board of Christian Training” be deleted and the words “Council for Training in Ministry” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 198(8) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 198(8) of the Code, the words “Assignment Committee” be deleted and the words “Council for Training in Ministry” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 200(4) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 200(4) of the Code, the words “of Ministers and Licentiates” be inserted after the words “the Assembly’s Reception”.

Anent Pars 219(3)(c)(i) and 219(3)(c)(iii) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 219(3)(c)(i) and 219(3)(c)(iii) of the Code, the words “General Board” be deleted and the words “Council for Training in Ministry” substituted in their place.

GROUP 5: COUNCIL FOR MISSION IN IRELAND SPECIFIC**Anent Par 79(e) of the Code**

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 79(e) of the Code, the words “Church and Government Committee, Forces Committee, Chaplains Committee or Education Board” be deleted and the words “Council for Mission in Ireland (or, if necessary, the General Council)” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 116(2) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 116(2) of the Code be deleted and the subsequent paragraph renumbered.

Anent Pars 227, 229, 230(1)&(3), 232, 234(1), 250(4), 300(1),(4)&(5), 301(1)&(3), 302(1)(b),(2)(c)&(4)(a), 305(4)-(6)&(9)-(12), and 307(1),(2)&(5) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Pars 227, 229, 230(1)&(3), 232, 234(1), 250(4), 300(1),(4)&(5), 301(1)&(3), 302(1)(b),(2)(c)&(4)(a), 305(4)-(6)&(9)-(12), and 307(1),(2)&(5) of the Code, the words “Board of Mission in Ireland” be deleted and the words “Council for Mission in Ireland” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 230(2) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 230(2) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(2) Grants towards the provision of suitable buildings for the carrying on of the work shall be made by the Council for Mission in Ireland, for expenditure incurred with their approval, from such funds as may be at their disposal on such terms as may be fixed by the Council, provided that plans have been approved by the Linkage Commission and Presbytery.

Anent Par 230(5)(a) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 230(5)(a) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(5) (a) Church Extension charges participating in joint projects with other Churches may apply to the Council for Mission in Ireland for assistance with the purchase of property or other approved expenditure, upon such terms as shall be determined by the Council having regard to the provisions of the appropriate scheme approved by the Assembly.

Anent Par 231(1) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 231(1) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(1) The call of a minister to serve in a Church Extension charge shall be at the initiative of the Council for Mission in Ireland, following such procedure for inviting applications and interviewing candidates as the Council sees fit, provided that the interim Kirk Session be represented in any interview and recommendation for call.

Anent Par 234(4) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 234(4) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(4) Notwithstanding any of the previous provisions, an established congregation moving its centre of worship, together with its assets, to serve a recognised Church Extension area (i.e., “porting”) may apply to the Council for Mission in Ireland for assistance towards the purchase of property, the erection of buildings and other approved expenditure. Any assistance given by the Council shall be on such terms and conditions as it sees fit.

Anent Par 302(1)(c) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 302(1)(c) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(c) To be considered as a candidate for the office of Irish Mission Worker application shall be made to the Secretary of the Council for Mission in Ireland.

Anent Par 302(3)(a) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 302(3)(a) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(3) (a) Immediate responsibility for the direction and supervision of the work of Irish Mission Workers shall rest with the Secretary of the Council for Mission in Ireland. The Council shall exercise a general responsibility. Irish Mission Workers shall report annually on their work.

Anent Par 305(1)&(2) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 305(1)&(2) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

305. (1) The appointment of deaconesses shall be as decided by the Council for Mission in Ireland, after consultation with the parties concerned; and any congregation or Council of the Church wishing for the services of a deaconess shall make official application to the Secretary of the Council for Mission in Ireland.

(2) The Council shall call to each appointment for service as a deaconess in connection with Presbyterian Women, and shall thereupon forward the call to be sustained by the Presbytery under whose jurisdiction it is proposed that she shall work. When sustained, the call shall be presented, either by that Presbytery if the deaconess is already under its care, or certified and forwarded

to the Presbytery then having jurisdiction for the issue of credentials. A call may be retained for consideration for fourteen days after presentation, but if not then accepted shall be deemed to be declined. If the call is declined the Council for Mission in Ireland shall reconsider the matter in the light of Par 305(1). Without such call a deaconess shall not change her appointment.

Anent Par 305(8) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 305(8) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(8) An appointment as a deaconess may, after twelve months' service, be terminated by mutual agreement, or by two months' notice given by the deaconess, the minister of the congregation, the Session (or in the case of a deaconess in special work by the Council for Mission in Ireland) subject to the approval of the Presbytery. In such cases a deaconess may apply to be retained on the records of Presbytery for a period of not longer than one year but she shall have no entitlement to special support from central funds, though the Council for Mission in Ireland may make a special arrangement.

Anent Par 307(3) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 307(3) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(3) The Council for Mission in Ireland shall fix at regular intervals a realistic allowance for expenses incurred in the course of duty. Reports on expenses shall be made to the Council as required.

GROUP 6: COUNCIL FOR GLOBAL MISSION SPECIFIC

Anent Pars 202(5)(VII)&(6), 205(6)&(7)(b), 290(1-4), 291(1-3), 292 and 293 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Pars 202(5)(VII)&(6), 205(6)&(7)(b).290(1-4), 291(1-3), 292 and 293 of the Code, the words "Board of Mission Overseas" be deleted and the words "Council for Global Mission" substituted in their place.

Anent Par 331(2)(b) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 331(2)(b) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(b) in the case of such a missionary, by the Council for Global Mission or in the case of such a ruling elder in special work other than as an overseas missionary by the appropriate Assembly Council;

provided that in any of the cases designated in this sub-paragraph, paragraph 161 (with the omission of sub-paragraph (a) thereof) shall apply to the committee or Council concerned as it applies to a Church court.

GROUP 7: LINKAGE COMMISSION SPECIFIC

Anent Pars 57(3)&(6), 73(d), 82(3)&(4) and 232 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Pars 57(3)&(6), 73(b), 82(3)&(4) and 232 of the Code, the words “Union Commission” be deleted and the words “Linkage Commission” substituted in their place.

Anent Pars 190, 191, 193, 195(11), 198(1)&(8-10), 226(b), 231(4), 232, 233, 234(3), 248(4), 250(4), 256(3), and 300 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Pars 190, 191, 193, 195(11), 198(1)&(8-10), 226(b), 231(4), 232, 233, 234(3), 248(4), 250(4), 256(3), and 300 of the Code, the words “Union Commission” be deleted and the words “Linkage Commission” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 197 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 197 of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

197. Calls to Licentiates:

A licentiate shall not normally be eligible for ordination until after two years from licensure subject to the following provisions:

(a) Persons licensed in the months of May, June, and July shall all become eligible from the 1st of September of the qualifying year.

(b) A licentiate called to be assistant to the Moderator of the General Assembly shall be eligible without any two years qualification.

(c) A licentiate shall be eligible for calls to special work as prescribed in Par 199(1).

(d) In circumstances not covered by the foregoing provisions, the Linkage Commission shall have power to decide on eligibility for call.

Anent Par 198(1) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 198(1) of the Code, the words “Allocation Committee of the Union Commission” be deleted and the words “Linkage Commission” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 199(1) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 199(1) of the Code, the words “six months” be deleted and the words “two years” substituted in their place.

GROUP 8: COUNCIL FOR CHURCH IN SOCIETY/ COUNCIL FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIFIC

Anent Pars 274(1) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 274(1) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

274. Council for Public Affairs

(1) The membership of the Council for Public Affairs shall be:

B. CHANGES TO CODE CORRECTING ERRORS

OVERTURES CORRECTING DEFICIENCIES 212(6), 272(15), 275

Anent Par 212(6) of the Code [Ordinations etc]

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 212(6) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(6) Subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith

[The Moderator addresses the minister-elect in these words:]

You have confessed your belief that the Word of God as set forth in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is the only infallible rule of faith and practice. It is under that supreme standard, which alone is final, that this Church holds its subordinate standards. (* See below).

This being understood, are you now prepared to subscribe, in terms of the General Assembly's Formula, 'I believe the Westminster Confession of Faith, as described in the Code, Chapter I, paragraphs 12-14, to be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God, and as such I subscribe it as the confession of my faith.'?

I am

[The Formula is signed in the Minute book of Presbytery.]

*In congregations of the former Munster Presbytery the minister-elect shall be invited to make a declaration of his faith according to the Standards of the Church by personally writing out and presenting for retention among the records of the Presbytery the following -

"I,, do hereby declare that I believe the Confession of Faith, compiled by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, as described in the Code, Chapter I, paragraphs 12-14, to be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God, and as such I declare it to be the confession of my faith."

[In cases certified by the Council for Global Mission, where the spouse is to be commissioned with the person being ordained or installed, the following question shall be asked of the spouse:]

Do you, *NN*, commit yourself to be a partner with your *husband/wife* in the missionary service to which *he/she* is being appointed?

I do

Anent Par 272(15) of the Code [General Council]

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 212(15) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(15) The Council shall, directly or through its appropriate committee:

- (a) administer The Central Ministry Fund (see Pars 311-318)
- (b) administer The Retired Ministers Fund (see Pars 319-323)
- (c) administer The Widows of Ministers Fund (see Pars 324-328)
- (d) administer The Prolonged Disability Fund
- (e) administer The Retired Ministers' House Fund

- (f) appoint a committee to consider and report to the Assembly the cases of all ministers applying for special leave to retire from active duty. The committee shall have the right to issue a schedule of queries to be answered by the applicant.

Anent Par 275 of the Code [Council for Training in Ministry]

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 275 of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

275. Council for Training in Ministry

(1) The membership of the Council for Training in Ministry shall be:

- (a) The Moderator and Clerk of the General Assembly; Council Convener and Secretary; Committee and Panel Conveners; Principal of Union Theological College; Director of Ministerial Studies;
- (b) One direct nominee from each Presbytery
- (c) Seven nominees of the Nominations Committee

(2) The membership of Council Committees shall be as agreed by the General Assembly from time to time.

(3) The Council shall consider all aspects of leadership training for ministers including responsibility for:

- (a) selection, training and on-going development of full-time ministers;
- (b) pastoral care of ministers and manse families;
- (c) selection, training and on-going development of auxiliary ministers and accredited preachers;
- (d) selection and initial training of deaconesses, including probationary period;
- (e) reception of ministers and licentiates from other Churches, subject to rules approved from time to time by the General Assembly;
- (f) management of Union Theological College and the Magee Fund Scheme;
- (g) provision of a conciliation service.

C. CHANGES TO CODE – APPENDICES

GROUP A: GENERAL ASSEMBLY’S STANDING ORDERS

Anent Appendix 1 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Appendix 1 of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

1. GENERAL ASSEMBLY’S STANDING ORDERS

I The stated annual meeting of the General Assembly shall be held beginning on the first Monday in June, with the opening session commencing at 7 o’clock p.m., to include the following:-

(1) The Moderator shall conduct public worship and preach a sermon or give a retiring address; after which, should a quorum be present, he shall constitute the Assembly.

(2) The Moderator having requested the Assembly to appoint a successor, the names of members nominated by Presbyteries for the office shall be read. Others may also be proposed in the Assembly. Should a vote be necessary it shall be taken after the method prescribed in the Assembly's Rules.

(3) The member who is appointed Moderator shall be installed in office by prayer and may address the Assembly.

II (1) The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall be administered at the annual meeting. Communicants of this or any Church, desiring to share the fellowship of the Sacrament, shall be invited and made welcome to join with members of the General Assembly at the Lord's Table.

(2) The Arrangements Panel of the General Assembly Business Committee shall make all the arrangements for the observance of this ordinance.

III The General Assembly Business Committee shall submit its report, including the proposed Order of Business for the succeeding sessions together with any additions or amendments and the Assembly thereupon shall proceed to deal with the various matters proposed.

IV Every report submitted to the Assembly shall be presented in written or printed form; and, as far as possible, every such report shall be included in a Blue Book printed and circulated to members at least one week before the annual meeting of the Assembly.

V (1) A proposed resolution or resolutions of Assembly shall be appended to every report in the Blue Book.

(2) Each proposed resolution shall be based on information provided in the report and shall seek to express a clear and succinct mind of the Assembly upon it, without attempting to include such arguments as are more appropriate to speeches.

(3) (a) Where it has not been possible to include some resolution in the Blue Book, it shall be transmitted to the Clerk of Assembly (if necessary appended to a supplementary report giving the relevant information) at least one clear day before it may be considered by the Assembly.

(b) At the beginning of each session the Clerk shall intimate to the Assembly any additional business and, where possible, provide members with printed copies of it.

VI An amendment to a proposed resolution or overture which would substantially affect its scope shall be transmitted to the Clerk at least one clear day before it is due to be considered by the Assembly; and it shall be announced to members and, where possible, circulated to members as additional business. This rule shall not preclude the Assembly from altering or amending the proposed resolution, as it may judge right having regard to the whole discussion on the subject when considered.

VII (1) Speeches or addresses in the Assembly shall be limited as follows, unless in the circumstances judged by the Moderator to be exceptional:

- (a) The first speaker presenting a group of reports with appended resolutions on behalf of an Assembly Commission or Council shall not occupy longer than seven minutes.
- (b) The speaker seconding the foregoing presentation shall not occupy longer than seven minutes.
- (c) All other speakers shall not occupy longer than four minutes.

(2) Arrangements shall be made to give a speaker warning at one minute and again at half a minute before the time expires; and upon its expiry a bell shall be rung and the speaker shall immediately resume their seat.

(3) Speakers proposing or seconding a group of resolutions (including additional resolutions, and also where a Convener is speaking to those of his Commission, Council or Committee) shall not speak separately to them except by way of closing a debate upon them.

VIII (1) A ballot shall be taken at the discretion of the Moderator or when it is asked for by not less than twenty-five members of the House rising in their place.

(2) When a ballot has been decided on a bell shall be rung for two minutes, during which time all members who propose to take part in the vote shall take their places in the House; and thereafter none shall enter or leave until the vote has been taken.

(3) Each member shall record their vote by detaching from their member's ticket and placing in the ballot box the part of the ticket that indicates on which side they vote. If it should be found that more than one voting paper bear the same number, all the voting papers bearing that number shall be excluded from the count.

(4) No member shall record any vote but their own, or use a ticket belonging to a member absent for whatever cause. This exclusion also applies to any additional named elder, appointed by a Kirk Session, with permission to sit and deliberate only. No vote shall be counted in the absence of a member's ticket.

(5) When the tellers have met and counted the votes, one shall take the voting papers and statement of the vote to the Clerk of Assembly and the Moderator shall announce the result to the House.

(6) (a) Any member of the House may demand a scrutiny of the voting papers, provided they do so in open court immediately after the result of the vote is announced and are supported by fifty members standing in their places.

(b) The Moderator shall thereupon appoint as many scrutineers as he or she shall think fit, selecting a number from the supporters of each side of the question voted on, who with the tellers, shall at once proceed to carry out the scrutiny.

(7) The Clerk of Assembly shall take charge of the voting papers until the rising of the Assembly, after which he or she shall destroy them.

IX (1) The Arrangements Panel shall be responsible for providing a panel of tellers for each session and for stewarding arrangements.

(2) In making all the arrangements that may be necessary for the accommodation and discharge of the business of the General Assembly at its meeting, the Arrangements Panel is empowered to issue tickets of admission to the Assembly, both to the members thereof and to others attending, to regulate the conditions of admission and to make such reservations of seating and accommodation as may be required.

(3) Collections may be taken from those attending at one or more sessions of the Assembly, and grants made from the Assembly's Incidental Fund, to defray the expenses incurred by the Arrangements Panel.

X The nomination of members for all Commissions, Councils and Committees shall be made in the first instance by the Nominations Committee. When the nominations are submitted to the Assembly it is open to any member to propose alternative names for appointment.

XI No person who is not a member of the Assembly shall be permitted to address the House unless with the approval of the House or of the General Assembly Business Committee.

XII No Presbytery, Assembly Commission, Council or Committee shall meet during the period of the General Assembly except at its discretion or with its permission.

GROUP B: COMMISSIONS OF RULING ELDERS

Anent Appendix 3 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Appendix 3 of the Code, the words “(Synod of)/(General Assembly)” be deleted and the words “General Assembly” substituted in their place.

GROUP C: CREDENTIALS

Anent Appendix 4 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Appendix 4 of the Code, the word “he” be deleted and the words “he/she” substituted in its place.

GROUP D: FORMS OF CALL

Anent Appendix 5(A) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Appendix 5(A) of the Code, the reference “Par 274(14)” be deleted and the reference “Par 273(14)” substituted in its place.

Anent Appendix 5(A) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Appendix 5(A) of the Code, the words “Commission on Union of Congregations” be deleted and the words “Linkage Commission” substituted in their place.

Anent Appendix 5(A) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Appendix 5(A) of the Code, the number “19.....” be deleted and the number “20.....” substituted in its place.

Anent Appendix 5(B),(C) & (D) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Appendix 5(B),(C) & (D) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in their place:

B: Form of Call to a Minister (Part-Time Ministry Scheme)

We, the members of
 in connection with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland
 having heard a good report of you
 and being fully satisfied of your fitness to be our Minister in the Lord, do hereby
 call and invite you to undertake the work of the ministry among us.

We promise to respect you for your work's sake, to attend to your instruction in the Gospel, and to submit to the discipline of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, according to the law of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we further promise as stipend in pursuance of our obligations under Paragraph 195(11) of the Code, the annual sum of £/€....., commencing from the date of installation and payable monthly, with increase in accordance with Paragraph 236 of the Code, together with the annual income of such endowments, held in connection with the Congregation, as are available for your benefit (if any) and the annual sum of £/€..... from investment income over which the Congregation or its Session or Committee or Trustees have absolute power of disposal; together with the use of the glebe (if any) and (tick as appropriate):

- right of residence in the manse, in which you are required to reside during the period of your active ministry in this Congregation, free of rent, rates and taxes, after which period you must vacate the manse; and promising that if a manse be not available then to provide other suitable residence on the same conditions, free of rent, rates and taxes, from which you can conveniently discharge your congregational duties, or to make such other arrangements as may be required under Paragraph 273(14).
- no right of residence in the manse. Housing Allowance £/€ _____ per annum.

And we hereby undertake to contribute to the Central Ministry Fund according to the regulations for the time being of the General Assembly; and to meet as a congregational expense the cost for a holiday pulpit supply for six weeks annually during vacation and acknowledge your entitlement to avail of both in-service and sabbatical leave under the terms approved from time to time by the General Assembly.

This Call is made out in conformity with the terms fixed by the Linkage Commission, a copy of which is herewith attached.

Dated and signed at this day of ..
..... in the year

We certify that we attended in the congregation of
this day of in the year

by appointment of the Presbytery of
..... as its Commission and that we were present at the signing of the call.

.....
Moderator
.....
.....

C: By a Congregation (for an Associate Minister)

We, the members of the congregation of in connection with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, being fully satisfied of your fitness to be our associate minister in the Lord, do hereby call and invite you to undertake the work of the ministry among us.

We promise to respect you for your work’s sake, to attend to your instruction in the Gospel, and to submit to the discipline of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland according to the law of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we further promise to provide for your livelihood and residence (or allowance in lieu thereof) as approved by the Linkage Commission.

And we hereby undertake to contribute to the Central Ministry Fund according to the regulations for the time being of the General Assembly; and acknowledge the Associate Minister’s entitlement to avail of both in-service and sabbatical leave under the terms approved from time to time by the General Assembly. This call is made out in accordance with the provisions of Paragraphs 128, 191, 193, 237, 273(4) of the Code and in conformity with the terms fixed by the Commission on Union of Congregations, a copy of which is herewith attached.

Dated and signed at this day of, 20....

Signed

.....

..... etc.

Certification:

We certify that we attended in the congregation of this day of, 20....., by appointment of the Presbytery of, as its Commission, and that we were present at the signing of the Call.

.....

Moderator

.....

.....

D: By a Kirk Session (for an Assistant Minister)

We, the Kirk Session of the congregation of in connection with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, being persuaded of your fitness to minister to the congregation in the Lord, do hereby call and invite you to undertake the work of the ministry among us as Ordained Assistant Minister, in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph 198 of the Code of this Church.

We promise to respect you for your work’s sake; to attend to your instruction in the Gospel; and to provide for your livelihood and residence as the said Paragraph 198 of the Code may require.

Dated and signed at this day of, 20....

..... Moderator of Kirk Session

..... Clerk of Kirk Session

E: By an Assembly Council (for Special Work)

We, the [name of Council]of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, being persuaded of your fitness to undertake such work in the name of our Lord, do hereby call and invite you to undertake the work of (within [name of Council or Department]) in accordance with the provisions of the Code, Paragraphs [here insert appropriate paragraph numbers such as 199, 200, 272(9), 301(3), 303(3)].

We promise, on behalf of the Church you will serve, to respect you for your work’s sake; and to support you with our interest and prayers; (and to provide for your livelihood and residence) as the said Paragraphs of the Code or Mission Rules may require.

Dated and signed at this day of, 20....

..... Convener
..... Secretary

Anent Appendix 5 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Appendix 5 of the Code, a new Section (F) be added as follows:

F: By a Kirk Session (for an Auxiliary Minister)

We, the Kirk Session of the congregation of in connection with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, being persuaded of your fitness to minister to the congregation in the Lord, do hereby call and invite you to undertake the work of the ministry of the Word among us as Auxiliary Minister, in accordance with the provisions of Paragraphs 36, 72, 128 and 201 of the Code of this Church.

We promise to respect you for your work’s sake; to attend to your instruction in the Gospel; and to conform to the Terms of Call agreed with the Linkage Commission.

Dated and signed at this day of, 20....

..... Moderator of Kirk Session
..... Clerk of Kirk Session

GROUP E: FORMS FOR USE IN CASES OF DISCIPLINE

Anent Appendix 11(1) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Appendix 11(1) of the Code, the words “Session, Presbytery Synod” be deleted and words “Session/Presbytery” substituted in their place.

Anent Appendix 11(13) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Appendix 11(13) of the Code, the words “Kirk Session/[Presbytery/Assembly]” be deleted and words “Kirk Session/Presbytery/General Assembly” substituted in their place.

Anent Appendix 11(14) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Appendix 11(14) of the Code, the words “Kirk Session/Presbytery/Synod” be deleted and words “Kirk Session/Presbytery” substituted in their place.

Anent Appendix 11(14) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Appendix 11(14) of the Code, the words “Presbytery/Synod” be deleted and word “Presbytery” substituted in their place.

RESOLUTION:

That the General Assembly authorise the Clerk to make all necessary amendments to the ‘Contents’ and ‘Index’ pages of the Code to reflect changes agreed by the General Assembly; and to make appropriate consequential changes to date numbering and symbols in the Appendices.

D. GENERAL OVERTURES ON THE BOOKS**Anent Par 23 of the Code**

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact Par 23 of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

23.(1) Any Church court may appoint a commission or committee, the latter being sometimes called a council, for such purposes as the court may determine, or may resolve itself into a committee of the whole court.

(2) In every case the commission, committee or council shall report to the court.

(3) Nothing in sub-paragraph (2) shall operate to prejudice any powers conferred on commissions of the Assembly under paragraphs 126-128.

Anent Par 24 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that Par 24 of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

24. Rules may make such provision as the Assembly shall think proper for the holding and functioning of Church courts, including provisions for -

(a) the appointment, powers and duties of commissions, committees, councils or members or officers of such courts and the fixing of a quorum for, or the appointment of an assessor to, any such court, commission, committee or council;

(b) the practice and procedure to be followed in or in connection with proceedings before such courts, commissions, committees or councils, or on appeals or references arising therefrom; or

(c) the records to be kept and reports to be made by such courts, commissions, committees or councils.

Anent Par 61(c) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that Par 61(c) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(c) chaplains to the Forces, ordained ministers and elders serving under the Council for Global Mission and other ministers serving under any Assembly Council in special work outside Ireland, who have been installed or inducted to their charge by Presbytery or have retired from active duty with the consent of the Assembly;

Anent Par 74 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that Par 74 of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

74. The Presbytery shall -

(a) inquire into and deal with reports affecting the character, usefulness or soundness in the faith of ministers in its congregations or in special work under the jurisdiction of the Assembly, and into the character and soundness in the faith of ministers retired or without charge or in work not under the jurisdiction of the Assembly, of deaconesses and auxiliary ministers, and of licentiates and students under its care. In the general case of ministers in special work or of students, the Presbytery shall invite four representatives of the appropriate Assembly Council to sit with them as assessors in the case, who shall for this purpose have the full powers of members of the court. In the special case of theological professors this procedure shall be followed if the College Management Committee, following preliminary investigation, requests the Presbytery to act;

(b) receive formal charges or complaints against ministers, licentiates, ruling elders, deaconesses or auxiliary ministers, summon witnesses and take evidence in cases of complaint or charge, and pronounce and publish judgment, in accordance with the disciplinary procedures of the Church.

Anent Par 78(b) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that Par 78(b) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(b) co-operate with the Council for Training in Ministry in supervising the life and conduct of the students under its care. Where the character or work of a student is considered unsatisfactory, the Presbytery may proceed as in paragraph 74 or, if it deem it advisable, delegate its authority to the Council for Training in Ministry.

Anent Par 97(c) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that Par 97(c) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(c) chaplains to the Forces, ordained ministers and elders serving under the Council for Global Mission and other ministers serving under any Assembly Council in special work overseas, or retired from active duty with the consent of the Assembly;

Anent Par 97(h)(ii)

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 97(h)(ii) of the Code, the word “Boards” be deleted and the word “Councils” substituted in its place.

Anent Par 97(j) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that Par 97(j) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(j) such elders as are direct nominees from Presbyteries or nominees of the Nominations Committee to Commissions of the Assembly, or whose membership is desirable in the interest of Assembly, and who are not otherwise members of the Assembly;

Anent Par 109(c)

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 109(c) of the Code, the word “board” be deleted and the word “council” substituted in its place.

Anent Par 109(d)

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 109(d) of the Code, the word “boards” be deleted and the word “councils” substituted in its place.

Anent Par 113(4) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that Par 113(4) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(4) The administration of the Church’s missions and agencies shall be entrusted to commissions, councils, committees, and conveners or secretaries appointed by the Assembly.

Anent Par 114(1)(c)

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 114(c)(1) of the Code, the words “Board of Mission in Ireland” be deleted and the words “Council for Mission in Ireland” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 114(2) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that Par 114(2) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(2) Presbyterian Women, under the Council for Congregational Life and Witness and in association with the Council for Mission in Ireland, shall -

Anent Par 114(3)

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 114(3) of the Code, the words “Board of Mission in Ireland” be deleted and the words “Council for Mission in Ireland” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 115(1)

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 115(1) of the Code, the words “Board of Mission Overseas” be deleted and the words “Council for Global Mission” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 115(2) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that Par 115(2) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

(2) Presbyterian Women, under the Council for Congregational Life and Witness and in association the Council for Global Mission, shall seek to further the work of the Church, especially amongst women and children, wherever the Overseas Mission of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland is at work and in such other places as the General Assembly may from time to time determine.

Anent Par 126(4)

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 126(4) of the Code, the word “board” be deleted and the word “council” substituted in its place.

Anent Par 127(1)

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 127(1) of the Code, the words “Business Board” be deleted and the words “Nominations Committee” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 127(2)(b)

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 127(2)(b) of the Code, the words “Business Board” be deleted and the words “Nominations Committee” substituted in their place.

OVERTURES RELATING TO THE LINKAGE COMMISSION

(Friday Morning – after Linkage Commission Report)

GROUP A: DIRECT LINKAGE COMMISSION

Anent Par 36(f) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 36(f) of the Code, the words “auxiliary ministers,” be inserted after the words “assistant ministers,”

Anent Par 201(2) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 201(2) of the Code the words “the appropriate Board” be deleted and the words “a Kirk Session (apart from missionaries) or the appropriate Council” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 201(3) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 201(3) of the Code the words “a Board” be deleted and the words “a Kirk Session (apart from missionaries) or the appropriate Council” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 202(2) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 202(2) of the Code the words “supervising Board” be deleted and the words “Kirk Session, supervising Council” substituted in their place.

GROUP B: RELATED CHANGE FOR COUNCIL FOR MISSION IN IRELAND**Anent Par 277(4) of the Code**

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 277(4) of the Code the words “auxiliary ministers,” be inserted after the word “elders,”.

REPORTS OF PRESBYTERIES

The **ARDS PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev PC Lyle is their Moderator; that the Very Rev Dr John Ross, Minister Emeritus of High Street, Holywood died on 31st August 2015; that the Rev HD McMorran, Minister Emeritus of Trinity, Bangor died on 10th October 2015; that the Rev MR Catney, Minister of St Andrew's, Bangor, was loosed from his Charge on 18th May 2015; that the Rev DW Leach resigned as Associate Minister of Hamilton Road, Bangor on 30th April 2015 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of Tyrone; that the Rev MR Catney, Minister without Charge under care of Presbytery was installed in Second Newtownards on 6th November 2015; that the Rev Lesley-Ann Wilson, presented credentials from the Presbytery of Down and was installed to the Charge of Ballycrochan on 11th September 2015; that the Rev David Stanfield was inducted as Associate Minister in First Bangor on 13th September 2015; that Mr GJ Simpson presented credentials from the Presbytery of East Belfast and was ordained and installed to the Charge of Ballywalter on 4th December 2015; that Mr SJ Lowry was licensed on 31st May 2015 and given credentials to the Presbytery of East Belfast; that Mr CN Lynn was licensed on 19th June 2015 and given credentials to the Presbytery of South Belfast; that the Rev Dr MJ Welsh was given credentials to the Presbytery of East Belfast; that the Rev CI Dickson presented credentials from the Presbytery of Omagh and was received as a Minister without Charge; that Mr DJ Gray presented credentials from the Presbytery of East Belfast and was received as a Licentiate; that Mr CN Lynn presented credentials from the Presbytery of South Belfast and was received as a Licentiate; that under their care are: as Ministers without Charge the Revs Dr SI Dennis, CI Dickson, CD Mawhinney, CG Anderson and David McKee (retired); as Licentiates Dr GW Clinton, Mr DJ Gray, Mr ML Gray, Mr CN Lynn, Mr JS McCrea and Mr JP McWatters; as Licentiates without Charge Mr DP Burke, Mr E Kirwan and Mr KJ Ward; that they held Consultations at Portaferry and Greyabbey; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed separately.

The **ARMAGH PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev Barry Reid is their Moderator; that the Rev Samuel McMillan, Minister Emeritus of Caledon and Minterburn died on 18th May 2015; that the Rev Dr Michael McClenahan, Minister of Knappagh and Lislooney, resigned his charge on 21st September 2015 and was received as Minister without Charge; that the Rev CG Harris, Minister of Ahorey and Clare, resigned his Charge on 28th January 2016 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of Iveagh; that Mr SM Hamilton presented credentials from the Presbytery of Dromore and was ordained and installed to the Charge of Cladymore and Tassagh on 8th May 2015; that Mr SD Kennedy presented credentials from the Presbytery of East Belfast and was received as a Licentiate; that Mr BS Preston was given credentials to the Presbytery of Carrickfergus; that under their care are: as Ministers without Charge the Revs Dr Michael McClenahan and JWP McConnell; as a Licentiate Mr SD Kennedy; as a Licentiate without Charge Mr PG Cleland; as Students Mr Edwin Frazer and Mr Craig Jackson; that they held Consultations at Ahorey and Moy; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed.

The **BALLYMENA PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev NAL Cameron is their Moderator; that the Rev Kenneth McConnell retired from the duties of the active ministry in Clough on 1st December 2015; that the Rev JC Simms retired from the duties of the active ministry in Rasharkin on 31st December 2015 ; that the Rev RH Houston resigned his appointment as Associate Minister in High Kirk on 19th June 2015, having received and accepted a call from Lucan and was given credentials to the Presbytery of Dublin and Munster; that the Rev TP McCullough, presented credentials from the Presbytery of Iveagh and was installed to the Charge of Third Portglenone on 27th March 2015; that Mr JR Kernohan was licensed as a Probationer for the Christian Ministry on 7th June 2015 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of Templepatrick; that Mr PA Kerr, a Licentiate under the care of Presbytery, having received and accepted a call to be Assistant to the Moderator of the General Assembly, was given credentials to the Presbytery of Route; that on 23rd February 2016, the Rev JC Stephens presented credentials from the Susquehanna Valley Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and was received as a Minister transferring from another Church; that they have under their care: as Licentiates Mr SW Orr and Mr DA McMillan; as Students for the Ministry Mr JJ Boyd, Mr M Boyd, Mr JA Porter, Mr RC Patton and Mr C Wilson; as a Minister transferring from another Church the Rev JC Stephens; that no Consultations were held during the year; that the Financial Reports of the Congregations are being printed separately.

The **NORTH BELFAST PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev TC Morrison is their Moderator; that the Rev RS Hetherington, Director of Ministerial Studies, retired on 31st March 2015; that the Rev Professor JP Taylor, MBE, TD, Theological Professor, UTC, retired on 15th February 2016; that Mr DR Cromie, a Licentiate under the care of Presbytery, having received and accepted a call to Greenisland, was given credentials to the Presbytery of Carrickfergus; that Mr MW Dodds, a Licentiate under the care of Presbytery, having received and accepted a call to Castlecaulfield and Eglisli, was given credentials to the Tyrone Presbytery; that Mr RE McCormick presented credentials from the Presbytery of Carrickfergus and was ordained and installed to the Congregation of Ballisyllan on 5th June 2015; that the Rev JSB Drennan was loosed from his Charge in Crumlin Road on 1st February 2016; that under their care are: as Ministers without Charge the Revs JSB Drennan; LH Eagleson; CI McKnight (retired), WA Shaw; WM Smyth (retired) and FW Vincent; as Licentiates Mr SD Currie, Mr MA Johnston, Mr JM Warburton and Mr RJ Watt; as a Licentiate without Charge Mr David McCarthy; as Students Mr Philip Houston and Mr Jonathan Newell; that they held Consultations at Immanuel and Alexandra; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed and will be supplied separately.

The **SOUTH BELFAST PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev RS Stockman is their Moderator; that the Rev TJ Wilson, Minister of Kilmakee died on 3rd December 2015; that the Rev WC Lynas, Minister Emeritus of Dunmurry died on 24th January 2016; that Mr Jonathan Abernethy-Barkley, a Licentiate, resigned on 31st November 2015 to take up a pastorate with Shotts Congregational Church in Scotland; that the Rev NS Harrison presented credentials from the Presbytery of East Belfast and was inducted as Chaplain, Royal Victoria Hospital

on 29th September 2015; that the Rev Dr PG McDowell, presented credentials from the Presbytery of East Belfast and was installed as Mission Support Officer in the Mission Department on 18th October 2015; that Mr CN Lynn presented credentials from the Presbytery of Ards; that Mr Gary McDowell, a Licentiate under the care of Presbytery, having received and accepted a Call to Greystones was given credentials to the Presbytery of Dublin and Munster; that Mr Brent van der Linde was licensed as a Probationer for the Christian Ministry on 28th June and was given credentials to the Presbytery of East Belfast; that Mr CN Lynn was given credentials to the Presbytery of Ards; that under their care are: as Ministers without Charge the Revs KA Drury and JD Maxwell; as a Licentiate Mrs CE Heron; as Students for the ministry Mr A Alvis-Averia, Mr John Martin and Dr Seth Wright; that they held Consultations at Cooke Centenary and Windsor; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed.

The **EAST BELFAST PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev Christoph Ebbinghaus is their Moderator; that the Rev NS Harrison, Minister of High Street, Holywood resigned his Charge on 31st July 2015 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of South Belfast; that the Rev BJ Walker, Associate Minister of Knock, resigned his Charge on 31st January 2016 and was received as a Minister without Charge under the care of the Presbytery; that the Rev Dr MJ Welsh presented credentials from the Presbytery of Ards and was installed to the work of Mission Development Officer, Council for Congregational Life and Witness on 8th November 2015; that Mr WA Dickey was licensed on 31st May 2015 and received as a Licentiate under the care of the Presbytery; that Mr DJ Gray was licensed on 14th June 2015 and given credentials to the Presbytery of Ards; that Mr DJ Kelly was licensed on 7th June 2015 and given credentials to the Presbytery of Carrickfergus; that Mr AJ McCracken was licensed on 7th June 2015 and given credentials to the Presbytery of Templepatrick; that Mr AS McQuade was licensed on 21st June 2015 and given credentials to the Presbytery of Down; that Mr Richard Cronin presented credentials from the Presbytery of Dublin and Munster, Mr SJ Lowry presented credentials from the Presbytery of Ards and Mr Brent van der Linde presented credentials from the Presbytery of South Belfast and were received as Licentiates; that the Rev Dr PG McDowell was given credentials to the Presbytery of South Belfast; that Mr GJ Simpson was given credentials to the Presbytery of Ards; that under their care are: as Ministers without Charge the Revs DR Baker, PP Campbell, WJ Harshaw and Dr DJ Montgomery; as Licentiates without Charge Mr SE Cowan and Mr Paul Orr; as Licentiates Mr GJ Ball, Mr JT Blue, Mr Richard Cronin, Mr WA Dickey, Mr SJ Lowry and Mr Brent van der Linde; as students Mr S Bostock, Mr A Downey, Mr B Johnston and Mr S Kennedy; that they held a Consultation at High Street, Holywood; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed.

The **CARRICKFERGUS PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev David Chapman is their Moderator; that the Very Rev Dr RVA Lynas, OBE, Minister Emeritus of Gardenmore died on 20th June 2015; that the Rev WG McConkey, Minister Emeritus of Ballycarry died on 31st December 2015; that Mr DR Cromie presented credentials from the Presbytery of North Belfast and was ordained and installed to the Charge of Greenisland on 26th June 2015; that Mr BS Preston presented credentials from the Presbytery of Armagh and was ordained and

installed to the Charge of Craigy Hill on 4th September 2015; that Mr Ian Cahoon was licensed on 31st May 2015; that Mr DJ Kelly presented credentials from the Presbytery of East Belfast and was received as a Licentiate; that Mr AD Burke presented credentials from the Presbytery of Coleraine and Limavady and was received as a Licentiate; that Mr Andrew Gill presented credentials from the Presbytery of Dublin and Munster and was received as a Licentiate; that Mr RE McCormick was given credentials to the Presbytery of North Belfast; that Mr AR Adger was given credentials to the Presbytery of Down; that under their care are: as a Minister without Charge the Rev RJ Gilkinson; as Licentiates Mr Andrew Gill, Mr RS Hamilton, Mr DJ Kelly, Mr Ian Cahoon and Mr AD Burke; as a Licentiate without Charge Mr CMS Barron; as Students Mr Bobby Orr and Mr Stuart Hawthorne; that no Consultations were held during the year; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed individually and in pamphlet form.

The **COLERAINE AND LIMAVADY PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev Andrew McConnell is their Moderator; that the Rev SJ Millar, Minister Emeritus of Hazelbank, Coleraine died on 11th July 2015; that Mr RJA McClure was licensed on 14th June 2015; that Mr AD Burke was licensed on 21st June 2015 and given credentials to the Presbytery of Carrickfergus; that under their care are: as Minister without Charge the Rev JD Mark; as a Licentiate Mr RJA McClure; as a Student Mr John Torrens; that no Consultations have been held; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed separately.

The **DERRY AND DONEGAL PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev DM Shaw is their Moderator; that the Rev Colin McKibbin was installed to the Charge of Alt on 19th April 2015; that Mr DJ Clarke presented credentials from the Presbytery of Tyrone and was received as Licentiate; that under their care are: as Ministers without Charge the Revs JC Teeney, KG Patterson and RA Mulholland; as Licentiates Mr DJ Clarke and Mr MTW McMaw; as Students Mr JD McKane and Mr RW McFaul; that they held Consultations at Donegal, Stranorlar and Kilfennan; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed.

The **DOWN PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev WH Higgins is their Moderator; that the Rev TW Gordon, Minister of First Comber, retired on 30th June 2016; that the Rev Lesley-Ann Wilson resigned as Associate Minister in First Comber on 17th March 2015; that Mr AR Adger, presented credentials from the Presbytery of Templepatrick and was ordained and installed to the Charge of Clough and Seaforde on 19th June 2015; that Mr BA Kee presented credentials from the Presbytery of Tyrone and was received as a Licentiate; that Mr AS McQuade presented credentials from the Presbytery of East Belfast and was received as a Licentiate; that the Rev Lesley-Ann Wilson, a Minister without Charge under the care of Presbytery was given credentials to the Presbytery of Ards; that Mr DT McNeill was given credentials to the Presbytery of Templepatrick; that under their care are: as Ministers without Charge the Revs Samuel Armstrong, JM Casement, RN Stewart, GR Stockdale; as Licentiates Mr BA Kee and Mr AS McQuade; as a Licentiate without Charge Mr MC Cowan; that they held no Consultations; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed.

The **DROMORE PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev DJ Bruce is their Moderator; that the Rev JI Davey, Minister of Hillsborough, retired on 31st May 2015; that the Rev WJ Todd, Minister of St Columba's, Lisburn, was loosed from his Charge on 15th January 2016 and received as a Minister without Charge under the care of Presbytery; that the Rev MN Davidson, presented credentials from the Presbytery of Iveagh and was installed to the Charge of Railway Street, Lisburn on 11th September 2015; that Mr SM Hamilton, on receiving a call from the Congregations of Cladymore and Tassagh was given credentials to the Presbytery of Armagh; that under their care are: as a Minister without Charge the Rev WJ Todd; as Licentiates Miss SJ Moore and Mr NW Duddy; as Students Mr R Aiken, Mr J Maguire and Mr P Poots; that they held a Consultation at First Lisburn; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed.

The **DUBLIN AND MUNSTER PRESBYTERY** that the Rev William Montgomery is their Moderator; that the Rev Thomas Campbell Davis, Minister Emeritus of Sligo and Boyle died on 19th September 2015; that the Rev Dr RWJ MacDermott, Minister Emeritus of Sandymount died on 28th March 2015; that the Rev TP McCaughey, Minister Emeritus died on 9th February 2016; that the Rev Gary McDowell, presented credentials from the Presbytery of South Belfast and was ordained and inducted to the Charge of Greystones on Saturday 16th May 2015; that the Rev RH Houston, presented credentials from the Presbytery of Ballymena and was installed to the Charge of Lucan on 20th June 2015; that Mr Richard Cronin, a Licentiate under the care of Presbytery, was given credentials to the Presbytery of East Belfast; that Mr Andrew Gill, a Licentiate under the care of Presbytery, was given credentials to the Presbytery of Carrickfergus; that they held a Consultation at Drogheda; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed.

The **IVEAGH PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev Raymond McKibbin is their Moderator; that the Rev TP McCullough, Minister of Ballyronney and Drumlee, resigned his Charge on 26th March 2015 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of Ballymena; that the Rev MN Davidson, Minister of Drumgooland and Kilkinamurry, resigned his Charge on 10th September 2015 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of Dromore; that the Rev TA Conway presented credentials from the Presbytery of Newry and was installed in Hilltown and Clonduff on 26th June 2015; that the Rev CG Harris presented credentials from the Presbytery of Armagh and was installed in Scarva Street on 29th January 2016; that Mr GR Mullan was licensed on the 14th June 2015 and given credentials to the Presbytery of Tyrone; that under their care are: as a Minister without Charge the Rev EG McAuley (retired); as a Licentiate Mr Andrew Boreland; as Students Mr M Rutledge and Mr K Parke; that no Consultations were held during the year; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed separately.

The **MONAGHAN PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev Stanley Stewart is their Moderator; that the Rev SG Anketell, Minister of First Bailieborough, Trinity Bailieborough and Corraneary, retired on 31st August 2015; that the Rev GA Mitchell, Minister of Sligo and Stated Supply of Boyle, retired on 1st November 2015; that the Rev DJM Boyle, Minister of First Castleblayney,

Frankford, Corvalley and Ervey, resigned his Charge on 15th September 2015 and was received as a Minister without Charge; that under their care are: as a Minister without Charge the Rev DJM Boyle; as a Student for the Ministry Mr Jonathan Porter; that no Consultations were held during the year; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed separately.

The **NEWRY PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev EJB McKenzie is their Moderator; that the Rev TA Conway, Moderator's Assistant in First Newry, resigned his Charge on 25th June 2015 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of Iveagh; that the Rev DB Murphy, Minister of Ryans and Brookvale, resigned his Charge on 30th September 2015 and was received as a Minister without Charge; that Mr Stephen Kennedy was licensed on 26th June 2015 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of Armagh; that under their care are: as a Minister without Charge the Rev DB Murphy; as a Student Mr CB Mulvenny; that they completed no Consultations; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed separately.

The **OMAGH PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev RG McElnea is their Moderator; that the Very Rev Dr JA Matthews, Minister Emeritus of Sixmilecross died on 19th July 2015; that the Rev WWMcI Craig, Minister Emeritus of Dromore and Drumquin died on 9th January 2016; that the Rev CFD Clements, Minister of Irvinestown, Pettigo and Tempo, resigned his Charge on 5th November 2015; that the Rev CFD Clements was installed to the Charge of Second Castlederg and Urney, on 6th November 2015; that the Rev CI Dickson, Minister without Charge, was given credentials to the Presbytery of Ards; that no Consultations were held during the year; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed separately.

The **ROUTE PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev William Harkness is their Moderator; that the Rev HW Mullan, Minister of Dromore and Drumreagh, retired on 28th February 2015; that Mr PA Kerr presented credentials from the Presbytery of Ballymena and was ordained and inducted as Moderator's Assistant in Trinity Ballymoney on 1st May 2015; that under their care are: as Ministers without Charge the Revs Dr Victor Dobbin CBE (retired) and William Brown (retired); as a Student Mr Richard Morrison; that they held a Visitation at Ramoan; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed separately.

The **TEMPLEPATRICK PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev Karen Campbell is their Moderator; that Mr DT McNeill, presented credentials from the Presbytery of Down and was ordained and installed to the Charge of First Randalstown and Duneane on 26th June 2015; that Mr AJ McCracken presented credentials from the Presbytery of East Belfast and Mr JR Kernohan presented credentials from the Presbytery of Ballymena and they were received as Licentiates; that under their care are: as Licentiates Mr RJ Edgar, Mr MPR Fryer, Mr JR Kernohan, Mr PWA McClelland and Mr AJ McCracken; that no Consultations were held during the year; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed separately.

The **TYRONE PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev JM Gracey is Moderator; that the Rev WI Ferris, Minister of First Stewartstown, Brigh and Albany resigned his Charge on 1st July 2015 and was received as a Minister without Charge under the care of Presbytery; that the Rev DW Leach, presented credentials from the Presbytery of Ards and was installed to the Charge of Lecumpher and Union Road, Magherafelt on 1st May 2015; that Mr MW Dodds, presented credentials from the Presbytery of North Belfast and was ordained and installed to the Charge of Castlecaulfield and Eglish on 11th September 2015; that Mr GR Mullan presented credentials from the Presbytery of Iveagh and was received as a Licentiate; that Mr DJ Clarke was licensed on 7th June 2015 and given credentials to the Presbytery of Derry and Donegal; that Mr BA Kee was licensed on 12th June 2015 and given credentials to the Presbytery of Down; that under their care are: as a Minister without Charge the Rev WI Ferris; as a Licentiate Mr GR Mullan; as a Licentiate without Charge Mr JA Dunn; that they held a Consultation at Dungannon; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed separately.

RESOLUTION

1. That the Report of the Presbyteries be received.

FINANCE AND STAFFING COMMISSION

Convener: Very Rev Dr RL CRAIG

Secretary: THE CLERK

1. The Commission met on two occasions since the last General Assembly and plans to meet for a third time towards the end of May 2016. The main work of the Commission during this session was largely to oversee matters arising from the restructuring of the General Assembly's work.

2. With new General Assembly Councils coming into being on 1st January 2015, this major aspect of restructuring is in place. Generally feedback has been positive with regard to the new Council Structures. **Councils had embraced the 'new beginning'**, organising opportunities to reflect on their remit, assist with the induction of new members etc. During the year there were occasional 'demarcation issues', which were mostly fairly easily resolved by the Clerk and the Commission Convener.

3. A modus operandi of the **General Council's Support Services Committee** and its Panels has been established and things are working well. A number of governance issues are being addressed, some of which are reported on in this year's General Council's report to the Assembly. The large remit of the **Council for Congregational Life and Witness** was being wisely handled, both by its officers and by the Council itself. The phased development of the internal structure of that Council was welcomed by the Commission, with some necessary changes agreed at the Council's request. The Commission noted that the **General Council** was coping with what would hopefully be a temporary back-log of work, which had necessitated the setting up of some eleven short term Task Groups.

4. The Clerk and Deputy Clerk were tasked with working on the routine **amendments to the Code**, necessary to reflect the new structures and these will be brought forward to the Assembly through the General Council.

5. The changes in the **General Assembly's staffing team** has by in large settled down. During the year some necessary decisions were taken by the Commission to facilitate staffing matters. In this regard, the Commission has been dealing with any business which would normally have come to the former Appraisals Committee, prior to that work becoming the responsibility of a dedicated Panel of the Priorities Committee following the 2016 General Assembly.

6. One significant matter which has been on the agenda of the Commission during this last session was an examination of **centrally owned assets of the Presbyterian Church, the use of which was not currently being maximised**. These include the premises at Elmwood Avenue (Council for Mission in Ireland); the Guysmere Centre and the Lucan Centre (former Board of Youth and Children's Ministry); and St Andrews Bungalows and Denegarh House and premises at York Road (Council for Social Witness).

- (a) The Commission noted that Council for Mission in Ireland had taken steps to stop the large losses by closing the café at Elmwood Avenue, with use now restricted to chaplaincy activity. The Commission welcomed that temporary arrangements had been put in place, with continued monitoring over the incoming twelve months as a permanent solution is found.
 - (b) The Commission noted and welcomed tentative plans for the possible developments at both the Guysmere and Lucan sites and hopes to be in a position to report further at the General Assembly.
 - (c) The Commission is engaging with representatives of the Council for Social Witness regarding St Andrews Bungalows and Denegarth House and the premises at York Road in Belfast. The Commission is also aware of, and shares, the concern of the Council for Social Witness with regard to the economic reality facing some of its residential facilities. This has also been highlighted during the year in the report of the Finance Panel of the Support Services Committee to the General Council. Again it is hoped the Commission will be in a position to report further at the General Assembly.
7. With its work largely completed the Commission is requesting that it be thanked and discharged at the 2016 General Assembly. It is recognised that the matters outlined in paragraph 6 above will however not be finalised. A suitable resolution is therefore appended to grant the General Council power to make necessary decisions on behalf of the Assembly during the incoming year.

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the General Council be instructed to oversee the matters outlined in paragraph 6 of the report of the Finance and Staffing Commission, along with any similar matters arising, and be authorised to make related decisions on behalf of the General Assembly.
2. That the report of the Finance and Staffing Commission be received.
3. That the Finance and Staffing Commission be thanked for its services and discharged.

JUDICIAL COMMISSION

Convener: Rev Dr DJ McKELVEY
Secretary: THE CLERK

1. The Judicial Commission has held two full meetings during the year, in addition to a short meeting in the course of last year's General Assembly.

2. Three matters have been before the Commission:

- (a) The fixing of allowances under Par 224 of the Code, at the request of Presbyteries.
- (b) The preliminary consideration of three appeals from decisions of Presbyteries. In each case, but for differing reasons, the Commission resolved not to hear the appeals.
- (c) The creation of a handbook on 'How to conduct Commissions under Par 161 and 224 of the Code and to how to hear Appeals'. This is the precursor to a series of training days that the Commission hopes to offer to Presbyteries during the next session.

3. The Commission remind those seeking to appeal that the grounds for valid appeal are set out in Par 164 of the Code and in particular that, for an appeal to be valid, it must:

Be lodged with the Clerk of the inferior court within ten days of the publishing of the finding appealed;

Be from a 'party to the case' – that is someone who is directly affected by the decision appealed;

State clearly the valid reasons why the decision is being appealed – simply disagreeing with the decision is not of itself a 'valid' reason.

4. In addition, it is a longstanding rubric of the Commission that it will not hear an appeal where action in the civil courts is either current or contemplated.

5. The Commission is anxious to assist in good practice in the conducting of Judicial process within the Church and therefore hopes that the training it contemplates will help in this. The Commission encourage Presbyteries to respond positively to the invitation to engage in the process.

6. In continuing the self-denying process whereby second term members are retiring early in order to bring about a rotational appointment system for the Commission, the Commission wishes to thank the Rev Gabrielle Farquhar, Mrs Elizabeth McLeod, Mr Alan Spence and the Rev Prof Patton Taylor, who retire this year, for their service to the Commission over the past eight years.

RESOLUTION

1. That the Report of the Judicial Commission be received.

SPECIAL JUDICIAL COMMISSION

Convener, Rev Dr DJ McKELVEY
Secretary: THE CLERK

It was not necessary for the Special Commission to meet.

RESOLUTION

1. That the Report of the Special Judicial Commission be received.

COMMISSION ON APPLICATIONS

THE CLERK, Convener

It was not necessary for the Commission on Applications to meet.

RESOLUTION

1. That the Report of the Commission on Applications be received.

LINKAGE COMMISSION

Convener: Rev WJ HENRY
Secretary: Mr TJ LIVINGSTONE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report summarises the work of the Union Commission from April-May 2015 and Linkage Commission from June 2015-March 2016. Matters dealt with include: the terms of leaves to call granted to 15 charges, the reviews of the financial terms in various leaves to call, and reports on the work of the internal Panels of the Commission.

Mr Tom Reid

2. It was with great sadness that the Commission learned of the passing of the Co-Convener of the Church Architecture and Manses Panel. Mr Reid had given many years of service as a Presbytery representative on the previous Union Commission and most recently as a Panel Convener. His common sense and knowledge of the realities of Church life is a great loss in the day-to-day workings of the Commission.

Defaulting Congregations

3. The Commission has in recent years made the Assembly aware of the potential difficulties that lie in the future for the Church when individual Congregations are not able to meet their central assessments, including payment of stipend. The Financial Secretary's Department will ensure that when payments do come from individual Congregations in this situation that the payments will first be directed towards stipend. However, any unpaid assessment is still a debt. The Commission, in following the direction of the Assembly, will investigate and discuss with local representatives to determine what must be done, all the while being aware of the financial strain on the Congregation.

4. Regrettably in the past year this has again meant that a Minister has had to be loosed from his charge ahead of a reconfiguration of ministry. It cannot be stated strongly enough how much the stress and pain that such unavoidable action causes to all parties but especially to the Minister and his family.

5. The Commission urges Presbyteries to be involved at an early stage where it becomes apparent that financial difficulties are becoming worryingly significant.

New Forms of Call

6. During the year the Commission updated many of the forms that are in regular use either for application for Leave to Call, the Leave to Call document, and the Form of Call to a Minister. Where appropriate similar forms have been created for Part-Time ministries. These are in immediate use. The Form of Call to a Minister (Part-Time) and Auxiliary Minister are reported to the Assembly as Appendix 1 as these have traditionally been printed at the end of the Code.

Part-Time Ministry

7. The Commission has reflected further on some practical aspects which have come to light in relation to the on-going implementation of the Part-time ministry scheme. For example, the implications of preparation time in situations where more than one sermon might be required in a week. Updated guidelines are included at Appendix 2.

Auxiliary Ministry Scheme

8. To facilitate the further implementation of this new scheme of the Assembly it has been necessary to provide guidelines to assist Kirk Sessions which might be considering appointing an Auxiliary Minister (Appendix 3). Some changes in the Code are necessary to take account of the existence of Auxiliary Ministry posts. Overtures will be transmitted.

Longer Term Stated Supplies

9. Medium to Long term “Stand-Alone” Stated Supply arrangements do not necessarily achieve the purposes for which they were created and oftentimes can result in a sense of contentedness within a Congregation so that it will be resistant to further change or re-alignment. Instead of enabling and facilitating the Congregation to move towards a positive resolution of a vacancy, a negative co-dependence between Stated Supply and Congregation can result. This in no way detracts from the very many positive Stated Supply arrangements that have existed where a Minister (under the oversight of Presbytery) has been charged with a very specific time-limited role of building a Congregation up after a period of unease and upheaval.

10. The Linkage Commission must seek to encourage Presbyteries to see obvious new linkage partners at an early occasion (preferably immediately) but certainly within a couple of years. The Linkage Commission must consider long and hard before breaking future linkages.

11. Neighbouring Ministers acting as Stated Supplies should be considered slightly differently as the relationship is one that might be compared to courtship prior to marriage. Where it might be expedient to delay a linkage such relationships should be supported and encouraged.

Register of Retired Ministers

12. For a number of years, in order to assist Conveners of Vacancies and others, the Commission has made available a register of retired Ministers who are willing to assist with preaching and pastoral duties. It has been decided to stop maintaining this register due to lack of use.

Minister’s Self-Certification of Illness

13. The Commission issued a reminder of the need for Ministers, should they be off ill for more than 3 days and unable to work, to self-certify for that period. After a week of absence from work due to illness they must produce a doctor’s certificate. This is a legal requirement under state law where, for tax purposes Ministers are regarded as employees, and it is also a requirement of the Church. The Financial Secretary’s Department must be able to keep an accurate record of all instances of ministerial illness over a rolling two-year period.

Guidelines for Interviews at Vacancies

14. In 2015 the Union Commission brought draft Guidelines to the General Assembly for interviews at Vacancies. The previous Guidelines, which dated back to 1988 (MGA page 69) included this paragraph: *(f) Where there is a sole nominee of a hearing committee, or only one candidate preaches for the Congregation, a brief report from the meeting, agreed by the candidate and approved by the Vacancy Commission, may be read when the Congregation meet to decide on a Call.*

15. The word ‘meeting’ here refers to an interview by the hearing committee. The Code neither allows nor prohibits the practice. It does allow for a Hearing Committee to report to the Congregation at a meeting to call at Code Par 195(3): *On the day and at the time specified and after the hearing committee, if any, have reported, the Minister presiding shall ascertain by a vote of the Congregation whether they desire to propose that a call be issued to any candidate on the list.*

16. Accordingly the draft Guidelines brought by the Union Commission last year included, along with those for Kirk Session Interviews, guidelines for Hearing Committee Interviews. The Assembly removed the Hearing Committee Interview guidelines but did NOT either endorse or rule out the possibility of such interviews taking place. This left the Church with no guidelines at all for Hearing Committee Interviews.

17. Those present at the debate gained a sense that the Assembly did not wish Hearing Committee Interviews to take place at all and so a new set of guidelines for Kirk Session Interviews only and which explicitly rules out the possibility of Hearing Committee Interviews is provided (Appendix 4 Option A).

18. However, since this would be a change of policy from something that has prevailed since 1988, an alternative set of guidelines which include the possibility of Hearing Committee Interviews is provided (Appendix 4 Option B). With both sets provided in the General Assembly Reports, it is hoped that the 2016 Assembly will be able to have an informed debate and come to a cogent determination.

Leave To Call A Minister

19. This is only a summary - there may well be conditions attached to the Leave to Call, which are not recorded here. These might include Part-time, Reviewable Tenure, Restricted List, additional income for Minister etc. When a figure is set the year denotes when Leave to Call was granted. This figure will increase automatically under the annual Stipend Review. Expenses are “initial ministerial expenses” and are to be kept under review and paid in accordance with the procedures agreed by the General Council’s Support Services Committee.

Congregation	Stipend	Expenses
Drumreagh & Dromore	£30,000 [2015]	£7,500
Killymurriss	£4,000 [2015]	£970
Ballyrashane	£29,000 [2015]	£7,500
1st Comber	£AMM [2015]	£7,500
Stream	£36,500 [2015]	£7,500
	£32,658 [2015]	£7,500

Hillsborough	£39,658 [2015]	£7,500
Donemana	£29,158 [2015]	£7,500
Ballyrone &	75% of £ AMM [2015]	£6,000
Drumlee	25% of £ AMM [2015]	£2,000
Christ Church, Rathgar	€ AMM [2015]	€12,500
Knappagh &	50% of £ AMM [2015]	£3,750
Lislooney	50% of £ AMM [2015]	£3,750
St. Andrews, Bangor	£ AMM [2015]	£7,200
Belmont	£38,658 [2016]	£7,600
1st Donaghadee	£26,500 [2016]	£7,500
Drumgooland &	£19,360 [2016]	£5,600
Kilkinamurphy	£8,360 [2016]	£2,400
Clough	£33,488 [2016]	£7,500
Rasharkin	£ AMM	£7,500

(Note: BMM = Basic Ministerial Minimum; AMM = Appropriate Ministerial Minimum)

Leave To Call An Associate Minister

Orangefield	£AMM	£5,900 Expenses & £2,000 Housing Allowance
Knock	£AMM	£4,500 Expenses & £3,000 Housing Allowance
Bangor West	£AMM	£6,000 Expenses & £2,000 Housing Allowance

Extension of Reviewable Tenure Ministries

20. Reviewable Tenure Ministry in Ballycairn was extended for an Interim period to allow time for an additional report from the Presbytery of South Belfast.

21. Reviewable Tenure Ministry in Carlow and Athy was extended for 7 years from 30th November 2015. It was further agreed that the Minister be asked to carry out research into missional opportunities in Athy and report back to the Presbytery of Dublin and Munster.

22. The Reviewable Tenure Ministry in Clontibret and Middletown was extended for an interim period to allow for the Presbytery of Monaghan to bring forward a Plan for Ministry within its bounds, particularly in the light of a number of current vacancies.

Stated Supply Arrangements

23. During the past year the Commission has renewed a number of previous nominations for a further period in co-operation with the appropriate Presbytery. New Stated Supply arrangements in Tobermore and Draperstown, Vinecash, Great Victoria Street, Belfast and May Street, Belfast, 1st Stewartstown, Brigh and Albany were effected.

Amalgamation

24. Following discussions between the Kirk Session and Presbytery, the Commission has agreed to the Presbytery's request that Berry Street Congregation

be amalgamated with another, as yet unidentified, Congregation. The permission of the General Assembly is required and a resolution is appended.

REVIEWS, EXPENSES and FEES PANEL

Mr James Livingstone reports:

Reviews

25. In accordance with Par 236(2) of the Code and arising out of other circumstances the Reviews Committee reviewed the stipend of the following Congregations:

Congregation	Stipend
ARDS PRESBYTERY	
Ballygrainey	No Change
Trinity, Bangor	No Change
Regent Street, Newtownards	No Change
Carrowdore & Ballyfrenis	Increase by £500
Shore Street, Donaghadee	No Change
Helen's Bay	No Change
Kilcooley	Increase by £1000 per year for 2 years.
ARMAGH PRESBYTERY	
1st Lurgan	No Change
1st Keady &	No Change
Armaghbrague	No Change
Richhill	
No Change	
BALLYMENA PRESBYTERY	
Ballykeel	Increase by £500 per year for 2 years
West Church, Ballymena	No Change
Ballee	Reduce by £3,000 With Annual Review
NORTH BELFAST PRESBYTERY	
Rosemary	No Change
Newington	No Change
Ballygomartin	No Change
Fortwilliam & Macrory	Increase by £2,000
Eglinton	No Change
Woodvale	No Change
New Mossley	Increase by £1,000 With Annual Review
SOUTH BELFAST PRESBYTERY	
Kilmakee, Seymour Hill	No Change

EAST BELFAST PRESBYTERY

Castlereagh	No Change
Bloomfield	No Change
Granshaw	No Change

CARRICKFERGUS PRESBYTERY

Whitehead	No Change
Woodlands	No Change

COLERAINE & LIMAVADY PRESBYTERY

Ballysally	Increase by £1,000 per year for 2 years with Annual Review
1st Garvagh	No Change
Drumachose &	No Change
Derramore	No Change
Castlerock	No Change
Portstewart	No Change
Portrush	No Change
1st Kilrea	No Change

DERRY & DONEGAL PRESBYTERY

Ramelton &	No Change
Kilmacrennan	No Change
Ray &	No Change
Newtowncunningham	No Change
Ballyarnet &	No Change
Knowhead	No Change

DOWN PRESBYTERY

1st Comber	No Change
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DROMORE PRESBYTERY

Cargycreevy &	No Change
Loughaghery	No Change
1st Dromore	No Change
Legacurry	No Change
Magheragall	No Change

DUBLIN & MUNSTER PRESBYTERY

Maynooth	No Change
Clontarf & Scots	No Change
Christ Church, Sandymount	No Change
Donabate	Review in 2016
Abbey, Dublin	Increase by €2,500
Mountmellick	Increase by €300

IVEAGH PRESBYTERY

Garvaghy &	Increase by £500
Anaghlonge	Increase by £500

MONAGHAN PRESBYTERY

Drumkerran &	No Change
Killeshandra &	No Change
Cavan &	No Change
Bellasis	No Change

NEWRY PRESBYTERY

Tullyallen &	No Change
Mountnorris	No Change
1st Drumbanagher & Jerretspass	No Change
Kingsmills	No Change

OMAGH PRESBYTERY

Dromore &	Increase by £500
Drumquin	Increase by £500
Ardstraw &	No Change
Douglas	No Change
Trinity, Omagh &	No Change
Gillygooley	No Change
Corrick	Increase by £500

TEMPLEPATRICK PRESBYTERY

1st Ballyeaston	No Change
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TYRONE PRESBYTERY

Dungannon	No Change
Culnady &	No Change
Swatragh	No Change

Travel Expenses

26. The Commission, through its Reviews, Expenses and Fees Panel, gives guidance to Congregational Committees about Travel Expenses and its recommendations are based on information available from the motoring organisations in the UK and RoI.

27. For 2016, based on an average of 14,400 business miles per year, the recommended figures take into account the continuing reductions in the cost of motoring in NI, and a similar pattern for RoI.

Northern Ireland: £5,985 Republic of Ireland €10,000

Ministers recording a higher business mileage should be paid more, while a lower amount may be appropriate to those who do not record as many business miles.

28. As it has done for a number of years, the Commission uses 125% of travel recommendations in setting its recommended figures for total expenses which are as follows in 2016:

Northern Ireland: £7,500 Republic of Ireland: €12,500

Review of Ministerial Expenses System and the Proposal regarding a 2-Part Expenses Scheme for PCI

29. The issue of the Scheme by which PCI makes payments to its Ministers in respect of expenses has been considered by the (former) Union Commission and the Linkage Commission for a number of years. To set the matter in context: “Expenses” are reasonable legitimate costs directly incurred by an individual arising out of their employment.

30. The current system is that, at the time when the Linkage Commission grants Leave to Call, in addition to setting a Stipend Figure, it sets a Minimum Expenses figure. This figure is based on two elements: travel and heat and light of a manse.

31. In setting the total figure using this methodology the Commission seeks to reflect what was felt to be a reasonable average figure but it remains an art rather than a science.

32. In the Union Commission report to the 2015 General Assembly on this issue of the Review of Ministerial Expenses it stated that: “The fundamental aim of the review is to ensure that the system for the payment of Expenses ensures that Ministers are fully reimbursed for ALL the expenses they incur in the course of their work, whilst at the same time achieving a system that is fully transparent, accurate and accountable.” It went on to state that at the February Meeting of the then Union Commission the following report was received:

- “ 1. A “Pure Reimbursement System” for ministerial travel expenses in which Congregational Treasurers would reimburse Ministers monthly, on the basis of accurate records of daily work-related travel, but which would not detail individual visits. Reimbursement would be at the rate recognised by HMRC, or the equivalent in RoI and this would therefore remove travel expenses completely from the Ministers’ taxable returns.
 2. An Expenses Allowance to cover the other work-related expenses which are significantly more difficult to measure and record, with the Linkage Commission continuing to set this figure, as under the current system. It would continue to be the Ministers’ responsibility to account for this element of ministerial expenses in their tax returns.”
33. The details of a proposed scheme are contained in Appendix 5.

Supply Fee

34. The level of Supply Fee is determined by the Code, Par 238, and for 2016 this is £100 (€155), and £66 (€105) where only a single service is supplied in one Congregation. Travelling expenses should be paid in accordance with the rate set for attendance at Assembly Councils, currently 15p (22 cents) per mile.

35. The Panel has also considered the level of Supply Fee payable where in a Linkage two or more Morning Services and a separate Evening Service are conducted. A recommendation is brought that in such circumstances the Supply Fee should be 125% of the Full Supply Fee.

CHURCH ARCHITECTURE AND MANSES PANEL

Mr Brian Knox reports:

36. The remit of the Panel is: the consideration of the site and plans of all new buildings proposed to be erected on congregational property and of all proposed demolition, structural alterations of or structural additions to existing buildings; the consideration of proposals and designs for memorials, windows, artificial lighting and for seating and furnishings including the installation of audio-visual systems; and making recommendations to Linkage Commission in respect of a wide variety of manse issues.

37. All enquiries and submissions for the Church Architecture and Manses Panel should be sent to Miss Lorraine Beatty, Property Support Officer, Assembly Buildings, 2-10 Fisherwick Place, Belfast, BT1 6DW.

38. The Panel has met six times since September 2015 and considered thirty-eight applications ranging from the construction of new Churches, halls and manses, extensions to Church halls and manses, removal of pews for wheelchair access, to the provision of new screens and projectors. Thirty-five applications were recommended to Linkage Commission for approval, while three applications were either at a very early stage or required the provision of further information.

39. The Panel gave consideration to the existing Guidelines on Manses and prepared new guidelines (Appendix 6), which were approved by the Linkage Commission at the February 2016 meeting.

**ADDITIONAL PASTORAL PERSONNEL AND
AUXILIARY MINISTRY PANEL**

The Rev Colin Gamble reports:

40. In the past year the Linkage Commission approved the creation of 21 new APP posts and the extension of 13 existing posts. It also authorised the creation of one Congregational Auxiliary Ministry post and Leave to Call was issued.

41. Guidelines are available from the Convener of the Panel to help Kirk Sessions through the process of creating a new APP post. These Guidelines ought to be consulted as early as possible and followed. Advice from Peninsula Business Services should also be sought in all cases. No post can be advertised until approval is received from both Presbytery and the Linkage Commission.

42. Extensions to existing APP posts also require approval from Presbytery and the Linkage Commission. A number of these requests have reached the Linkage Commission late. Therefore, when appointing someone to a fixed-term post, Kirk Sessions ought to note when the contract ends so that an early decision can be made on whether to extend the post when the times comes.

43. New APP Salary Scales for 2016 as shown below were agreed by the Linkage Commission at its meeting in December 2015. These are also available from the Convener of the Panel. Kirk Sessions should normally follow the Salary Scales when creating a new post. Advice is given in the Guidelines for when it might be appropriate to award a salary increment to an employee in an existing post.

APP Recommended Salary Scales 2016

	Sterling salary pt	E u r o salary pt	Level of responsibility of post	Qualification attained by employee or level of experience
Band A	£17,695 £18,328 £18,968 £19,605 £20,415 £21,047	€27,418 €28,400 €29,391 €30,377 €31,634 €32,612	Mostly direct work with children, young people or adults under close regular supervision; low management responsibility for people or projects.	Obtained or working towards OCN level 2&3 qualifications, PCI Youth/Children's Ministry Course or similar qualification in the relevant field; Where this level of qualification is not held, demonstrated experience in this field of activity may be deemed equivalent.
Band B	£22,070 £23,071 £24,105 £25,172 £25,901	€34,197 €35,749 €37,350 €39,004 €40,134	General responsibility for specific areas of programme and ministry oversight; graduating and less closely supervised responsibility for programmes, strategy, volunteers or leaders.	Appropriate recognition of attainment or working towards undergraduate or postgraduate theological study or professional qualifications (including Youth & Community, teaching qualification or other related professional qualifications such as counselling or social work). Where this level of qualification is not held, demonstrated experience in this field of activity may be deemed equivalent.

Please note:

1. This salary scale was initially based on the JNC Youth and Community work scale (2009) for the UK and has since been updated annually. The ROI salary scale will be the appropriate salary point multiplied by the ROI Ministerial Minimum (€37,377) and divided by the NI Ministerial Minimum (£24,122) i.e. uplifted by PCI's agreed percentage for ROI cost of living differential.
2. The above rates are deemed to apply to a minimum of 37.5 hours per week. For employees working less than 37.5 hours per week a pro-rata rate is applicable.
3. The APPAM Panel Convener of the Linkage Commission should be contacted for the most up to date figures and for advice on their interpretation.
4. Guidelines for creating Congregational Ministry Auxiliary posts are available from the Convener of the Panel. Kirk Sessions are advised to make

contact with the Convener as early as possible when investigating the possibility of creating an AM post. Proposals to create such posts should normally come to the Linkage Commission through the Presbytery.

45. Ministers are reminded to seek approval from Presbytery and the Linkage Commission before undertaking paid public appointments, sometimes referred to as 'Extra-Parochial Work', which we have defined as 'Remunerated work outside of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland undertaken by a parish Minister that amounts to more than six hours in any week.' A return form, available from the Convener of the Panel, should normally be sent in prior to the commencement of the appointment and then annually by 15th September.

APPENDIX 1

Form of Call documents

Form of Call to a Minister (Part-Time Ministry Scheme)

We, the members of the congregation of.....
in connection with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland having heard a good report of you
and being fully satisfied of your fitness to be our minister in the Lord, do hereby call and invite you to undertake the work of the ministry among us.

We promise to respect you for your work's sake, to attend to your instruction in the Gospel, and to submit to the discipline of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, according to the law of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we further promise as stipend in pursuance of our obligations under paragraph 195(11) of the Code, the annual sum of £/€, commencing from the date of installation and payable monthly, with increase in accordance with paragraph 236 of the Code, together with the annual income of such endowments, held in connection with the congregation, as are available for your benefit (if any) and the annual sum of £/€ from investment income over which the congregation or its Session or Committee or Trustees have absolute power of disposal; together with the use of the glebe (if any) and (tick as appropriate):

- right of residence in the manse, in which you are required to reside during the period of your active ministry in this congregation, free of rent, rates and taxes, after which period you must vacate the manse; and promising that if a manse be not available then to provide other suitable residence on the same conditions, free of rent, rates and taxes, from which you can conveniently discharge your congregational duties, or to make such other arrangements as may be required under Paragraph 273(14).
- no right of residence in the manse. Housing Allowance £/€ _____ per annum.

And we hereby undertake to contribute to the Central Ministry Fund according to the regulations for the time being of the General Assembly; and

to meet as a congregational expense the cost for a holiday pulpit supply for six weeks annually during vacation and acknowledge your entitlement to avail of both in-service and sabbatical leave under the terms approved from time to time by the General Assembly.

This Call is made out in conformity with the terms fixed by the Linkage Commission, a copy of which is herewith attached.

Dated and signed at this day of in the year

We certify that we attended in the congregation of this day of in the year by appointment of the Presbytery of as its Commission and that we were present at the signing of the call.

..... Moderator
.....
.....

Form of Call for an Auxiliary Minister

We, the Kirk Session of the congregation of in connection with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, being persuaded of your fitness to minister to the congregation in the Lord, do hereby call and invite you to undertake the work of the ministry of the Word among us as Auxiliary Minister, in accordance with the provisions of Paragraphs 36, 72, 128 and 201 of the Code of this Church.

We promise to respect you for your work’s sake; to attend to your instruction in the Gospel; and to conform to the Terms of Call agreed with the Linkage Commission.

Dated and signed at this day of, 20.....
..... Moderator of Kirk Session
..... Clerk of Kirk Session

APPENDIX 2

Part-Time Ministry Guidelines Revised October 2015

A. Introduction:

1. In June 2010 it was resolved, “That the General Assembly adopt the Scheme for Part-Time Ministry”, (2010 General Assembly Minutes page 71, resolution 35). The scheme referred to was included as Appendix 1 of the report of the Ministries Panel of the General Board, (2010 General Assembly Reports, pages 93-94), and is attached to this report for ease of reference.

2. At the outset it should be clearly noted that, while there are lots of ways in which individuals can exercise a ministry which might be described as part-time in nature, e.g. Stated Supply or under Par 81(3) of the Code, the ‘Scheme for Part-Time Ministry of Word and Sacrament’ is the scheme as approved by the General Assembly in 2010. The following therefore apply:

- (a) The Linkage Commission has been authorised, after appropriate consultation, to declare a particular charge to be a “Part-Time charge” (2010 Report 2.1).
- (b) Such changes to the status of a charge can only be made at the time of a vacancy or of a realignment (2.3).
- (c) The Linkage Commission has the responsibility of granting Leave to Call to such a charge (2.2).
- (d) Such charges are not normally open to licentiates but only to those “who are already ordained as Ministers of Word & Sacrament” (2.4).
- (e) Such charges are not open to those who have retired from the Ministry of PCI, in that a retired Minister is not eligible to be called to any vacant charge – once a pension has been taken a Minister cannot ‘un-retire’. However, a Minister could apply for a call to a Part-Time charge immediately prior to retirement, and indeed work in it until the age of 70, (the current compulsory retirement age for Ministers), not taking their pension until eventual retirement from that Part-Time charge.

B. Guidelines

1. In considering the creation of a Part-Time charge, the Linkage Commission shall consult with:

- The Presbytery concerned;
- The congregation, or congregations concerned;
- Any other appropriate bodies e.g. the Council for Mission in Ireland in the case of Home Mission congregations, Urban Mission congregations or ‘church planting’ type situations.

Such consideration may be initiated either by the Presbytery or by the Linkage Commission.

2. After the conclusion of consultations, the Linkage Commission, in situations where it is clearly deemed appropriate, may declare a congregation, or a linkage, to be a Part-Time charge. In doing so the Commission should specify the following:

- The proportion of appropriate Ministerial Minimum which would be paid to the Minister;
- The amount of pastoral and other work to be carried out;
- Any other necessary matters e.g. clarity regarding occupancy of the Manse, holidays, other supplies etc. Particular attention needs to be given to envisaged arrangements for emergency cover outside the part-time hours period and the Presbytery will be required to ensure that the detail of this is fully understood and agreed prior to any eventual call being sustained.
- **In relation to the manse**

Where there is no manse an allowance in lieu of manse shall be set by the Linkage Commission.

Where there is a manse and the minister chooses not to live in it, no allowance shall be paid in lieu.

Where the terms under Leave to Call leave it optional, the issue of residency in the manse ought to be settled before a call is issued.

3. The congregation, or linkage, should then follow the normal vacancy procedures i.e. filling in vacancy forms, under the supervision of the Presbytery Commission, and seeking Leave to Call from the Linkage Commission. Where representatives of a charge have already appeared before the Linkage Commission, and Part-Time Ministry subsequently emerges from the ensuing consultations as the best way forward in the situation, then Leave to Call may be issued by the Linkage Commission if the details have been communicated to the representatives and they have been given opportunity to comment before a final decision is made.

4. The Linkage Commission may grant Leave to Call for Part-Time Ministry as either 'reviewable tenure' or 'unrestricted', though it is envisaged that the former will be the norm. Terms will be set, as with a normal Leave to Call, taking account of all of the details agreed when the charge was declared Part-Time.

5. Once a charge has been given leave to call for Part-Time Ministry, any qualified ordained Minister of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, who has not retired from the ministry, shall be eligible to apply for such a Part-Time charge (although in exceptional circumstances a Licentiate may be declared eligible by the Linkage Commission when Presbytery requests it, and in Home Mission situations where the CMI agrees it). A Minister called to such a charge shall be a full member of the courts of the Church.

6. If a congregation or linkage, which has obtained leave to call for Part-Time Ministry, but has not yet called a Minister, wishes to seek to have ministry delivered in another way e.g. by a Stated Supply or by a temporary assistant under par 81(3) of the Code, the Congregation shall first apply to the Linkage Commission for withdrawal of the Leave to Call a Part-Time Minister before progressing any such arrangement.

7. Part-Time ministry is understood to cover the provision for the morning (or main) diet of worship, whether that is one or more services. As a guideline, one session per week ought to be allowed for preparation. For illustration purposes, a 50% part-time ministry call would be considered as 5 sessions per week (excluding Sunday) – where a session is a morning, afternoon or evening.

8. As a guideline, where there is a midweek service to be taken one session will include the service and preparation time, recognising that this allocation of time may extend to other parts of the week.

9. Where there is an evening service, either regular or occasional, it will be understood that the congregation make a payment of the appropriate supply fee to the minister for the conduct of these services of worship. Payment for this would be at General Assembly supply fee rates. It is understood that preparation time for this additional service is included within the supply fee and would be additional to the agreed sessions of work. The part-time minister would not be obligated to conduct evening services, but would be responsible for organising supply cover.

10. The Presbytery is strongly encouraged to appoint a continuing Commission for a period of one year after installation to oversee the practical outworkings of the locally agreed arrangements for ministry.

Notes:

(a) Financial

- Both a Minister in a Part-Time charge and the congregation(s) will

pay the usual percentage of stipend as a contribution to pension. The anticipated level of pension will obviously reflect the fact that a part time salary will be paid.

- All other assessments will be paid as normal by the congregation.
- A Part-Time Minister will only have the right to claim augmentation, or incremental grant, to bring his/her stipend up to the proportion of appropriate ministerial minimum set for the charge in which they serve.
- The Linkage Commission shall not set expenses any higher in a situation where the minister resides some distance from the church in his/her own house. These are minimum expenses and a congregation may wish to pay expenses at a higher rate, though the minister is reminded he/she will be required to justify his/her expenses payments received to the relevant tax authorities.

(b) Extra parochial work

- It is recognised that a Part-Time Minister may be involved in part-time extra parochial work to supplement his/her income. This employment would require the approval of the Linkage Commission, through the Additional Appointments and Auxiliary Ministry Panel, following normal procedures. The Panel will consider the nature of the work and the time commitment involved. While common sense will prevail, clearly some types of employment would not be appropriate for a Minister of Word and Sacrament.
- Where information about the extra parochial work is available before the Call is issued this permission must be obtained before the Presbytery proceeds to issue the call.
- Acceptance of a call involves acceptance of the authority of the Linkage Commission to determine these matters, including the right to decline to authorise particular types of employment.

General Assembly Reports 2010 pages 93f Appendix 1

Towards a Scheme for Part Time Ministry of Word & Sacrament in PCI

1. Introduction

1.1 Over the past number of years it has become apparent that PCI needs to have more flexibility in its use of Ministerial resources. One such change that could prove helpful would be to permit the Union Commission to give leave to call for 'part-time Ministry of Word & Sacrament' to a charge where that was the most appropriate way to proceed.

1.2 While it is not envisaged that a large number of such positions would be created, such posts could be attractive to a number of Ministers and may prove a useful option for Presbyteries and the Union Commission to have available for specific situations. Such a part-time congregational ministry could also be linked to a part-time non-parish ministry.

2. The Basic Scheme

2.1 After consultation, with the Presbytery concerned and other relevant bodies, the Union Commission, in situations where it is clearly deemed appropriate, should be authorised to create a position which is deemed to be a 'part-time charge'.

2.2 The Union Commission in granting 'leave to call' to such positions should both set the stipend at a suitable proportion of appropriate ministerial minimum and also specify the hours to be worked etc.

2.3 No current full-time position would be permitted to 'evolve' into a part-time position during a ministry. Such changes to the status of a charge can only be made at the time of a vacancy or realignment.

2.4 It should be clearly understood that any provision of posts in PCI which were deemed to be part-time Ministry of Word & Sacrament would be open only to those who are *already ordained as Ministers of Word & Sacrament*.

2.5 The Union Commission should exercise due care in creating such positions, taking into account not only the local need, but the use of ministry personnel throughout PCI.

APPENDIX 3

Guidelines for Kirk Sessions in filling Auxiliary Ministry Posts

1. These Guidelines are intended to help Kirk Sessions in filling an Auxiliary Ministry post once one has been created by the Linkage Commission.

2. The Guidelines on the operation of the Scheme were agreed by the 2015 General Assembly and are attached for reference.

3. Comment on C.6: The following applies where there is any form of remuneration, but not if the Auxiliary Minister is called on an expenses only basis. It is very important to get tax and related matters right and to know what arrangements will be put in place prior to the Auxiliary Minister starting work. Auxiliary Ministers are called and commissioned, and are therefore not employees (B.1). How someone is treated for tax purposes, however, is a different matter, depending on the location of the congregation(s) (and not of the Auxiliary Minister's residence).

- (a) In Northern Ireland, Ordained Ministers and Commissioned Deaconesses, while 'office holders' and not 'employees', are treated as 'employed' for tax purposes. As another member of the 'staff-team' who is an 'office holder', the Auxiliary Minister is also not an 'employee' but should be treated as 'employed' for tax purposes in the same way. This means that the congregation(s) will need to operate a PAYE system with payment of tax and National Insurance Contributions, if appropriate. Kirk Sessions should ensure they comply with statutory workplace pension requirements. At the time of writing relevant information can be found online at <https://www.gov.uk/workplace-pensions>.
- (b) For the Republic of Ireland, Auxiliary Ministers, as 'office holders', are deemed to be self-employed for tax purposes.

4. In both jurisdictions the final responsibility for being aware of and following tax, pension and related regulations lies with the Kirk Session(s).

5. Comment on C.12: While it is stated that a Congregation may appoint a particular individual they identify, the advice from the PCI Personnel department is, that if the post is remunerated, best practice would be that other suitably qualified people should be given the opportunity to apply. To give effect to this, the Linkage Commission will inform all those eligible to be called as Auxiliary Ministers once Leave to Call (Appendix 2) has been given that a post exists and inform them that if they are interested in applying they should contact the Minister concerned. Kirk Sessions will then need to give anyone who does this all relevant information and send them an application form. Kirk Sessions must then consider any applications received. This does not mean that all or any applicants have to be 'heard' or even interviewed, but it does mean that applications have to be fairly considered. If Kirk Sessions have a particular individual in mind, they too should fill in an application form. 5. Sequencing should be as follows:

- (a) Leave to Call granted by Linkage Commission.
- (b) Allow three weeks from issuing of Leave to Call to receipt of expressions of interest.
- (c) Send out information and application forms to all who express interest.
- (d) Allow three weeks for return of application forms. (But once all to whom forms have been sent either return them or indicate formally that they will not be applying the next step can be undertaken without waiting the full three weeks). The application form must include on it space for the applicant to include information about any other remunerated employment they are engaged in or are currently applying for.
- (e) Any information about any other remunerated employment applicants are engaged in or applying for must be sent to the Convener of the Additional Pastoral Personnel and Auxiliary Ministry Panel for Linkage Commission approval before proceeding further (B.7).
- (f) Once any necessary approval under e. above is received, Kirk Sessions may proceed to interview.
- (g) Kirk Sessions may ask the candidate or candidates to preach before issuing a Call. This may not be necessary if there is only one candidate it is wished to proceed with after interview and they have previously preached in the congregation(s).
- (h) Issue a Call – see appendix 3.
- (i) Sustained by Presbytery.
- (j) Transmitted to Presbytery under whose care the individual is (this will be their home Presbytery if not already commissioned, or the Presbytery in which they are serving if already commissioned).
- (k) Presbytery conducts a Commissioning Service.

Kirk Session(s) *may* invite an Auxiliary Minister to 'sit and deliberate' for relevant business.

General Assembly Reports 2015 pages 152-155 Appendix 4**GUIDELINES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A SCHEME FOR
AUXILIARY MINISTRY****A. Introduction:**

1. In June 2010 it was resolved, “That the General Assembly adopt the Scheme for an Auxiliary Ministry ”, (2010 General Assembly Minutes, p 71, res 36). The scheme referred to was included as Appendix 2 of the report of the Ministries Panel of the General Board, (2010 General Assembly Reports, pp 94-96), and should be consulted to set the Guidelines in context.

2. An Auxiliary Minister is a Minister of the Word, normally part-time, and should not be confused with others who may exercise a ministry which can be described as part-time in nature, e.g. Stated Supply or under Par 81(3) of the Code, or the ‘Scheme for Part-Time Ministry of Word and Sacrament’ as also approved by the General Assembly in 2010. Part-time will normally mean up to 20 hours per week.

3. It is intended that the scheme should be as flexible as possible.

B. General:

1. Some pastoral duties may be associated with a post, but it is primarily a Ministry of the Word. The person appointed to such a post will be called and commissioned, and is therefore not an employee.

2. The Union Commission – henceforth Linkage Commission – is authorised, after appropriate consultation, to create Auxiliary Ministry posts.

3. Auxiliary Ministry posts fall into one of two categories:

(i) An Auxiliary Minister who will work alongside, and under the supervision of, a full Minister of Word and Sacrament: a ‘Congregational Auxiliary Ministry’.

(ii) An Auxiliary Minister who will provide ministry in a pioneering situation, working under the auspices of a Presbytery or the Council for Mission in Ireland. A ‘Pioneering/Missional Auxiliary Ministry’. This will not include Congregational Auxiliary Ministries which happen to have a strong missional aspect.

4. Both forms of Auxiliary Ministry may be on an expenses only or remunerated basis. Auxiliary Ministry posts are only open to those not already Ministers of Word and Sacrament.

5. Normally an applicant for the Auxiliary Ministry Scheme would be required to be an Accredited Preacher within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

6. After successful completion of a one year course, followed by a six month probationary period, an individual will be eligible to apply for Auxiliary Ministry posts which have been created, being commissioned to their first such position. There will be additional modules of study for those moving into a Pioneering/Missional Auxiliary Ministry post.

7. An Auxiliary Minister may be involved in other remunerated employment. This will require the approval of the Linkage Commission following normal procedures and take account not only of the hours worked, but of whether the nature of the work is appropriate for a Minister of the Word. Acceptance of appointment to a post involves acceptance of the authority of the Linkage Commission to determine these matters, including the right to decline to authorise particular types of employment both before and after commissioning.

8. Auxiliary Ministers will be commissioned by a Presbytery to whom he/she will also be accountable.

9. If they are not already members of the Court, Kirk Sessions and Presbyteries may invite Auxiliary Ministers to sit and deliberate, if appropriate.

C. Congregational Auxiliary Ministry

1. Congregational Auxiliary Ministry may be exercised in:

- (i) one Congregation;
- (ii) a linkage;
- (iii) a group of Congregations.

2. In C1(i) and (ii) above the Auxiliary Minister will be under the supervision of one Minister. In C1(ii) and (iii) above there will be two or more Kirk Sessions. The Linkage Commission shall have power to direct that they will act together in matters concerning an Auxiliary Minister as if they were one Kirk Session. In C1(iii) there will be more than one Minister. They will normally act together but the Linkage Commission will designate one as the lead Minister who will be responsible for supervision of the Auxiliary Minister.

3. In what follows the term 'Kirk Session' refers to one Kirk Session or to two or more Kirk Sessions acting together as appropriate; the term 'Minister' refers to one Minister or to two or more Ministers acting together as appropriate.

4. The initiative for a Congregational Auxiliary Ministry will normally come from a Kirk Session and proposals brought to the Linkage Commission through the local Presbytery. The Linkage Commission shall consult with the following concerned parties:

- the Minister (who may be a Convener of a Vacancy), without whose approval no scheme will go ahead;
- the Kirk Session;
- the Presbytery;
- any other appropriate bodies e.g. the Council for Mission in Ireland in the case of Home Mission Congregations, Urban Mission Congregations or 'Church planting' type situations.

5. After the conclusion of consultations, the Linkage Commission, in situations where it is clearly deemed appropriate, may create a Congregational Auxiliary Ministry post.

6. The Kirk Session will be responsible for payment of expenses and any remuneration and fulfilling any requirements of the statutory tax and revenue authorities. A pension may be offered where there is remuneration. As the person will be an 'office holder' rather than in an 'employed post', Employment Law will not apply to that extent, but good practice should still be followed. The Financial Secretary's Department will not process any remuneration through the payroll.

7. The Kirk Session must specify the following:
- the hours to be worked – normally the frequency of preaching, leading Bible studies etc. and any pastoral duties. Account will need to be given to time for preparation;
 - whether the post will be established on an ‘expenses only’ or on a ‘remunerated’ basis and what it proposes by way of expenses and, if appropriate, remuneration. Changes in remuneration will normally take place at review, but application can be made to the Linkage Commission at any time;
 - what particular arrangements will be put in place where there is more than one Congregation involved;
 - the period of review by Presbytery, which will normally be three years. (The Linkage Commission will not normally be involved in these reviews.)

any other necessary matters e.g. holidays, other supplies etc.

8. After Consultation with representatives of the Congregation and, if appropriate, the Presbytery, the Linkage Commission will decide whether to authorise the creation of a Congregational Auxiliary Ministry post applied for. It will also accept or adjust the terms a Kirk Session specifies. As each situation will have individual requirements, the Linkage Commission will not apply a scale for payments or impose a uniformity upon these posts other than what is in this document.

9. An existing post cannot transform to become an Auxiliary Ministry post as this would mean an individual moving from an employed post to being an ‘office holder’. An individual who is employed in a similar post (that is, with the prime duty of preaching) will have to resign their post before being commissioned. With immediate effect the Linkage Commission will not authorise any further such posts, other than under the Auxiliary Ministry Scheme.

10. Anyone declared eligible by the Council for Training in Ministry may make application directly to the Minister under whose supervision he/she will be working.

11. An Auxiliary Minister may be appointed within their own Congregation on the same basis as anyone else.

12. In seeking to fill the post the Congregation may advertise or appoint a particular individual they identify.

13. Calls to a Congregational Auxiliary Ministry post will be made by Kirk Session.

14. A Congregational Auxiliary Ministry post may be terminated by mutual agreement, or by a minimum of two months’ notice given by the Presbytery, any individual Minister or individual Kirk Session involved, or the Auxiliary Minister, subject to the approval of the Presbytery. In the case of an expenses only post, a minimum of one week’s notice will apply.

15. If a Congregation or group of Congregations for which an Auxiliary Ministry post has been created wishes to seek to have ministry delivered in another way e.g. by a Stated Supply, by a temporary assistant under Par 81(3) of the Code, or by the Scheme for Part-Time Ministry of Word and Sacrament, application shall first be made to the Linkage Commission for withdrawal of the post before progressing any such arrangement.

D. Pioneering/Missional Auxiliary Ministry

1. The initiative for a Pioneering/Missional Auxiliary Ministry will normally come from the Presbytery or the Council for Mission in Ireland. In the latter case it will come with the knowledge, understanding and consent of Presbytery.

The Linkage Commission shall consult with the following concerned parties:

- the Presbytery;
- the Council for Mission in Ireland;
- any Congregation and/or Minister directly involved.

2. After the conclusion of consultations, the Linkage Commission, in situations where it is clearly deemed appropriate, may create a Pioneering/Missional Auxiliary Ministry post.

3. The Presbytery or Council will be responsible for payment of expenses and any remuneration, in the Council's case using the same processes as for other commissioned posts.

4. The Presbytery or Council must specify the following:
the hours to be worked – normally the frequency of preaching, leading Bible studies etc. and any pastoral duties. Account will need to be given to time for preparation;

whether the post will be established on an 'expenses only' or on a 'remunerated' basis and what it proposes by way of expenses and, if appropriate, remuneration. Changes in remuneration will normally take place at review, but application can be made to the Linkage Commission at any time;

the relative responsibilities, if any, of the Presbytery and/or Council in the arrangement;

the period of review by Presbytery or Council as appropriate, which will normally be three years. The Linkage Commission will normally be involved in these reviews;

- any other necessary matters e.g. holidays, other supplies etc.

5. After Consultation with representatives of the Presbytery, Council, and any other directly involved parties, the Linkage Commission will decide whether to authorise the creation of a Missional Auxiliary Ministry post applied for. It will also accept or adjust the terms a Presbytery or Council specify. As each situation will have individual requirements, neither the Council nor the Linkage Commission will apply a scale for payments or impose a uniformity upon these posts other than what is in this document.

6. Anyone declared eligible by the Council for Training in Ministry may make application directly to the Council.

7. In seeking to fill the post the Council should normally recruit using the same processes as for other commissioned posts.

8. Calls to a Pioneering/Missional Auxiliary Ministry will be made by the Council and sustained by the Presbytery. As there is no provision in the Code for a Presbytery to issue a Call proposals may include provision for the Council to issue a Call on the request of a Presbytery.

9. A Pioneering/Missional Auxiliary Ministry post may be terminated by mutual agreement, or by a minimum of two months' notice given by the Council

by its own decision or following the withdrawal of consent to the post by the Presbytery, as appropriate.

APPENDIX 4

Guidelines for Interviews at Vacancies

OPTION ONE: Guidelines for Interview by Kirk Session (only)

The only point at which a candidate may be interviewed is that at which the Kirk Session is in the process of drawing up a list for hearing (Code Par 194(6)). A Hearing Committee, while members may mingle with and speak to others, including the candidate informally while refreshments are being served after a service, shall not meet with a candidate for the purpose of an interview. The necessary interview will have already been done by the Kirk Session and the Hearing Committee must not take what is Session's responsibility to itself.

1. General
 - (a) No meeting shall be held before a Minister is eligible for call.
 - (b) The Minister's spouse shall not be present.
 - (c) There shall be no bargaining, and no promises shall be sought or given.
 - (d) The same basic questions for each candidate shall be agreed at a meeting convened by the Vacancy Convener or another ministerial member of the Vacancy Commission.
 - (e) If possible, the questions should be notified to the candidates beforehand. Supplementary points may be discussed at the meeting.
 - (f) No questions may be asked which invite comment on current settled policy of General Assembly.
 - (g) No questions may be asked about the likely role of the Minister's spouse or family in the life of the Congregation or local community.
2. Detail
 - (a) While it is common practice for Kirk Sessions to interview possible candidates before drawing up a list, they are not obliged to do so.
 - (b) If a Kirk Session wishes to interview, then it should take care to observe all the guidelines at 1. General above, as well as those that follow under this section.
 - (c) In interviewing candidates Kirk Sessions must bear in mind that, while the right to select candidates for a hearing belongs to them (Code Par 194(3)), it is the prerogative of the Congregation to choose the Minister (Code Par 195). The way the interviews are structured, and how the list is drawn up following the interviews, must be in such manner that the right to choose is not taken away from the Congregation.
 - (d) The Convener of the Vacancy Commission, or another ministerial member of the Vacancy Commission, shall act as Chairman.
 - (e) It may be appropriate to ask questions concerning matters that are specific to Kirk Session under Code Pars 35ff. These include: Sacramental Discipline; Times of service or number of services on a Sunday; The merits or demerits of a particular type of organisation

or group that the Kirk Session would be responsible for e.g. BB, GB, Bowling Club, Choir, Praise Group, House Groups; Attitude towards services in connection with the Loyal Orders or the Masonic Order, including what may be carried/worn into Church; The delivery of pastoral care; Inter-church worship and relationships.

- (f) It may be appropriate to ask questions concerning other matters not specified above but which may be important locally. These include: Preaching patterns – e.g. topic, text, expository, lectionary; Style of worship – e.g. use of liturgy, congregational participation; Music – issues around use of organ and/or other instruments, contemporary songs, traditional hymns and psalms; Marriage – personal criteria used by the candidate in deciding who to join in marriage.
- (g) Candidates should be given opportunity to indicate their position on matters important to them, which may not have been raised by Kirk Session.
- (h) Once a list has been drawn up no further interview may take place in the process, unless it is necessary to make out a new or supplementary list.

OPTION TWO: Guidelines for Interview by Kirk Session and Hearing Committee

There are two points at which an interview may take place. The first is that at which the Kirk Session is in the process of drawing up a list for hearing (Code Par 194(6)). The second is that at which a Hearing Committee has heard a candidate (Code Par 194(4)). It is important to distinguish between these interviews and the fact that a Hearing Committee must not ask questions about matters which are the particular responsibility of the Kirk Session under Code Pars 35ff.

1. General

- (a) No meeting shall be held before a minister is eligible for call.
- (b) The minister's spouse shall not be present.
- (c) There shall be no bargaining, and no promises shall be sought or given.
- (d) The same basic questions for each candidate shall be agreed at a meeting convened by the Vacancy Convener or another ministerial member of the Vacancy Commission.
- (e) If possible, the questions should be notified to the candidates beforehand. Supplementary points may be discussed at the meeting.
- (f) No questions may be asked which invite comment on current settled policy of General Assembly.
- (g) No questions may be asked about the likely role of the minister's spouse or family in the life of the congregation or local community.

2. Interview by Kirk Session

- (a) While it is common practice for Kirk Sessions to interview possible candidates before drawing up a list, they are not obliged to do so.
- (b) If a Kirk Session wishes to interview, then it should take care to observe all the guidelines at 1. General above, as well as those that follow under this section.
- (c) In interviewing candidates Kirk Sessions must bear in mind that, while the right to select candidates for a hearing belongs to them (Code Par

194(3), it is the prerogative of the congregation to choose the minister (Code Par 195). The way the interviews are structured, and how the list is drawn up following the interviews, must be in such manner that the right to choose is not taken away from the congregation.

- (d) The Convener of the Vacancy Commission, or another ministerial member of the Vacancy Commission, shall act as Chairman.
 - (e) It may be appropriate to ask questions concerning matters that are specific to Kirk Session under Code Pars 35ff. These include: sacramental discipline; times of service or number of services on a Sunday; the merits or demerits of a particular type of organisation or group that the Kirk Session would be responsible for, BB, GB, Bowling Club, Choir, Praise Group, House Groups; attitude towards services in connection with the Loyal Orders or the Masonic Order, including what may be carried/worn into church; the delivery of pastoral care; inter-church worship and relationships.
 - (f) It may be appropriate to ask questions concerning other matters not specified above but which may be important locally. These include: preaching patterns – e.g. topic, text, expository, lectionary; style of worship – e.g. use of liturgy, congregational participation; music – issues around use of organ and/or other instruments, contemporary songs, traditional hymns and psalms; marriage – personal criteria used by the candidate in deciding who to join in marriage.
 - (g) Candidates should be given opportunity to indicate their position on matters important to them, which may not have been raised by Kirk Session.
 - (h) Once a list has been drawn up no further interview by Kirk Session may take place in the process, unless it is necessary to make out a new or supplementary list.
3. Interview by Hearing Committee
- (a) Interviews by a Hearing Committee are not obligatory, nor are they necessary to fulfil the remit of a Hearing Committee, which is appointed in some circumstances to carry out more conveniently the role of the congregation in hearing candidates.
 - (b) If a Hearing Committee wishes to interview, then it should take care to observe all the guidelines at 1. General above, as well as those that follow under this section.
 - (c) An interview by a Hearing Committee may only take place on the same day that it has 'heard' a candidate preach – it must not be part of the process of drawing up a list.
 - (d) The purpose of a Hearing Committee interview by must be understood. A Hearing Committee must not trespass in areas that are the responsibility of Kirk Session, including those undertaken in drawing up a list for hearing. A Hearing Committee may be appointed (i) to hear candidates and report back to the congregation, or (ii) to recommend a sole nominee to be heard directly by the congregation before a call is decided on (Code Par 194(4)). In both cases the Hearing Committee will either report that it is unable to bring in a recommendation, or

it will bring forward a name. If a candidate is being recommended, the Hearing Committee will report only their name and the details available in the General Assembly Directory (updated if necessary) or the equivalent information if not already a minister of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

- (e) The Convener of the Vacancy Commission, or another ministerial member of the Vacancy Commission shall act as Chairman.
- (f) The Chairman must ensure that the Hearing Committee does not discuss matters with candidates which are specific to Kirk Session. This means that it is inappropriate to ask questions concerning matters listed above under 2e.
- (g) While the Minister is responsible to Presbytery for the conduct of public worship, it may be appropriate to ask questions concerning matters connected with public worship. This includes preaching patterns, style of worship, music, and things relating to the service that has just been 'heard'.
- (h) While the delivery of pastoral care is the responsibility of Kirk Session, it may be appropriate to ask candidates about their own personal approach – for example how they prioritise, the use of prayer and Scripture in visiting, the conduct of funerals.

APPENDIX 5

Proposal regarding a 2 Part Expenses Scheme for P.C.I.

The 2015 General Assembly approved the following Resolution:

“That the proposals re Ministerial Expenses based on a 2-part system made up of (a) reimbursement at HMRC rates for all travel related expenses and (b) an expenses allowance set by Linkage Commission for all other expenses, be approved, and that the Linkage Commission be instructed to present full proposals for the introduction of this system to 2016 General Assembly.”

Proposals

Part 1 – Travelling and Associated Expenses

1. The Commission will draw up a Mileage Log.
 - 1.0 This Log will set out the following details:
 - (a) Ministers Name
 - (b) Congregations in a situation of Linkages. It is proposed that the Linkage Commission when setting Leave to Call figures will agree the % of Expenses to be met by each Congregation in the Linkage.
 - (c) Vehicle Description
 - (d) Rate per mile. Currently to comply with Tax Legislation this will be £0.45p per mile for first 10,000 miles and £0.25p per mile for over 10,000 miles (Northern Ireland) and €0.66cents per mile for first 10,000 miles and € 0.36 cents per mile over 10,000 miles (Republic of Ireland).

- 1.0 The log will also show the following:
 - (i) Miles Year to Date Carried Forward
 - (ii) Current Month
 - (iii) Miles Year to Date
- 1.2 On a daily basis the Minister will record:
 - (a) Date of Journeys
 - (b) Starting Location (this will normally be Manse)
 - (c) Destination. This will be general destination e.g. Lisburn. Please note no personal identifying information is to be recorded e.g. names of persons visited etc.
 - (d) Description - this will be general e.g. Visits, Hospital Visits, School Assemblies, Meetings. Again no personal identifying details to be recorded.
 - (e) Mileage.
 - (f) Other.

The information contained on this Log will be held by the Minister and can therefore be made available to HMRC should any review of an individual's tax assessment be requested. The monthly mileage will then be transferred to the Monthly Expenses Form for ALL Expenses. This claims form should be submitted to the Congregational Treasurer by the 5th of each Month.

Ministers who attend Councils or Commissions of the General Assembly should NOT include these journeys on this form as they are included on a separate form and paid centrally from Incidental Fund.

There are a few Ministers who avail of the "company car" scheme. They should note that reimbursement is at a separate rate:

Engine Size	Petrol	Diesel
1400cc or less	12p	13p
1401cc to 2000cc	15p	13p
Over 2000cc	21p	17p

Part 2 Other Expenses

It is recognised that in drawing up proposals for the second part of the Scheme relating to 'All other Expenses' there are both difficulties and sensitivities. However what cannot be lost sight of are:

1. The issue is one of Expenses i.e. the reimbursement to Ministers of actual expenses they have incurred in allowing them to carry out their role as a Minister of Word and Sacrament. Unfortunately a situation has been allowed to develop where the payment of 'Expenses' was seen by some as an alternate to paying appropriate Ministerial Stipends. This has meant that Expenses were used to supplement Stipend rather than a payment for costs accrued. The alteration to the level of Minimum Stipend may have gone some way to addressing this but it may be that by the introduction of the new system Ministers may feel that their 'total income package' is being reduced and they are being left out of pocket.

2. The Code requires that unless special permission is granted a Minister must live in a Manse in the charge(s) to which he/she is called. Manses come in all shapes and sizes ranging from the old, large, draughty impossible to heat to the new modern well insulated fuel efficient building. It has to be borne in mind that the Congregation is only responsible for costs relating to 'public rooms'.

To design a system which seeks to reimburse costs at a standard level for all is difficult. The current system simply 'loaded' 125% onto travel and arrived at a global expenses figure. While it was the best that could be done, it is hard to argue that it is a perfect appropriate one size fits all.

3. Some have argued that whatever replaces it must not leave a Minister 'out of pocket' but this is to suggest that what we are currently doing is appropriate. If that is the case why are we changing? To repeat the well-worn phrase 'if it's not broke don't fix it'. It may be that is the conclusion though we leave ourselves open to external forces who may take a different position.

In drawing up the Options below it is assumed that Part 1 of the Scheme already approved by 2015 General Assembly and described above will apply to all the following Options.

Options:

1. The Linkage Commission will set an Allowance figure currently £1,500 for Northern Ireland, €2,500 for Republic of Ireland for All other non- travel Expenses. Ministers will as now have to make their Annual tax returns. It may be they can show that they are due a tax refund for expenses rather than a tax bill. This may go some way to improving the position but in reality the figures are not based on solid figures and may still leave us open to external challenge. The also lack little improvement in terms of openness, transparency and accountability.

2. The Expenses related to the Non-travel element would no longer be directly paid by Congregations. Instead Congregational Committees would be requested to add a figure of e.g. £1,000 (Northern Ireland) and €1,750 (Republic of Ireland) to Stipend. These additional amounts would NOT attract a compensatory payment to CMF which is the case where Stipend figures above the recommended level are paid. They would attract Tax, National Insurance and Pension Contributions. However Ministers would through their Annual Tax Self-Assessment be able to reclaim Benefits for Expenses incurred which would then reduce their tax code. This Option has the benefit of removing the issue of non- travel related expenses from the Local Congregation, provides certainty for Congregational budgeting and helps to offset any perceived loss to Ministers income. It also removes the potential for external scrutiny in that it is total open, transparent and accountable. It is possible that such an Option would still leave Ministers with a reduction on Total "Income" they currently receive.

3. Under the appropriate Tax Jurisdiction all Allowable Expenses must be reimbursed by the Congregational Committee. A list will be provided by the Commission in conjunction with the Financial Secretaries Department, as to what is an Allowable Expense. This Option fully meets the tests for openness, transparency and accountability.

APPENDIX 6**Guidelines on Manses**

The term “Guidelines” has been used rather than “Laws” or “Rules” as it is sometimes necessary to have a degree of flexibility. However, Guidelines are more than mere suggestions. When approved by the General Assembly they carry a definite authority and should only be departed from where there is good and sufficient reason approved by Presbytery and the Linkage Commission.

The following Guidelines were adopted:-

In a Vacancy Situation

1. Major manse problems are better resolved before a new Minister is called, let alone installed.

2. It is recommended that the outgoing minister and his/her family be consulted by the Convener of the Vacancy before they leave the manse, as they may be aware of problems and faults which will not be immediately obvious to others.

3. Following an installation a Vacancy Commission should remain in place until any recommendations with regard to the manse are implemented. It is strongly recommended that the new minister should refrain from involving himself/herself in any substantial discussions and decisions concerning the manse. The Vacancy Convener should chair any meetings of Committee concerning work on the manse until it is complete.

4. Where Leave to Call is sought the Linkage Commission will require a survey, carried out by a suitably qualified person, together with gas and electric reports and a copy Minute of the Congregational Committee meeting, detailing what it is prepared to do. This is in order that permission having been given, it is not subsequently discovered that major work needs to be undertaken or even the manse needs replacing! It is important to understand that the state of the manse will definitely be taken into account before Leave to Call is granted. (Code Par 273(4)).

5. Recognising that a manse, in addition to being a family home, has on occasion a wider use (e.g. meetings of organisational committees etc.) as a minimum ‘public’ rooms should be furnished, decorated and maintained by the congregation i.e. carpeting provided for Hall, Stairs and Landing; carpet and curtains provided in the ‘public rooms’ (Study, Drawing Room, Dining Room). The kitchen should be fitted to a contemporary standard.

6. Reasonable removal expenses should be paid. It is recognised that these are bound to vary depending on the distance involved and other circumstances. A sensible figure should be agreed by the Presbytery in which the vacancy occurs and submitted along with the other specified information when Leave to Call is being sought.

7. If it is wished to provide for the short-term rental of a vacant manse the authorisation of the congregation must be obtained first (Code Par 57(2)). Permission must then be sought and obtained from the Presbytery and the Linkage Commission (Code Pars 57(4) and 82(4)):

- (a) Permission for letting should be given for a specified period of time and then, if necessary, be subject to further permission from the Presbytery and Linkage Commission.
 - (b) The Convener of the Vacancy should have the opportunity to inspect the property between rentals.
 - (c) A proper legal leasing agreement should be drawn up by the Congregational Committee and approved by the Congregation and Presbytery. The Convener of the Vacancy Commission should be satisfied with this agreement in order to avoid unforeseen difficulties at a later stage.
 - (d) Where for any reason it is necessary for the minister to continue living in the manse, after ceasing to be the minister of that Congregation, a legally binding “Caretaker’s Agreement” must be drawn up before he/she ceases to be the minister of the congregation.
8. If there is an exceptionally large manse garden or a manse farm, the respective responsibilities of the minister and Church Committee, with regard to maintenance and upkeep, should be determined by the Vacancy Commission and the Congregation and the arrangements submitted to the Linkage Commission when seeking Leave to Call.

In a Settled Situation

1. If a minister is to leave the manse temporarily on account of major renovation or the unavoidable necessity of replacing the manse, the permission of both the Presbytery and the Linkage Commission must be sought before the Minister vacates the premises.
2. It is the responsibility of the Congregation, acting through its Committee, to make the necessary provision for suitable alternative accommodation, its manse being unavailable. A departure from the provision of a manse is in fact a departure from the Terms of the Call and it is therefore not the responsibility of the minister to endeavour to find his/her own accommodation. Such ‘temporary’ accommodation should conform, as far as is possible, to the Assembly’s Guidelines and have the approval of the overseeing Presbytery. In these circumstances acceptable provision should also be made by the Committee, if necessary, for the storage of furniture temporarily ‘surplus to requirements’.
3. The minister should not be responsible for the removal costs in a situation such as that envisaged, where such a move has been necessitated by circumstances not of his/her own making.
4. It is important to understand that permission to vacate the manse is given for a limited period of time. Immediately the renovations have been completed arrangements should be set in hand by the Committee, guided by Presbytery, for the return of the minister to the manse.
5. If a minister is within one year of his/her definite date of retirement, or over the normal age of retirement, it is probable that permission will be given to vacate the manse, if he/she so requests and with the agreement of the congregation, in order to facilitate the congregation in undertaking any necessary repairs or renovations to the manse property in anticipation of a vacancy. In other circumstances a request by a minister to vacate the manse should only be considered where there are compelling reasons (e.g. a certified medical condition).

Consultations

The Commission understand that a professional survey of the manse will be carried out in Consultation. This will not do away with the need, however, for a survey to be carried out prior to granting Leave to Call, as it is necessary for this to be done on a vacant manse.

General

When a congregation requests permission from the Linkage Commission to sell its manse it should ascertain the following:

1. That the deeds of the property have been inspected and that there are no restrictive clauses.
2. That a new manse will be built or bought, conforming to the Assembly's Guidelines (unless the manse is redundant on account of a linkage).
3. That if there is any surplus of money after a manse has been sold and a replacement provided, it will normally be placed in a Manse Fund Account, to be used for repairs and maintenance of the manse unless permission has been received from the Linkage Commission to vary this arrangement.
4. Where redundant manses are let, the trustees are under obligation to ensure that a realistic rent is charged, which can be reviewed at least annually and where the tenant is responsible for the payment of rates. If the Union Commission previously laid down stipulations as to the use of income from a redundant manse, any request to vary these should be made to the Linkage Commission through the Church Architecture and Manses Panel.

Accommodation

In view of the fact that new manses may need to be obtained for many different situations - (rural, suburban, inner city, church planting) the Linkage Commission will receive sympathetically requests for variation from the following Guidelines which should be read in that light.

1. A manse in its lifetime will be required to serve several family groups of different sizes and demands. While it could be considered extravagant to centre the design on a family unit which is somewhat larger than average, it is also short-sighted to simply provide accommodation for a minimal family unit.
2. Generally this could be achieved by providing:
 - Study ideally located convenient to the entrance of the manse. Where a properly specified office exists for the sole use of the minister on the church premises, a study will still need to be provided in the manse, scaled back in size, but able to accommodate appropriate furniture and storage for books.
 - Ground floor WC
 - Family room which may be an integral part of the kitchen area
 - Kitchen fitted to a contemporary standard
 - Adequate dining facilities
 - Lounge of sufficient size to permit comfortable social and official entertainment
 - Preferably four good sized bedrooms, one with en-suite
 - Bathroom fitted to a contemporary standard. Either the en-suite or the bathroom should include a stand- alone shower

- Adequate garage, storage and utility facilities
 - Mechanical and electrical services should meet appropriate standards including alarm systems and environmental considerations
 - Consideration should be given to the thermal efficiency of the property
3. In church planting and other situations these guidelines may not be feasible and flexibility can be used with the permission of the relevant bodies.
 4. A manse of lesser size or specifications, if suitable, may require to be extended or replaced at a later date.
 5. The advice of the Presbytery Architecture Committee should be sought and the proper procedures adhered to. It is inadvisable to seek full planning approval before the plans have been recommended by the Linkage Commission's Church Architecture and Manses Panel and approved by the Linkage Commission.

ASSESSMENTS ON FULLY CONSTITUTED CHURCH EXTENSION

CHARGES – 2016

Under Par 234(3)(a) of the Code

<i>Church</i>	<i>Fully Constituted</i>	<i>Families (†)</i>	<i>Assess 2016 £</i>	<i>Assess Income £</i>	<i>Income*</i> £
New Mossley	2005	118 (99)	148	39,908	114,249
Ballysally	2007	150 (87)	130	47,539	153,267

† Families contributing at least £5.00 per annum

* As from 2012 Income includes all Organisational Income

ASSESSMENTS ON CHURCH EXTENSION CHARGES – 2016

<i>Church</i>	<i>Building Income £</i>	<i>Assessable. £</i>	<i>Stip. £</i>	<i>C.M.F. £</i>	<i>Ch. Ext. £</i>	<i>H.M. £</i>	<i>Total £</i>
Taughmonagh	-	11,200	3,360	1,680	1,120	672	6,832

LICENTIATES – 2016

Licentiates are paid 75% of the Ministerial Minimum = £18,092 plus House Allowance pa (single - £702; married - £1,002) if applicable. House Allowance is shared equally between the Congregation and CMF

FIRST YEAR – From 1 January, 2016

<i>Congregation</i>	<i>Assistant</i>	<i>Date of Licensing</i>	<i>Minister's Stipend</i> £	<i>Congregation's Contribution</i> £	<i>C.M.F.</i> £
Gardenmore	* A Burke	21.07.15	37,740 (30%)	11,823	7,271
Joymount	* I Cahoon	31.05.15	38,295 (30%)	11,990	7,104
Kilfennan	† D Clarke	07.06.15	33,176 (30%)	10,304	8,490
Kirkpatrick Memorial	* R Cronin	21.06.15	43,575 (30%)	13,574	5,520
Knock	* A Dickey	31.05.15	43,750 (30%)	13,626	5,468
1st Carrickfergus	† A Gill	07.06.15	41,767 (30%)	12,881	5,913
Bangor, West	* D Gray	14.06.15	42,330 (30%)	13,200	5,894
Bangor, Hamilton Road	* M Gray	05.06.15	44,574 (30%)	13,873	5,221
Carryduff	* B Kee	12.06.15	34,680 (30%)	10,905	8,189
1st Larne	† D Kelly	07.06.15	38,234 (30%)	11,821	6,973
Lurgan, Hill Street	* S Kennedy	26.06.15	39,015 (30%)	12,206	6,888
2nd Randalstown	* R Kernohan	07.06.15	28,664 (s/a)	5,600	13,494
1st Holywood	* S Lowry	31.05.15	38,250 (30%)	11,976	7,118
Ballyholme	* C Lynn	19.06.15	33,823 (30%)	10,648	8,446
Derramore	† R McClure	14.06.15	12,921 (30%)	3,995	2,358
Drumachose	† R McClure	14.06.15	25,304 (30%)	7,823	4,618
Templepatrick	* A McCracken	07.06.15	38,760 (30%)	12,129	6,965
2nd Comber	* A McQuade	21.06.15	42,942 (30%)	13,384	5,710
Dungannon	* G Mullan	14.06.15	37,355 (30%)	11,708	7,386
Stormont	* B Van der Linde	28.06.15	42,813 (30%)	13,345	5,749

* Married House Allowance

† Single House Allowance

No House Allowance - House provided by Congregation

s/a Special Arrangement

LICENTIATES – 2016

Licentiates are paid 80% of the Ministerial Minimum = £19,298 plus House Allowance pa (single - £702; married - £1,002) if applicable. House Allowance is shared equally between the Congregation and CMF

SECOND YEAR – From 1 January, 2016

<i>Congregation</i>	<i>Assistant</i>	<i>Date of Licensing</i>	<i>Minister's Stipend</i> £	<i>Congregation's Contribution</i> £	<i>C.M.F.</i> £
Bloomfield	† JT Blue	30.05.14	38,000 (27%)	10,611	9,389
Greenwell Street	† GW Clinton	22.06.14	36,751 (32%)	12,111	7,889
Ballylinney	* RS Hamilton	06.06.14	30,090 (27%)	8,625	11,675
Glendernott	† MTW McMaw	08.06.14	35,732 (32%)	11,785	8,215
1st Ballymena	* D McMillan	01.06.14	37,740 (32%)	12,578	7,722
Ballygilbert	* JP McWatters	08.06.14	34,660 (32%)	11,592	8,708
Harmony Hill	† SJ Moore	22.06.14	38,249 (32%)	12,591	7,409
Whiteabbey	† JM Warburton	08.06.14	37,880 (32%)	12,473	7,527

* Married House Allowance

† Single House Allowance

No House Allowance - House provided by Congregation

s/a Special Arrangement

LICENTIATES – 2016

Licentiates are paid 85% of the Ministerial Minimum = £20,504 plus House Allowance pa (single - £702; married - £1,002) if applicable. House Allowance is shared equally between the Congregation and CMF

THIRD YEAR – From 1 January, 2016

<i>Congregation</i>	<i>Assistant</i>	<i>Date of Licensing</i>	<i>Minister's Stipend</i> £	<i>Congregation's Contribution</i> £	<i>C.M.F.</i> £
Newmills	† A Boreland (to 03.03.16)	10.06.12	29,730 (27%)	1,465	2,243
Bangor, Hamilton Road	* D Burke (to 31.01.16)	02.06.12	44,574 (32%)	1,230	562
Cooke Centenary	* C Heron (SMP)	17.06.12	29,580 (s/a)	0	21,506
Christ Church	† GJ Ball (to 31.01.16)	09.06.13	29,592 (27%)	695	1,072
Raloo	† CMS Barron (to 31.01.16)	16.06.13	20,025 (27%)	468	650
Magheramorne	† CMS Barron (to 31.01.16)	16.06.13	11,594 (27%)	273	376
2nd Keady	* PG Cleland (to 31.01.16)	09.06.13	11,942 (32%)	339	557
Drumhillery	* PG Cleland (to 31.01.16)	09.06.13	11,942 (32%)	339	557
Ballysillan	* SD Currie	16.06.13	28,560 (32%)	9,640	11,866
Legacurry	* NW Duddy	26.05.13	35,774 (32%)	11,949	9,557
O C Randalstown	* RJ Edgar	16.06.13	33,000 (27%)	9,411	12,095
Kilbride	† MPR Fryer	16.06.13	35,700 (32%)	11,775	9,431
Abbot's Cross	* MA Johnston	26.05.13	31,061 (s/a)	8,001	13,505
First Antrim	† PWA McClelland	09.06.13	40,328 (27%)	11,240	9,966
First Bangor	* JS McCrea	02.06.13	39,372 (32%)	13,100	8,406
High Kirk	* SW Orr	16.06.13	41,474 (32%)	13,773	7,733
Ballywalter	* KJ Ward (to 31.01.16)	16.06.13	28,200 (s/a)	542	1,250
Immanuel	† RJ Watt	31.05.13	31,620 (27%)	8,888	12,318

* Married House Allowance

† Single House Allowance

No House Allowance - House provided by Congregation

s/a Special Arrangement

ASSOCIATE MINISTERS – 2016

<i>Name</i>	<i>Congregation</i>	<i>Salary</i>		<i>Recovery</i>	<i>House Allowance Paid</i>	<i>Employer Pension NIC Costs</i>
		<i>Paid</i>	<i>£</i>			
BJ Walker (to 31.01.16)	Knock	2,263.58	£	2,263.58	(83,33)	703.51
AD Mullan	Mourne	27,428.00		27,428.00	n/a	9,255.72
GA McCracken	Ballywillan	25,533.00		25,533.00	2,000.00	8,538.92
JD McCaughy	Cuningham Memorial	28,822.00		28,822.00	n/a	9,782.00
D Stanfield	1st Bangor	30,340.00		30,340.00	n/a	10,357.00

Following the change in Basis of Assessment for Congregations, there are no longer assessments on Associate salaries for CMF, RMF, WMF and PDF. Congregations are however now charged full Pension costs for their Associate, although during the first four years of the implementation of the new Basis of Assessment, rebates are paid for all existing arrangements to ensure that the additional cost does not exceed 10% in the first year and this initial rebate is tapered for a further three years.

ORDAINED ASSISTANTS

From 1 January, 2016

<i>Congregation</i>	<i>Assistant</i>	<i>Date of Ord</i>	<i>Minister's Stipend</i> £	<i>% Min</i>	<i>Salary</i> £	<i>House Allow</i> £	<i>Total</i> £	<i>Cong Contrib</i> £	<i>C.M.F.</i> £
West Church, Ballymena	* J Stephens	04.09.11	41,718	75	18,092	1,002	19,094	13,016	6,078
Trinity Ballymoney	* P Kerr	01.05.15	34,924	100	25,280		25,280	2,000	23,280

* Married House Allowance

† Single House Allowance

s/a Special Arrangement

No House Allowance - House provided by Congregation

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the General Assembly instructs all ministers to fulfil the relevant requirements concerning certification of illness, as outlined in par 11 of the report.
2. That Option [X] be adopted as Guidelines for Interviews at Vacancies.
3. That the congregation of Berry Street be amalgamated with the congregation of _____, the date of amalgamation to be no later than 31st December 2016, on terms set by the Linkage Commission.
4. That Option [Y] be adopted as the basis for the proposals regarding a part system for Ministerial Expenses and that the scheme be approved.
5. That the recommendation that where, in a Linkage two or more Morning Services and a separate Evening Service are conducted, the Supply Fee should be 125% of the Full Supply Fee, be adopted.
6. That the revised Manse Guidelines be noted.

CONSOLIDATED RESOLUTION

7. (a) That the new forms of call for Part-time and Auxiliary Ministers be noted and included in the Appendices to the Code.
 - (b) That the Revised Part-time Ministry Guidelines be noted.
 - (c) That the Guidelines for Kirk Sessions in filling Auxiliary Minister posts and the Form of Call be noted.
 - (d) That CMF be authorized to pay inadequate expenses grants towards expenses incurred by Ministers, up to a limit of NI £5,985 or RI €10,000, within the terms of resolution 3, p70 General Assembly Minutes, 1988.
8. That the Report of the Linkage Commission be received.

COUNCIL FOR CONGREGATIONAL LIFE AND WITNESS

Convener: Rev Dr GRAHAM CONNOR

Secretary: Rev DAVID THOMPSON

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. At time of writing the Council for Congregational Life and Witness has met on two occasions since last year's General Assembly. A third meeting is scheduled in May to maintain necessary progress in the run up to the General Assembly.

2. The Council has had a threefold focus this year:

- (i) Continuing to develop the life of the Council both strategically and structurally. Strategic development has focussed on a listening exercise in which all nineteen Presbyteries have been visited, giving members the opportunity to express their views on priorities in congregational life and witness and how the Council can most effectively offer support in addressing them. Structural development has involved continuing to lay foundations on which to build, and shaping ways of integrating and developing inherited aspects of the work. These have included integrating *Presbyterian Women* into the wider remit of the Women's Ministry Strategy and Coordination Committee, reviewing SPUD and the Volunteers and Interns Programme (VIP).
- (ii) Crafting Committee remits and agendas to deliver a programme of events, training and resourcing aimed at supporting and developing all areas of the life and witness of local Congregations.
- (iii) Constructing a framework strategy to shape and guide the Council's resourcing and supporting of Congregations for their life and witness as the work continues to progress and grow.

3. Reflecting these areas of focus, the remainder of the report is presented under three headings:

- THE DEVELOPING LIFE OF THE COUNCIL
- AN EMERGING AGENDA AROUND CORE ASPECTS OF CONGREGATIONAL LIFE AND WITNESS
- RESOURCING AND SUPPORTING CONGREGATIONS FOR THEIR LIFE AND WITNESS

4. The report also references significant pieces of work relating to the areas of PCI Counselling and the PCI Family Holiday. At time of writing, progress is ongoing in both areas. It is hoped to provide more up to date detail by way of the Supplementary Reports.

5. Plans for developing the vision of *Fruitful Congregations* as the Council's central theme have been advanced.

THE DEVELOPING LIFE OF THE COUNCIL

Active listening

6. A major focus of this year's life has been active listening to the wider Church. The exercise of Presbytery Engagement completed in March with all nineteen Presbyteries visited. The Council is grateful to Presbytery Clerks, host venues, those who attended, executive and administrative staff and Committee Conveners who have made this unprecedented piece of work possible. The task of analysing and making sense of all the returns is ongoing and will shape and nuance the formation of the Council's agenda in terms of both content and delivery. A flavour of the early impressions is woven throughout the report (see paragraphs 41, 50, 54, 58, 61, 64, 68, 71 and 73). A resolution instructing Council to provide each Presbytery with the feedback from their engagement for examination and comment, with a view to continuing the conversation, is appended.

Potential, progress, pace, problems and practices

7. As the work of the Council for Congregational Life and Witness moved into its second year, the scale of its remit continued to be daunting. However it is also enormously exciting to see what is beginning to develop. The potential for an increasingly coordinated and effective support and accompaniment for Congregations in the development of their ministry and mission is what drives the life of the Council and its agenda.

8. Enormous progress has been made in many areas, but it should be expected that the Council will remain in something of a transitional period for quite some time. It is simply not possible to give immediate detailed attention to all the issues and questions that have come with various aspects of the work passed on from the previous Board structures. Pressing matters with particularly significant implications have naturally taken priority. Developments in some of these areas are detailed below. Additionally, as new work has expanded, the Council has experienced significant growing pains. With every new Panel, Task Group and Organising Group comes the challenge of finding Conveners and adequately populating membership. The Council was grateful to receive an additional member from each Presbytery to help alleviate these pressures.

9. The process of developing adequate reporting mechanisms for a wide range of Organising Groups attending to the detail of events under the oversight of Council Committees is a matter of ongoing consideration. The challenge is to strike an appropriate balance between proper accountability and an expectation of a level of detail that would quickly swamp Committee agendas.

10. Improving means of communication with Congregations and networks of key leaders is a priority if the Council is to be able to deliver its remit. The new PCI website and associated platforms of communication are eagerly anticipated. The ability to quickly harness their potential will be crucial if a two-way flow of information between the Council and Congregations is to be developed. Similarly, the relationship forged through the Presbytery Engagement exercise needs to be built upon to maintain the momentum established.

11. The Council is committed to continuing to cultivate a range of practices which will develop the embodiment of the principles of accountability, communication and engagement enshrined in the 2014 Structures Review.

Integrating Presbyterian Women

12. A major piece of work this year involved arriving at a suitable structure to incorporate *Presbyterian Women* into the life of the Council. After careful consideration and consultation, the new arrangement gained final approval from the Finance and Staffing Commission.

13. The structure involves the oversight of the ongoing running of *Presbyterian Women* by a PW Panel, which will sit under the Council Committee renamed the Women's Ministry Strategy and Coordination Committee. This arrangement allows *Presbyterian Women* to run with minimal change to its structure of relating to congregational groups through its Forum and Presbytery LINKs. It also ensures a good balance of functional autonomy for *Presbyterian Women* while ensuring its strategic contribution to the overall development of women's ministry through Panel representation on the Women's Strategy and Coordination Committee. Overlap in membership between the two bodies will ensure good two way communication and common direction.

14. In light of the new arrangements, the job descriptions of the PW General Secretary and the PW Development Officer were to be re-examined in terms of designated responsibilities servicing the organisational requirements of *Presbyterian Women* and any anticipated wider contribution to the development of the strategy and coordination of women's ministry in the Council for Congregational Life and Witness. With the subsequent vacancy created by the resignation of Caroline Hawthorne from the post of PW General Secretary, that post has been lightly reshaped and re-designated Women's Ministry and Presbyterian Women's Development Officer. The Council record their thanks to Caroline for the energy and vision she brought to her work and the significant part she played in the development of *Presbyterian Women*. The focus of the previously designated post of PW Development Officer remains unchanged, but it has been renamed PW Support Officer.

15. Important details of the new arrangements are set out below for the information of the Assembly.

A. The Role and membership of the Women's Strategy and Coordination Committee

Strategy Role

To envision, equip and enable Congregations of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland for women's ministry and mission in line with the key Council themes of Discipleship, Leadership, Worship, Outreach, Global Mission Involvement and Pastoral Care, and in conjunction with strategy for Youth, Children's and Family Ministry.

Coordinating Role

- To ensure good two-way communication with the Council in the area of women's ministry and mission
- To ensure good two-way communication with the other Council Committees
- To ensure good two-way communication with *Presbyterian Women*

- To ensure coordination of resourcing and training and in the area of women's ministry through the Council's Congregational Events, Training and Resources Coordination Panel
- To oversee delivery of congregational resources, events and training in women's ministry
 - (i) directly through *Presbyterian Women*
 - (ii) in conjunction with *Presbyterian Women*
 - (iii) on occasions out with, but never in competition with, *Presbyterian Women* – in service of the delivery of the remits of the other Council Committees

Membership of Women's Strategy and Coordination Committee (*indicates overlapping membership with the Presbyterian Women's Panel)

Moderator*, Clerk*, Council Convener*, Council Secretary* (4)
 Convener of WS&C Committee*, President of PW* (2)

Two women drawn from the membership of the Council for Congregational Life and Witness (2)

Two members* with a detailed experience of PW who also serve on the PW Panel (2)

Two women chosen for their wider vision for women's ministry (2)

One member (male or female) chosen to bring a congregational perspective on women's ministry (1)

Women's Ministry and Presbyterian Women's Development Officer to sit and deliberate*

B. The Role and membership of the Presbyterian Women's Panel

Role

- To act as the decision making body of the organisation of *Presbyterian Women* and the main delivery unit of women's ministry under the Council of Congregational Life and Witness.
- To be responsible for the spiritual life of the organisation as it:
 - decides the theme and direction of *Presbyterian Women* taking on board the theme and direction of the Council for Congregational Life and Witness and the wider Church
 - promotes women's ministry
 - encourages prayer
 - educates regarding mission at home and overseas
 - organises the Annual Meeting and other conferences in association with the Events, Training and Resources Coordination Panel
 - produces resources
 - provides guidance for PW LINK and PW Group Meetings
- To be responsible for the organisation's finances as it:
 - educates about the Mission Fund
 - allocates grants
 - decides projects in consultation with other finance raising bodies within PCI

- formulates financial policies for speakers' fees etc in consultation with the Events, Training and Resources Coordination Panel
- To be responsible for policy making and communication within the organisation
 - reviewing existing policies, as necessary
 - communicate current policy to PW LINKs and PW Groups
- To work on behalf of the organisation in partnership with all the Committees of the Council for Congregational Life and Witness, the Council for Mission in Ireland in relation to deaconesses, the Council for Global Mission in relation to missionaries, and other Councils and Committees as necessary in relation to South Belfast Friendship House.
- To oversee the production of the *Wider World* magazine
- To be consulted on Council staffing arrangements as they relate to *Presbyterian Women*

Membership

(*indicates overlapping membership with the Women's Strategy and Coordination Committee)

Council Convener*, Council Secretary*, Convener of WS&C Committee*, President of PW*, Home Vice President of PW, Overseas Vice President of PW (6)

Two members* drawn from the membership of the WS&C Committee (2)
Seven members drawn from a PW Volunteer Bank into which members' names are submitted (7)

Women's Ministry and Presbyterian Women's Development Officer and Presbyterian Women's Support Officer to sit and deliberate*

SPUD 2015/16

16. SPUD's theme this year has centred on how to equip young people through congregational life to thrive as followers of Jesus in the world beyond. Using the story of Daniel as an anchor point in Scripture, the issue has been framed as "equipping our young people in Jerusalem for their life in Babylon".

17. An overnight conference was held at Wellington Presbyterian Church on 15th-16th April 2016 where delegates wrestled with this issue from individual experience and their reflections on growing up in a variety of Congregations. This provided the first step in discussing, thinking through and framing the issue. The Working Group will compile feedback into a brief report to be passed to the Youth, Children's and Family Strategy and Coordination Committee for consideration as to how best to integrate the insights offered into the life of the Church at Council and congregational levels.

SPUD Review

18. The crucial and refreshing role of SPUD within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland is widely acknowledged. Since its inception, SPUD has made a vital contribution to enriching the Church's understanding of many issues through the perspective of its younger members. Nevertheless multiple changes

to the environment in which SPUD operates have necessitated taking stock and consideration of the best way forward. The Council has completed a review of SPUD aimed at achieving five key outcomes:

- Re-establishing the primary focus of SPUD
- Reimagining elements of the programme to address changes in the environment in which SPUD operates, falling numbers and a sense of declining momentum
- Reassigning aspects of work that emerged through SPUD elsewhere in the Council agenda

Repositioning SPUD as part of wider Youth and Young Adults' agenda

Reflecting on how SPUD offers a vehicle for developing leaders

19. The outcome and way forward involves four aspects.

- (i) A constant stream of requests for SPUD representation on Assembly Councils, Committees, Panels and Task Groups has developed in recent years. While this is an indication of SPUD's success in providing a trusted voice of younger members of PCI into a wide variety of contexts and issues, it is simply not possible for SPUD to meet this demand. Consequently, the Council advises the Assembly that it is necessary to explore alternative ways to gain the representative voice and perspective of younger members in policy formation should it wish to continue to do so.
- (ii) It is important that SPUD retains the ability to speak proactively into the Church's life, rather than merely reacting to General Assembly Reports. In recent years the process of compiling the SPUD Report has enabled that to happen. To maintain that valuable contribution, commencing in 2017, an annual one day event will be the focus of drawing together young people for a facilitated discussion on an issue chosen by the SPUD Working Group. The texture and outcome of that discussion will be compiled into a brief report. It is anticipated that this will be passed on to a relevant Council, Committee or Panel for their further consideration.
- (iii) Grow Your Own SPUDs has been the vehicle by which facilitating young people to have opportunity to speak, participate, understand and decide at congregational level has been encouraged. This has been a helpful extension of the original focus of SPUD which revolved around the General Assembly. Gaining real momentum at congregational level, however, has been difficult because of limited capacity. To better develop this emphasis, the Council will revisit the Grow Your Own SPUDs material in conjunction with related aspects of the Close To Home initiative and the youth ministry element of Youth, Children's and Family Strategy. A new package for congregational development of youth participation will be completed by 2018.
- (iv) To endeavour to encourage and enthuse an increase in SPUD participation at the General Assembly, commencing next year, a two night SPUD overnight coinciding with the beginning of Assembly week, will be trialled. Commencing on Sunday night and running through to Tuesday morning, a SPUD community of delegates drawn from the one day event and directly from local congregations, will have the opportunity to collaboratively examine the Assembly Reports, co-

write speeches to be delivered throughout the week and play a part in the life of Assembly.

20. In connection with the outcome of the review, the Council is exploring the most effective means of organising, overseeing and developing appropriate reporting mechanisms for SPUD as it moves into this new phase of ministry.

21. The Council encourage the prayerful and practical support of the Assembly in these experiments in maintaining, refreshing and developing the valuable contribution of SPUD to the Assembly and the wider ministry of the Church.

Volunteers and Interns Programme (VIP) Review

22. Changes in legislation in recent years governing volunteering and internships, along with significant regulations introduced by HMRC in respect of payment of participants in such schemes, has necessitated a review of the Volunteers and Interns Programme. Other aspects of the programme also warranted a fresh look.

23. The review concentrated on the focus of the programme, the range of opportunities it affords, funding and associated legal concerns and the Council's facilitation of the scheme. The findings of the review are outlined below.

- Focus of the programme – The primary focus of the scheme is affirmed as participants testing and developing leadership gifting. A secondary focus is on providing a source of help to host Congregations in resourcing areas of ministry and mission. It was noted that there are often unhelpful conflicting expectations of the scheme from participants and host Congregations. The Council draws the attention of the Assembly and any potential applicant Congregations to the primary and secondary purposes of the scheme.
- Opportunities – The Council is committed to exploring how to extend the range of opportunities for participants beyond youth and children's ministry. Imaginative ideas from applicant Congregations for involvement in other forms of ministry and mission would be welcomed.
- Funding and associated issues – Participants in the scheme are not employees or workers and should not be considered as such by host Congregations. The Council affirms that, in line with HMRC regulations, participants in the scheme should only receive receipted expenses accruing from costs directly incurred in a range of defined areas. Given that 'volunteers' and 'interns' are two different categories under the law, the Council has approved a name change for the scheme from 2016/17. At time of writing, the new name remains to be confirmed. The documentation of the scheme is being overhauled to improve clarity around legal and financial issues.
- Facilitating the scheme – A new application process for 2016/17 is being developed that aims to bring greater synergy between applicants, Congregations and the oversight of the Organising Group. The *Emerging Leaders' Programme* (described in paragraph 39) will reshape Council input and offer enhanced equipping in leadership development for participants.

24. The Council see these changes to the scheme as both necessary and remaining under constant review so as to ensure compliance with legal requirements and ensure operational effectiveness.

Events, Training and Resources Coordination Panel

25. The Panel has begun the task of developing processes to better plan and coordinate the overall output of all the Councils so as to avoid clashes between training and events. A new calendar for event planning has been launched for all the Councils. A meeting with Conveners, Secretaries and key event planners in all Councils has been held with a view to shaping a competent process aimed at prioritising event scheduling.

PCI Family Holiday

26. A number of significant operational issues around staffing and financing the PCI Family Holiday have necessitated a need to reflect on the future of this initiative. After a period of invaluable long service to the Church, a significant number of key members of the Family Holiday Organising Group have decided to stand down simultaneously. In the short-term, this puts the running of the Holiday in 2017 in doubt. Increasing costs and declining numbers also place a question mark over the financial viability of the event for families going forward. The Council is taking steps to reflect on the venture and considering possible alternative ventures in social witness to support families in need.

PCI Counselling

27. The work of the Task Group reviewing PCI Counselling was placed on hold while the issue of continued affiliation to the Association of Christian Counsellors following their issue of a Memorandum of Understanding governing the practice of conversion therapy was addressed. As this issue touches upon areas of theological substance and to the wider consideration of same sex orientation within the Church, the advice of the General Council was sought. The matter was referred back to the Council of Congregational Life and Witness for consideration, initially by its Pastoral Care Committee, with appropriate specialised support from the General Council. At time of writing the recommendations of the Pastoral Care Committee await Council discussion at its May meeting.

28. The attention of the Assembly is drawn to both the complexity of this matter and its ramifications for the Counselling service. The Association of Christian Counsellors provide the necessary professional standards and code of ethics and practice without which the Counselling service cannot function in its present form. There appear to be no obvious alternatives for affiliation. Consequently, should the Association of Christian Counsellors' position on conversion therapy be deemed to be at odds with the doctrinal position of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the continuation of the Counselling service would be placed in doubt. An update on this matter will be brought to the Assembly via Supplementary Reports.

Marriage and the Family Task Group

29. This Task Group was formed in response to the following resolution passed at last year's General Assembly:

Recognising the need for the Church to teach clearly the biblical understanding of marriage and the family, the General Assembly direct the Council for Congregational Life and Witness to give priority to resourcing Congregations for this task.

30. Signposting to a range of resources for congregational use in a variety of ministry settings has been compiled and is available on the PCI website. This approach will accommodate updating as suitable new resources appear. The Task Group are committed to exploring the viability of developing further initiatives in this area of congregational life and witness and will report to the Council in due course.

AN EMERGING AGENDA AROUND CORE ASPECTS OF CONGREGATIONAL LIFE AND WITNESS

31. The eight Assembly Committees each make particular contributions to envisioning, equipping and enabling a cohesive approach to developing the life and witness of Congregations. In any year, different Congregations will choose to access specific areas of the Council's output as they relate most directly to their context, emerging priorities and season of ministry. This is to be expected, however the Council is committed to ensuring a wide range of outputs in the core areas of worship, pastoral care, leadership, discipleship, outreach and global mission involvement. An overview of the main activities, training and events offered by the Council during 2015/16 in each core area appears by way of an appendix to the report. It is hoped this will help members of Assembly to be more aware of the range of options provided to support the development of their Congregation's life and witness.

32. The development of how each of the core areas integrate with the particular perspectives of youth, children, family and women's ministries continues to unfold. It is pleasing to note some of these connections occurring very naturally in the overlap of Committee agendas. Others will require continuing intentional coordination if they are to be integrated to their full potential.

33. In this regard, the Youth, Children's and Family Strategy and Coordination Committee have produced a valuable strategy paper which offers a framework for resourcing and a backdrop against which to identify age specific areas of overlap with other aspects of congregational life and witness. Key elements of this paper are shared below for the attention of the Assembly.

34. The Presbyterian Women's Strategy and Coordination Committee has been overseeing the ongoing work of *Presbyterian Women* while the structure for its integration into the Council has progressed in parallel. With that work now complete, the Women's Strategy and Coordination Committee will have space to begin to shape an overall strategy for women's ministry in 2016/17.

35. This phase of Committee life continues to be marked by overseeing a blend of work inherited from the previous structures alongside developing new insights, emerging opportunities and fresh initiatives. Committees have been mindful not to rush ahead of the feedback provided through the Presbytery Engagements and so the pace of their work has been deliberately measured.

36. The following section provides a summary of how the general themes endorsed by last year's Assembly are being developed by each Committee,

along with significant new initiatives or strategic observations, and initial future priorities emerging from Presbytery Engagement feedback.

LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE

General theme being developed

37. Developing the practice of congregational leadership.

Significant new initiatives

38. *Leading Edge* consists of two separate learning communities which have each met three times to explore the practice of congregational leadership in the contemporary context of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The two strands, comprising Ministers in one and emerging leaders in the other, will converge in a joint overnight gathering after the Assembly in June at which they will reflect together on what they have learned. While the Committee anticipate that participants will benefit for their practice of leadership, it is also hoped that learning from this programme will shape a range of future initiatives in the crucial area of developing a vision for collective congregational leadership.

39. An *Emerging Leaders' Programme* has been approved and will commence in 2016/17. The programme aims to harness the leadership development potential of a variety of existing Council run activities and networks e.g. SPUD, VIP, summer teams, young adults' activities. However, it also aims to engage more directly with Congregations in their task of developing younger leaders in the context of ongoing Church life. It will offer something of a parallel 'intern' opportunity to that presently provided by VIP, but which would take place in the participant's own Congregation. Leadership development opportunities will be provided through a number of gatherings throughout the year. Learning from these gatherings would then be brought back into congregational life as participants lead in the various organisations and activities of their own local Church. The Council hope that many Congregations will avail of this opportunity to identify and invest in their emerging leaders through the programme.

40. The *Elders' Panel* has commenced its work by commissioning a survey of Ruling Elders. The aim is to identify what Elders, from a wide variety of Congregations across Ireland, consider to be the most pressing issues in developing the practice of eldership.

Presbytery Engagement feedback

41. This area of congregational life and witness drew a large response from participants indicating the priority of developing our depth and ability to lead well in a changing Church and society. Eldership figured often in comments, with a particular focus on the need for refresher training which would inspire, encourage and equip. Other areas that featured included steps towards raising a new generation of younger leaders, training for Congregational Committee members and the need to raise expectation of commitment among leadership in balance with a realism about changing life patterns and increasing time poverty. There is growing awareness that leadership needs to be a shared task and a desire

to explore stories of Congregations that have developed new cultures and models of leading, along with the practices which enable such change.

JONATHAN CURRY, Convener

DISCIPLESHIP COMMITTEE

General theme being developed

42. Developing Congregations as disciple-shaping Churches.

Significant new initiatives

43. A number of follow up initiatives to the *Discipleship Church* conference held in Assembly Buildings in March 2015 have sought to take the discipleship agenda to a wider audience. Roadshows were rolled out in Armagh, Iveagh and Coleraine and Limavady Presbyteries. With the accent on taking some of the content from the conference and aiding reflection on how it can be applied in congregational setting, these events were well attended and positively received.

44. On request from the Council for Training in Ministry, post-ordination training for all Ministers in the first five years of ministry on the area of '*Disciple Making: The Minister's Role*' was delivered in April. A '*Preaching for the Frontline*' morning conference took place in Assembly Buildings in May. The Discipleship Development Officer also brought together a number of gatherings in which a wide range of participants contributed insights on discipleship from their congregational experience and setting. All of these initiatives continue to develop understanding and practice of what is required to be a disciple-shaping Church.

45. The Committee is working towards producing a two-year programme of envisioning, equipping and enabling Congregations to introduce, identify and implement specific practices of intentional discipleship into their local life and witness in forms appropriate to their Church context.

46. Work on creating a daily devotional resource entitled *Tides* has been progressed with the aim of resourcing Congregations to equip their members for their discipleship journey. A daily rhythm of bible reflection and prayer will be made available in electronic format.

47. *Transform*, a reimagining of *The Word* event previously delivered by the Board of Youth and Children's Ministry, was held in April. Staged in a variety of venues in Titanic and Cathedral Quarters, Belfast, the event quickly sold out. The focus of teaching and discussion was on equipping young adults to live as disciples in their everyday lives.

48. A *Close To Home* DVD Bible Study resource to enable Congregations to capture some of the teaching on the subject of Covenant family that has emerged over recent years is in production. Release is planned for General Assembly week.

49. A *Good Relations Panel* has commenced work examining what it means to follow Jesus in our still divided society. The *Grace of Giving* initiative continues to be integrated as an aspect of discipleship. Material to highlight the importance of planned giving for use among young adults has been produced.

Presbytery Engagement feedback

50. Developing this area of congregational life, and its overflow into witness, is clearly a priority in Congregations. Feedback centred on the need to create a culture of discipleship which is more than being a member of the Church, but enables growth in following Christ in the everyday realities of life such as work and family. There was a large demand for resources for use in congregational settings, but also a desire to learn from stories of Congregations that are undertaking a journey of intentional disciple making and to identify small steps that move the vision of the Discipleshaping Church initiative to congregational practices. Alongside the need for resources to envision whole Congregations, a need was identified to find ways of working intentionally one-on-one with both individuals and small groups. The connection between the discipleship and family, youth and young adult agendas was also noted.

ANGUS STEWART, Convener

GLOBAL MISSION INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE

General theme being developed

51. Developing involvement in global mission as a core area of congregational life and witness.

Significant new initiative

52. The Committee's main focus has been on overseeing the design, production and delivery of the 2016/17 denominational Fit for Purpose theme, '*A Community of Global Concern*'. A Task Group, including membership from the Council for Global Mission, has been giving shape to what it means to be a Church which is '*learning from and sharing with our brothers and sisters in the world Church, while recognising with them those issues of concern for our stewardship of the world's resources where together we must challenge injustice, poverty and oppression in Jesus' name.*'

53. The integration of this theme into congregational life involves an intentional drawing together of new and familiar PCI projects, events and resources in the area of global mission. The aim is to provide a platform and programme to envision, equip and enable the local Church to enhance its identification with, and involvement in, God's work in the world. The theme will be a major focus at the Assembly and a launch brochure will be available highlighting a variety of ways for Congregations to engage with the theme throughout the year.

Presbytery Engagement feedback

54. This appears to be an area in which many Congregations are particularly struggling to build momentum. There were two prominent perspectives about how Congregations should develop their involvement in global mission. Some focused on improving links with PCI mission personnel serving overseas. In such cases, the request for better communication of their stories in forms that were more readily useable in congregational life was a recurring theme, along with

increased deputation. Others focused on improving congregational involvement in global mission through developing links with members of PCI serving with other mission agencies, or non-PCI mission agencies. In both cases, specific personal contact with individual missionaries or projects seems to be the preferred way forward, rather than trying to stimulate general interest in mission overseas. There were fewer comments about sending congregational teams overseas than might have been anticipated, but an expressed desire to learn how to construct good overseas partnerships. There appears to be a general deficit of ideas for how to progress this aspect of congregational life and witness.

COLIN DICKSON, Convener

OUTREACH COMMITTEE

General theme being developed

55. Developing the practice of sharing the message of the gospel in contemporary Irish cultures.

Significant new initiatives

56. Given the scale of the theme, the variety of cultural contexts involved and the range of relationships in which gospel opportunities occur, the Committee have been considering approaches to breaking the task down into manageable outputs useful to Congregations and members. The options include a conference aimed at identifying the challenges of evangelism in a rapidly changing world and/or a series of smaller outputs aimed at upskilling members and Congregations for sharing the gospel in a variety of contexts e.g. urban, rural, the workplace, with friends, in the family, in men's ministry. The spring meeting of the Committee will decide on a specific programme to begin to address this crucial issue.

57. A gathering for those involved in *Parent and Toddler Groups* was held in May and will be followed by a resource to facilitate conversation and share ideas around how to marry the social witness aspect of this ministry with the opportunities it provides to stimulate conversations about Christian faith.

Presbytery Engagement feedback

58. Feedback suggests a Church that has an increasing hunger to reach out, but is struggling to know how to do so and lacking confidence in the ability to engage evangelistically in a rapidly secularising society. Responses expressed a desire for help in knowing how to connect to changing communities and in beginning to undertake a journey outwards. The sharing of stories of how that is happening from around the Church was a frequent request, as was equipping in evangelism. In some cases the setting for doing so was the organisations of the local Church, in others it was the frontline of the everyday lives of members. There was some indication of desire for PCI to produce evangelistic resources. The variety of settings for evangelism was something that featured regularly, with specific references made to the Republic of Ireland, Loyalist communities, an increasingly secular society, a divided society, urban and rural communities. Recognition of different people groups such as the middle class, men, nominal

Roman Catholics and foreign nationals also featured as requiring different nuancing to sharing of the gospel if it was to connect. The desire for specific ideas seems to indicate the need to engage in outreach with a fresh creativity - faithful to Scripture but imaginative in its ability to connect. The identification of outreach as an overflow of discipleship was also present.

STEPHEN RICHMOND, Convener

PASTORAL CARE COMMITTEE

General theme being developed

59. Casting a vision for the development of the pastoral life of Congregations around the three interlocking themes of pastoral care (all of life understood through the lens of Scripture), pastoral community (space and place in congregational life for genuine sharing of lives with one another) and pastoral care (appropriate response to specific situations of need.)

Significant new initiatives

60. *'Even to old age I will carry you'* is a resource offering guidelines for those involved in pastoral care of older generations. Accompanying questions to stimulate discussion make the resource useful in a range of congregational settings with groups involved in this crucial aspect of pastoral life.

Presbytery Engagement feedback

61. Responses indicated the need to continue to build on the existing platform of training content. The three models of pastoral care for Congregations endorsed by the General Assembly in 2011 continue to develop in different forms in a variety of settings. As well as an enhanced Elders' district based model, the two newer models involve developing a pastoral care team and facilitating pastoral care in small groups. If there is to be a shift in balance from a Minister and Elder focused model to a more collective approach, stories of Congregations who have navigated this journey need to be shared so as to envision for alternative possibilities, show how to take first steps, build momentum and begin to deliver effective pastoral care in a new way. Nevertheless, it is important to note that help with pastoral visitation in the home remains a high priority. There is a desire for the signposting or production of resources that might develop the practice of visitors, supplement conversation and appropriately introduce ministry of the Word and prayer. The need for congregations to find ways of developing genuine congregational community as the platform of effective caring for one another is an increasing realisation. Requests for a number of specialist areas of training and guidance for pastoral carers also emerged including bereavement, stress, depression, death of a child, marriage and family breakdown. The expressed desire was for simple resources or basic pastoral skills training to equip those offering support and ministering into these situations.

ALISTAIR BILL, Convener

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

General theme being developed

62. Developing a renewed focus on encounter with God in congregational worship.

Significant new initiatives

63. Work has begun on designing a variety of resources for congregational use to envision, equip and enable all participating and leading in public worship to do so within an atmosphere of expectation and reflection on meeting with the living God.

Presbytery Engagement feedback

64. Feedback comprised a mix of presenting issues arising from practical challenges around the mechanics of delivering worship week on week and deeper reflection on form, change and heart. There are clearly difficulties for many Congregations in providing musical accompaniment, persuading members other than the Minister to lead worship and in tensions around worship style. There appears to be a desire to be helped to re-imagine Reformed worship in terms of the movements in the service, use of language and a desire for contemporary Psalmody. More thinking about the practice of intergenerational worship and how to sensitively lead change were frequent requests. There is a sense of the majority of Congregations aiming at a blend of contemporary and traditional in worship.

JAMES HYNDMAN, Convener

YOUTH, CHILDREN'S AND FAMILY STRATEGY AND COORDINATION COMMITTEE

General theme being developed

65. Developing a flexible, but intentional, framework to help Congregations in the development of their ministry and mission to children, young people and young adults in the context of a 'Church family' umbrella.

Significant strategic observations

66. More work remains to be done in developing the framework, however some of the key observations that have emerged from this detailed piece of work are shared for reflection below.

- (a) *The need to develop ministry and mission - Balancing congregational life and witness in the area of children's, youth, young adults and family ministry.*

There is a growing and healthy focus across the Church on developing congregational life to minister to covenant families, children, youth

and young adults. Central to this is recapturing the primary role of covenant parents in nurturing faith and reimagining what that looks like in contemporary family life. Enhancing the understanding and practice of congregational covenant ministry by developing and resourcing partnership in ministry between parents, leaders and members of Congregations needs to remain a high priority. However, in all Congregations, a healthy balance needs to be struck between this concentration and the development of an equally important outward facing emphasis so as to effectively reach out to those who do not grow up in covenant homes and their families. In some Congregations there are few or no covenant children or young people. They must be equipped to start afresh to win a new generation of children, youth, young adults and families for Christ. The Council will need to ensure balance in its output so as to envision, equip and enable Congregations for covenant ministry and in reaching out with the gospel in this age specific area of *congregational witness*. This twin emphasis needs to be firmly embedded in the life of our Church if we are to faithfully live out the fullness of our calling as covenant people and so be fruitful Congregations.

(b) *Children's ministry and mission*

Children's Ministry: Children in congregational life

The Council's role in helping Congregations develop children's ministry includes:

- Enabling Congregations to examine overall vision and direction of their children's ministry
- Facilitating reflection on programmes, aims of each activity and the variety of provision offered
- Envisioning for developing children's ministry against the increasingly common backdrop of diminishing resources – especially personnel
- Equipping Congregations to support parents in their children's faith development
- Helping Congregations to revitalise existing activities and explore a variety of new models of children's ministry
- Developing a range of models and practices for including and integrating children in worship

Mission to children: Congregational witness to children

The Council's role in helping Congregations develop mission to children includes:-

- Enabling increasing congregational awareness of the impact of the loss of Church-going culture and basic Bible knowledge in the world of many of today's children
- Helping Congregations explore the gaps in traditional pathways in children's ministry designed with 'Church children' in mind, but which do not easily facilitate a journey towards the centre of Church life for those who come in from the edges

- Developing new pathways which better support the journey above
- Helping Congregations maximise the outreach potential of Parent and Toddler Groups
- Enabling Congregations to explore ‘Messy Church’ style models of ministry to children and families

(c) *Youth ministry and mission*

Youth ministry: Young people in congregational life

The Council’s role in helping Congregations develop youth ministry includes:

- Enabling increasing appreciation of the variety of youth cultures and equipping Congregations to connect with the values and message of the gospel
- Sharing key values and practices of effective youth ministry – providing a place to belong; a holistic emphasis; providing opportunities to contribute to Church life; effectively communicating the gospel; providing opportunities to respond to the gospel; discipling for everyday life as a young person
- Equipping Congregations to support parents in their young people’s faith development
- Helping Congregations to revitalise existing activities and explore a variety of new models of youth ministry
- Enabling development of youth ministry against the common backdrop of diminishing resources and leadership increasingly delivered on a rota basis, rather than by consistent teams
- Balancing suggestions for developing youth ministry between those suitable for Congregations resourced by full or part-time youth workers and those in which provision is entirely by volunteers
- Developing a richer conversation about integrated intergenerational ministry in congregational life which identifies and balances appropriate times of ‘being together’ and ‘doing things apart’

Mission to young people: Congregational witness to young people

The Council’s role in helping Congregations develop mission to young people includes:

- Helping the denomination rise to the challenge of the starting point of the vast majority of young people who now grow up with no significant or active connection to any Church
- Sharing key values and practices of effective mission to young people – creating points of connection to Christians and the Church; providing a welcome and pathways into the community of the Congregation; presenting the gospel effectively and providing opportunity for response
- Helping congregational youth organisations, which are key points of contact with many unchurched young people, to develop appropriate evangelistic edge
- Envisioning Congregations in developing pathways, both *out of* the Church into the world of unchurched young people, and *into*

the community of congregational life, so that they may see and experience the gospel embodied

(d) *Young Adults' Ministry and Mission*

Young Adults' Ministry: Young adults in congregational life

The Council's role in helping Congregations develop young adults' ministry includes:

- Providing Congregations with ways to identify and grapple with supporting young adults as disciples through the multiple transitions of this stage of life – school/university to unemployment, work or further study; predominantly Church based peer group to a more diverse environment; Church life based on provision to expectation of taking greater responsibility for themselves and leading others
- Helping Congregations develop an environment for thriving young adults' ministry which is shaped by: practices that balance equipping and releasing in ministry; building of intentional community that promotes belonging and deepening relationships; participation in congregational life that allows for influence as well as involvement
- Helping Congregations recognise the following approaches to young adult ministry currently employed:
 - (i) extension of youth ministry
 - (ii) encouraging continued involvement in Church life by channelling into maintaining ministries
 - (iii) segregated young adult age specific programme
 - (iv) focusing on integration of young adult ministry into congregational life.
- Developing a conversation which helps Congregations identify the strengths and weakness of the first three models and to move towards an appropriate expression of the fourth model, will be an important next step towards greater overall effectiveness.

Mission to young adults: Congregational witness to young adults

The Council's role in helping Congregations develop mission to young adults includes:

- Helping the denomination recognise and find ways of rising to the missional challenge of the world of the unchurched young adult
- Equipping young adults for living out the missional potential of relationships with their peers in the everyday settings in which they live, work and socialise
- Exploring with Congregations a range of appropriate pathways for unchurched young adults to encounter the life of the local Church and explore questions of belief

(e) *Other areas still to be explored and developed*

These include further investigation of how Congregations can support contemporary expressions of covenant family life and enable smooth age-related transitions between various stages of children's, youth and young adult ministry.

67. Even a cursory reading of the range of challenges and opportunities above is dizzying. However, this work will prove crucial giving shape and direction to the development of this key area of congregational life and witness for the next number of years.

Presbytery Engagement feedback

68. Comments on this area of congregational life and witness indicated a vast array of challenges. Some indicated a shortage of leaders, others the challenges of working with smaller numbers in children's and youth ministry settings. The effect of changes in the family unit on children and young people was noted, along with the specific need for help in knowing how to reach those outside the Church. There was a desire for envisioning in reshaping existing programmes and developing new models. The need for good resourcing with materials that address everything from ministry and mission to teenagers, to parenting and family life, was also prominent. There is a remaining sense of haemorrhaging of young people from the Church and difficulties in integrating them into the regular patterns and practices of Church life. A disconnect between much children's and youth work and the rest of congregational life was noted, as was a lack of joined up strategy between different organisations in the same Congregation. Specific help was requested with reimagining Sunday School and Children's Church, integrating those with special needs and young adults' ministry.

COLIN MORRISON, Convener

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN'S STRATEGY AND COORDINATION COMMITTEE

Presbyterian Women Theme 2016/17

69. The *Presbyterian Women's* theme for 2016/17 is 'This is the Day'. It was launched at the Annual Meeting in Assembly Buildings on 5th/6th May.

Resourcing the PW Theme and Annual Projects

70. A resource pack with ideas to develop the theme in Congregations, called *Inspirations*, has been completed and made available. The *Presbyterian Women* projects for the year are supporting Alan and Tracey Johnston, PCI missionaries in Mantova, Italy, and a project worker in the Big House in Belfast.

Presbytery Engagement feedback on Women's Ministry

71. There was a very clear threefold breakdown in responses in this area. In some settings *Presbyterian Women* remains the single most effective vehicle for women's ministry. In others, *Presbyterian Women* groups have developed other initiatives in ministry and mission to women that supplement and complement the regular meetings of the organisation in the Congregation. A third category indicates a further group of Congregations in which women's ministry is developing in forms other than that of *Presbyterian Women*. A generational divide is evident between older and younger women. This is often the result of

changing lifestyle patterns and generational preferences for formal or informal ways of gathering. There is also a strong desire to develop other aspects of the Council's agenda through the lens of women's ministry such as pastoral care, discipleship, outreach and family.

VALERIE STEWART, Convener

RESOURCING AND SUPPORTING CONGREGATIONS FOR THEIR LIFE AND WITNESS

72. The Council for Congregational Life and Witness exists to resource and support the ministry and mission of Congregations across the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. An important feature of the Council's work this year has been to consider and approve an outline framework for fulfilling this remit. It has done so by facilitating discussion in the Council meetings, but also aware of the need to integrate the feedback from the Presbytery Engagement process. Initial impressions of Presbytery feedback and the key features of the Council outline framework are detailed below.

Initial impressions from Presbytery Engagements

73. A number of important observations emerged on which the Council will continue to reflect and respond.

- (i) Generally Congregations prefer to be resourced directly into the heart of the existing patterns and rhythms of their Church life e.g. have resources to use in Sunday services, midweek and small group gatherings; training which they can deliver locally
- (ii) There is a significant demand for sharing stories from around the Church to expand imagination, illustrate the outworking of important ideas, build confidence that change is achievable and breathe hope by showing God at work
- (iii) A frequent request was to make better use of mediums of communication such as DVD clips and web materials which are immediately accessible and less wordy
- (iv) The time lag between fresh vision shared through conferencing and the provision of congregational resources to embed new ideas locally was identified as impeding momentum and necessary progress in developing change
- (v) The importance of awareness of the variety of congregational contexts and flexibility of resources was stressed
- (vi) The preference for training delivered regionally as opposed to events staged in Assembly Buildings was affirmed, although the role of large conferences in addressing significant themes for the whole denomination is recognised
- (vii) The value of Council staff delivering training, facilitating discussion and accompanying Congregations in journeys of change was confirmed
- (viii) A number of respondents referenced the need to be equipped in using and delivering resources, particularly in developing facilitation skills where leading, planning and bringing change in the local Congregation is required

- (ix) There is a desire for home produced PCI resources, but also signposting of other resources
- (x) There were a significant number of comments about lack of awareness of already available materials
- (xi) An important reminder was to ensure outputs catered for Congregations of all sizes

The Council Outline Framework

Envisioning, Equipping and Enabling

74. The Council identifies three main tasks in resourcing and supporting Congregations:

- (a) Envisioning – presenting possibilities and painting pictures of different ways of doing things;
- (b) Equipping – providing resources and training directly to Congregations and/or up-skilling key leaders to develop effective practices of ministry and mission in the local Congregation;
- (c) Enabling – journeying with Congregations as they work out, and work towards, realising their vision.

Supplementing congregational life and witness with larger, specialist events

75. Where necessary, the Council also needs to supplement the life and witness of Congregations with programmes and events of a larger scale, or requiring specialist expertise, which in turn develop the capabilities of the local Church. This can be achieved by planning more intentionally to create programmes for such events that include an intentional element of fold back into the congregational setting. An example of this approach is the programme for MAD 2015 in which the focus of the theme at the weekend was supplemented by take away resources for use to develop the same content in local Youth Fellowships.

Entry points for engagement with Congregations

76. The Council identifies three entry points through which it needs to engage with Congregations.

- (a) Key leaders – through learning and training opportunities
- (b) The mainstream of congregational life – through resources or other provision which touches down directly into the standard settings around which the rhythms of congregational life are formed e.g. Sunday Services, Small Groups, Midweek Meetings, Kirk Session or other regular meetings of members of key ministries
- (c) Communicating the larger denominational story – through the sharing of observations of changes in the landscape of congregational life and witness and stories which expand imagination and give confidence to experiment

Perspectives guiding agenda setting

77. In this phase of the Council's life, an agenda will emerge from the following perspectives in interaction with one another:

- **A sharper focus** on the primary role of resourcing Congregations and subsidiary role of supplementing congregational activities
- **A fuller picture** of the present agenda with an eye to numbers participating in existing programmes, but with the number of Congregations involved as the key focus
- **A fresh look** at Presbytery Engagement feedback, developing Committee agendas, converging and diverging themes, how to give a lead towards necessary change, signalling shifts in and making sense of the landscape of congregational life and witness
- **A realistic vision** which maps types of Congregation, operates within capacity to fulfil priorities, acknowledges changes in rhythms of Church life, sets expectations, and offers a balanced programme of bigger and smaller events

The next phase of the Council's life and agenda

78. The next phase of the Council's life and agenda will involve a gradual rebalancing of Council outputs. The approach will be to retain a wide range of possible resourcing options, but also the flexibility to choose different combinations of particular elements on a year on year basis depending on emerging priorities.

A missing piece?: Men's ministry and mission

79. One regularly reoccurring piece of feedback during the Presbytery Engagements was that while there was a specific focus on devising a strategy for women's ministry, there was no similar vehicle for examining and developing ministry and mission to men. Many expressed the view that this is a crucial area of work, particularly considering the increasingly noticeable deficit of males in many aspects of congregational life.

80. The Council is keen to respond to this observation and have already taken a first step in doing so by staging a gathering to further explore the nature and practice of men's ministry. Further thought will be given as to how to integrate this particular concern into the agenda of appropriate Committees.

FRUITFUL CONGREGATIONS: CULTIVATING THE THEME

81. The Council introduced its central theme of *Fruitful Congregations* at last year's Assembly. The theme has been shared extensively through the process of Presbytery Engagements. It has quickly gained significant currency in the denomination as a useful way of capturing the purpose and nature of congregational life and witness.

82. In I Corinthians 3 v.6 Paul reminds the Church in Corinth of the dynamics of fruitful congregational life as follows,

I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow

83. This vision of how fruitfulness happens offers both challenge and encouragement. It asks each Congregation to consider how they are both planting and watering the seed of gospel ministry and mission in each area of life and witness. It also turns our focus to God in prayerful expectation that He might grow His Kingdom, both among us and through us to the world.

84. The Council reaffirms the vast variety of contexts and starting points of Congregations across the island of Ireland and recognises that fruitfulness in ministry and mission can find expression in different ways and is subject to seasonal variations.

85. In an effort to further embed this theme among Congregations and their members, the Council notes four things that need to happen:

- (i) Find ways of **introducing** the theme into the thinking of the whole membership of Congregations
- (ii) Fire the **imagination** of members with biblical images of fruitfulness, fused with stories of contemporary expression
- (iii) Focus on **identifying** developments in congregational life and witness that offer examples of movement toward the creation of a culture which nurtures fruitfulness
- (iv) Firmly getting to grips with the practices which, under God, begin to **implement** a local expression of growing fruitfulness

86. The Council offers the following vision of basic elements that make for a fruitful Congregation. They are drawn from the overall conversation about congregational life and witness in Council and Committee meetings up to this point. The insights gleaned from Presbytery Engagement feedback seem to underscore many elements of this emerging picture.

87. Fruitful Congregations:

- Place encounter with the Living God at the centre of their life
- Are shaped by understanding their life and witness as part of God's unfolding story of redemption
- Are led to lean forward into the future
- Develop their life as a community of God's people
- Move the vision of membership from belonging to Church, to longing to be followers of Christ in every aspect of life
- Make an impression for God locally and globally through outreach and involvement in God's wider activity in the world

88. These aspects of developing a culture of fruitfulness should not be read as a sequence of ordered steps, but rather represent the interlocking elements of a rounded approach to the challenge. Neither will any Congregation be able to develop in all areas at once, but will need to prayerfully discern their own starting points and priorities in deepening their overall ministry and mission.

89. The Council will continue to find ways of developing, articulating and cultivating the *Fruitful Congregations* theme at all levels of Church life.

THE VITAL ROLE OF PRAYER

90. Often we organise prayer in parallel to the activities of our congregational life and witness. Sometimes we pray at the start of our meetings and then proceed in a disconnected way with the business of making plans and decisions. Perhaps we need to recapture something more - a posture of prayerfulness that continually positions us to be sensitive to God's activity around us and responsive in following where He is prompting.

91. In that regard, the Council has scheduled an examination of the practice of prayer in congregational life and witness as an important future agenda

item. Attention is also drawn to the *Fruitful Congregations Prayer Journey* which many have found useful in stimulating intentionality in the prayer life of Congregations. As an undated resource it can be easily launched and incorporated into congregational life at any time. It is accessible primarily as an electronic resource via the PCI website, but hard copies for reproduction are available from the Council office.

APPENDIX

Overview of main activities, training and events offered by the Council during 2015/16 in core areas of Congregational Life and Witness

Programme/Event	Venue	Date(s)
VIP Training week & commissioning	Derryvolgie/Maze	31st August – 4th September 2015
PW Forum	Assembly Buildings	19th September 2015
Youth & Children's Workers' Days	Assembly Buildings	A series of morning sessions organised from May to June
Youth Ministry Course (17 weeks)	UTC	September 2015 – March 2016
Children's Ministry Course (10 weeks)	UTC	September to December 2015
Handling the Word (6 weeks)	UTC	October/November 2015
Youth and Children Road Trip	Richhill	13th October 2015
Sharpening Your Interpersonal Skills	Lorne House, Holywood	19th-23rd October 2015
MAD Weekend	UUC	23rd-25th October 2015
Youth Ministry Course residential	Castlewellan Castle	6th-8th November 2015
Youth and Children Road Trip	1st Ballymoney	17th November 2015
Leadership Roadshow	Letterkenny	19th November 2015
Discipleship Taster Day	Assembly Buildings	11th December 2015
Discipleship Taster Day	Assembly Buildings	15th December 2015
Discipleship Church Roadshow	Richhill	19th January 2016

Programme/Event	Venue	Date(s)
Discipleshaping Church Roadshow	Ballydown	26th January 2016
Pastoral Care Training	Ballynure	6th February 2016
PW Forum	Assembly Buildings	6th February 2016
Leadership Roadshow	Kilfennan	8th February 2016
Youth and Children Road Trip	Saintfield Road	16th February 2016
Impact Summer Teams' Leaders' overnight training	Portrush	4th-5th March 2016
Youth and Children Road Trip	Dublin	5th March 2016
Leading Edge – Ministers	Various	3 sessions and 1 residential between March and June
Discipleship Taster Day	Bloomfield	11th March 2016
Discipleship Taster Day	Assembly Buildings	14th March 2016
Prepared to Go	Belfast Bible College	19th March 2016
PCI Family Holiday	Share Centre	28th March - 1st April 2016
Transform Young Adults' Gathering	Cathedral/Titanic Quarters	1st-2nd April 2016
Leading Edge – Emerging Leaders	Various	3 sessions and 1 residential between April and June
SPUD Overnight	Wellington	15th-16th April 2016
Kids' Big Day Out	Wellington	23rd April 2016
PW Annual Meetings	Assembly Buildings	5th/6th May 2016
Discipleshaping Church Roadshow	1st Limavady	17th May 2016
Youth and Children Ministry Courses Graduation	Knock	18th May 2016
Toddler Group Leaders' Envisioning Event	Assembly Buildings	20th May 2016

Programme/Event	Venue	Date(s)
Preaching for the Frontline	Assembly Buildings	24th May 2016
Youth & Children's Workers' Retreat	Glenavon, Cookstown	25th-26th May 2016
Youth Night	Assembly Buildings	11th June 2016
Impact Mission Teams Training	Assembly Buildings	18th May 2016
Impact Summer Team	Letterkenny & Trenta	25th June - 2nd July 2016
Impact Summer Team	Scrabo	2nd-10th July 2016
Impact Summer Team	Cooke Centenary	2nd-10th July 2016
Impact Summer Team	1st Donaghadee	2nd-10th July 2016
Impact Summer Team	Mullingar	8th-17th July 2016
Impact Summer Team	Donegal Town	16th-24 July 2016
Impact Summer Team	Ballyweany	16-24th July 2016
Impact Summer Team	St Andrew's, Belfast	30th July – 6th August 2016
Impact Summer Team	Friendship House	6th-13th August 2016
Impact Summer Team	Seaview	6th-14th August 2016
Ignite Team	Romania	8th-21st August 2016
Impact Summer Team	Grange	13th-21st August 2016
Impact Summer Team	Ballycastle	27th-31st August 2016

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the General Assembly instruct the Council for Congregational Life and Witness to send each Presbytery the feedback from their engagement event and request that Presbytery consider its content and engage with the Council in shaping priorities for future support and resourcing in their area.

2. That the General Assembly welcome the approved structure for the integration of *Presbyterian Women* into the Council for Congregational Life and Witness.

3. That the General Assembly welcome the new format and programme emerging from the SPUD Review and instruct the Youth, Children's and Family

Strategy and Coordination Committee to receive and consider the content of this year's SPUD Report.

4. That the Report of the Council for Congregational Life and Witness be received.

COUNCIL FOR TRAINING IN MINISTRY

Convener: Rev JNI McNEELY
Secretary: Rev TJ STOTHERS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Council for Training in Ministry met on four occasions since the 2015 General Assembly to receive reports from the Committees and Panels through which it carries out its strategic responsibilities. The Council Convener, having guided the Council through the period of transition from the Board of Christian Training to the new Council, is retiring in June 2016.

2. The **Ministerial Studies and Development Committee** looks after all aspects of selection, training and ongoing development of full-time Ministers and operates with an Assignments Panel. The Committee reports a reduced number of applicants for the ministry and that 4 candidates are being nominated for acceptance as students for the Ordained Ministry in 2016. The report refers to the revision of the Ministerial Development programme and an adjustment to the age limit for sabbatical leave.

3. The **Union Theological College Management Committee** is responsible for all management of UTC and operates with a Curriculum Panel and a Property, Finance and Administration Panel. The Committee is pleased to report progress during the past year in regard to the restoring of the stonework at Union Theological College and the intention to appoint two full-time lecturers to the academic staff.

4. The **Reception of Ministers and Licentiates Committee** primarily considers requests from Ministers and Licentiates of other Churches in regard to service within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Following the resolution of the General Assembly in 2014 requesting a review of current guidelines for the receiving of Ministers from overseas the Committee agreed a set of revised arrangements for applicants.

5. The **Deaconess Selection and Training Panel** oversees the selection and initial training of Deaconesses including supervision of the probationary period. The Panel has agreed to receive applications from candidates to commence Deaconess training at Union Theological College in the 2017/18 academic year.

6. The **Accredited Preacher and Auxiliary Minister Panel** handles all aspects of the selection, training and on-going development of Accredited Preachers and Auxiliary Ministers. The Panel reports that a second cohort of candidates is participating in the Auxiliary Ministry Course and will complete their training in March 2017.

7. The **Pastoral Care of Manse Families Panel** is responsible for the development of pastoral care and provision of support for Ministers and their families. The Panel has been holding information events for Presbyteries and particularly those responsible for pastoral care of Ministers and their families.

8. The **Conciliation Panel** provides a service of conciliation and a team of trained people to assist in situations where conciliation is required. The Panel

has been producing a range of training materials which can be delivered by team members in local situations.

9. The **Ministry Formation Panel** monitors the progress of students for the Ordained Ministry and may add specific requirements to a candidate's pathway.

10. The **Qualifications Panel** considers the academic merit of degrees awarded by a university or college not normally recognised under the law of the Church and reports directly to the General Assembly. It did not have occasion to meet during the year.

Convener's Introduction

11. The former Board of Christian Training and the current Council for Training in Ministry have gradually been applying the recommendations included in the 2009 Assembly Report of the Union Theological College Review Panel. Two of the major recommendations were the appointment of a Principal with executive responsibility and the structuring of three departments to include full-time (junior) lecturer posts. The Council in 2016 is now pleased to report that it has been agreed to appoint two such lecturers in the Department of Biblical Studies and the Department of Systematic Theology and Church History.

12. The Rev Prof Patton Taylor retired as Professor of Old Testament at Union Theological College on 15th February 2016. The Council acknowledges the significant contribution he has made to the College since his appointment in 1994. Special recognition is recorded regarding his two tenures as Principal of the College from 2002-2008 and 2010-2013. Prof Taylor is not only recognised for his expertise in Old Testament studies but also will be remembered for the congenial rapport he formed with the students and his devoted commitment to the ethos of Union Theological College.

13. Council representatives and members of the Linkage Commission and the Council for Mission in Ireland met to consider the future developments in ministerial training. The Council has been considering the introduction of special training in Church planting and rural mission and subsequently involving students in training situations outside normal assistantships. Representatives of the Councils have been meeting to consider the implications of such a strategic approach and have been consulting with the Principal and the Dean of Ministerial Studies and Development. Appropriate use of income from scholarships has been able to contribute to funding to enable one third year student to be assigned to a Congregation in a missional context in Belfast.

14. In exceptional cases, following a report from the Ministry Formation Panel, it may be necessary to suspend a student's studies or recommend to the General Assembly that a Ministry Candidate's pathway be terminated. The attention of the Panel has been given to three particular students over the current academic year. Mr Keith Parke has recently withdrawn as a student for the ordained ministry. It is important to note that students are on pathways of training and that it should not be assumed that acceptance as a student for the Ordained Ministry is a guarantee of successful completion of the course, nor of being declared eligible for a call after a period of licentiatehip. An Overture is submitted which is intended to give clarity over the position of a licensed assistant whose appointment is terminated.

15. There have been a significantly reduced number of applications from candidates for the ministry in the last two years – nine last year and eight this and of the latter the Council can only recommend four. The Council reminds Ministers, Kirk Sessions and leaders in Congregations to be regularly looking out for people who demonstrate the gift profile that would potentially equip them to be ordained Ministers of the Church. It is important that men and women who may be called to ministry in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland are encouraged to consider such calling, to pray, seek guidance and explore the possibility of the Ordained Ministry. The Council provides the Accredited Preachers Course which can be for some people a stepping stone towards helping them decide the form of ministry they may follow.

16. Over recent years, as the recommendations of the 2009 Review have been implemented, the provisions of the Code have diverged from what has been agreed by resolution of the General Assembly. A series of Overtures are submitted to bring the Code into line with those resolutions, in accordance with the instruction of last year's General Assembly (Minutes page 50, resolution 4). Flowing from that same resolution steps have also been taken to amend the provisions of the 1978 Act of Parliament relating to Union Theological College. That work is almost complete: the amendments have been accepted by the relevant government department at Stormont and await enactment.

17. The Council acknowledges the retirement of three Conveners of Panels, coincident with the meeting of the Assembly

- (a) The Rev Nigel McCullough retires as Convener of the Accredited Preacher and Auxiliary Minister Panel. During his service as Convener he has been strategic in the creating of the Accredited Preachers course and the introduction of the Auxiliary Minister training.
- (b) Dr Lena Morrow retires as Convener of the Curriculum Panel. Dr Morrow was a member of the 2009 UTC Review Panel and has been serving on the UTC Management Committee; she gave significant and perceptive guidance to the Curriculum Panel under the new management structure.
- (c) Mr Joe Campbell retires as Convener of the Conciliation Panel. Mr Campbell offered many years of experience in conciliation and community relations to his work as Convener. He contributed much wisdom and discernment as he gave leadership to the Panel and was regularly engaged in mediation work with Churches and individuals.

The Rev Jim Stothers writes:

18. The Rev Noble McNeely retires as Convener of the Council at this year's General Assembly. Having served as Convener of the Ministerial Studies and Development Committee from 2007-2010, he was appointed as Convener of the Board of Christian Training in 2010. He gave himself fully to a very important position within our Church and steered the Board through the implementation of many changes which had been agreed in 2009. He graciously agreed to stay on for the transition of the Board into the Council for Training in Ministry at the start of 2015, with the further changes that that has entailed. To the position of Convener he has brought his own commitment to the work of the Board, then Council, and a very open and straightforward manner in guiding them and their Committees. The Council records its thanks to him for all that he has done. It

is understood that the Nominations Committee will nominate the Rev Nigel McCullough to succeed Mr McNeely as Convener of the Council for Training in Ministry. Mr McCullough brings a wealth of experience on the former Board and present Council and is currently Convener of the Accredited Preacher and Auxiliary Ministry Panel as well as a member of the Ministerial Studies and Development Committee: we look forward to the leadership he will provide.

STUDENTS' BURSARY FUND

The Rev Mark Russell, Students' Bursary Fund Agent, writes:

19. The Students' Bursary Fund exists to make financial provision for students for the Ordained Ministry and their families, during their time of study.

20. In the academic year September 2015-June 2016 there are 36 students in receipt of grants. The cost to the Fund of grants, fees and all other expenses for this period is £477,765.36. This is being met through offerings at services of licensing, ordination and installations of Ministers and Elders, personal and Congregational donations and by Congregational assessment. Thank you to all members of the Church who generously support the Students' Bursary Fund.

21. All those who have responsibility for planning services of licensing, ordination and installation are asked to ensure that full use is made of the SBF literature which is available from reception in Assembly Buildings, especially the Gift Aid envelope. Past experience has shown that where literature is handed out at an earlier service, those attending the special service are more likely to make use of the Gift Aid scheme.

MINISTERIAL STUDIES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

22. At the time of writing, in this academic year (2015-2016) there were 38 students under the care of Presbyteries, as listed in the appended Schedule (see Appendix 1). This is in addition to 2 students training at Union Theological College for Deaconess service.

Accredited Preacher Course Requirement

23. As agreed at the General Assembly in 2013 ministry candidates are now required to have completed the Accredited Preacher Course (and by implication the Handling the Word Course). It is believed that this requirement will not only be of tremendous benefit to Presbyteries by giving them an objective basis on which to assess the giftedness of any applicant for Ordained Ministry, because they will have overseen that applicant's journey through both the Handling the Word Course and the Accredited Preacher Course, but will also give a solid platform on which to set college years of intensive theological study and ministry formation if the applicant is accepted for training for Ordained Ministry. It has been realised that requiring completion of the Course prior to application introduced an unnecessary and unintended additional length of time, and so the Overture submitted anent Par 214 of the Code requires completion by time of interview, rather than at time of application.

Interviews

24. The interviews of 8 candidates were held in Union Theological College under the revised Application and Assessment process on Monday 21st and Tuesday 22nd March 2016. The Interviewing Panels comprised: Ministers – Amanda Best, Robin Brown, Andrew Faulkner, David Leach, Niall Lockhart, Colin Morrison, Nigel McCullough, Dr Ivan Patterson; Elders – Mr Joe Campbell, Dr. Lena Morrow. *HealthLink360* acted as Vocational Consultant, the Rev Noble McNeely as Chairman, the Rev Dr Bill Parker as Secretary, and the Rev Dr David Allen as DMSD. The Rev Jim Stothers, Secretary to the Council, was also present at the reporting stage. The Panels had previously had opportunity to meet and get to know those they had the responsibility to interview at a study day in December 2015. Having completed the interviewing process, 4 candidates are being nominated to the General Assembly by the Council for Training in Ministry.

Introduction to Biblical Languages Course Unit

25. The Biblical languages curriculum was revised for the academic year 2010-2011 and was reviewed towards the end of the academic year 2011-2012 after two years of operation. At that time the Committee expressed general satisfaction with the Course Unit. The Committee has now agreed that there will be a full formal review of the Introduction to Biblical languages Course Unit in the academic year 2016-2017.

Ministerial Development Programme

26. The Ministerial Development Programme (MDP) has provided significant benefits for our Ministers and Deaconesses, and through them subsequent benefits to Congregations in particular, and the Church in general. In the early years of the Programme applications for in-service training and sabbatical were limited and this allowed a significant surplus to be built-up in the Fund, e.g. £310,000 in 2011. In recent years, however, applications for In-service Training (IST) and Sabbatical leave have grown, and for this reason, along with the introduction in 2009 of a five-year residential programme for Post-ordination Training (POT), demands on the Fund have increased considerably. It was decided by Board of Christian Training not to overly increase the assessment on Congregations to the Fund. As an alternative to increased assessments, the surplus was allowed to diminish.

27. The surplus has now reached the point at which it cannot prudently be allowed to diminish further. The assessment has already been increased significantly from £25,000 in 2014, to £49,000 in 2015, and £100,000 for 2016. It is likely that the demands on the Fund will increase further as Ministers who have completed POT are more likely to apply for IST and sabbatical leave than Ministers who have not undergone that training, and as the requirement for Ministers to take at least 4 weeks' sabbatical within ten years of ordination takes effect. In light of the financial position of the Fund, the Committee agreed to recommend that the General Assembly make two changes to the Programme. The changes, it is believed, will achieve a balance between maintaining the benefits of the Programme, while at the same time limiting future increases in Congregational assessments.

28. Sabbatical leave has its emphasis on enabling a Minister to seek personal spiritual renewal and refreshment and also on allowing time and space for reflection on aspects of his/her ministry within the wider mission and ministry priorities of the Congregation. Although this may well include the enhancing of knowledge and skills in a specific area, the aim of sabbatical leave is to enable Ministers to refocus on their calling under God as both Minister and believer. Benefits of sabbatical, therefore, not only accrue personally to the Minister but also must be given opportunity to accrue to that Minister's ministry. The Committee agreed to recommend that the General Assembly reduce the maximum age of eligibility for sabbatical grant from the year in which recipients reach their 62nd birthday to the year in which they reach their 60th birthday. This would ensure the twin benefits of reducing demand upon the Fund, and of giving recipients longer to apply the benefits they have gained from their sabbatical. It is envisaged that the change will be phased-in so that recipients may prepare for impending changes. The recommendation includes the proviso that the maximum age of eligibility remains at this point as long as UK State Pension age is not more than 67 years – the General Assembly agreed in 2010 that normal retirement age for Ministers would be the male UK State Pension age. However, if the UK State Pension age becomes older than 67 years the maximum age of eligibility for sabbatical grants should be increased accordingly in order to maintain a seven year gap between final sabbatical entitlement and the normal retirement date. The Committee believes that seven years is a suitable period of time to give Ministers the opportunity to apply benefits gained from their sabbatical leave.

29. The Committee agreed to recommend that the General Assembly modify POT from a residential to a non-residential format. The current structure, established in 2009, provides two days of training, spread over three days, with two overnights, in a conference format. Ministers are also eligible to receive the rest of the week as leave and to have the cost of a pulpit supply covered by the Fund. The Committee is concerned to retain the objectives of POT but to reduce the demands on the Fund by removing the residential element. The Committee agreed that POT could be provided just as effectively by two separate days of training, normally in Assembly Buildings. The training days would additionally be open to Accredited Preachers, Auxiliary Ministers, Deaconesses, Additional Pastoral Personnel and others. Ministers will continue to receive the rest of one week as leave and have the cost of a supply fee covered by the Fund. This will allow the training element to be maintained, with time programmed for reflection, informal conversation and fellowship. The Committee is aware that some may see this as a negative change in the delivery of the Programme but notes that in 2015 the residential element of POT cost the Fund in the region of £18,000. The Committee believes that two non-residential Training Days will continue to provide the excellent training that has been delivered in the past but at a cost that is more equitable to the wider Church which has generously been financing it.

Pre-Retirement Residential

30. The Pre-Retirement Residential seeks to equip ordained Ministers and their spouses as they anticipate the transition from full-time ministry to retirement. It is open to ordained Ministers and their spouses from the year in which the Minister reaches the age of 63. A residential was held from 10th-

12th November 2015 with nine couples and one single person attending. The Committee wishes to express its appreciation to the facilitators, the Very Rev Dr David and Mrs Hazel Clarke and the Rev Bill and Mrs Margaret Sanderson. Another residential is planned, God willing, for 2016.

Assignments

31. This year the Assignments Panel assigned thirteen students to Congregations, and has also re-assigned four students or licentiates. The Panel recognises the important role of mentoring in the training of students and licentiates, and is grateful to those Congregations and Ministers who accept this role.

WJM PARKER, Convener

UNION THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

32. The Committee adds its own strong appreciation of the Rev Prof Patton Taylor's particular service to it, to that given earlier in this report by the Council Convener.

33. The annual Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visit produced a satisfactory report. The next one in October will be the major triennial visit.

34. Queen's University Belfast is going through a time of considerable flux due to financial constraints. Many of the areas of academic study are being reviewed, including Theology. In view of this, the agreement between QUB and UTC for the delivery of Theology continues to be under review, although there are positive indications of progress. Because of the on-going uncertainties, the introduction of the Masters degree programme for teachers of Religious Education has been delayed.

35. The Committee is pleased to report that there are 56 first year theology students in the 15/16 academic year. However, some concern was expressed over the lower number of applications from ministry students.

36. Two Church in the Public Square events were held: in October 'Economic Hope: a biblical roadmap for a just society'; and in January 'The Future of our Past: Remembering and Reassessing 1916'. Good interest was shown in both, with the latter drawing an especially full attendance.

37. Although some issues remain to be solved, there has been a marked improvement in the College IT experience. The Committee is grateful to the IT Department and to the Support Services Committee.

Personnel

38. There have been some changes in the administrative staff. Mrs Donna Orr took up duties as Senior Secretary (3 days/week) in April 2015, Mrs Margaret Olivier as permanent Library Assistant in June, and Mrs Sharon McWhirter was employed as Receptionist from September to March.

39. Following the retirement of the Professor of Old Testament the Committee approved the appointment of two (junior) lecturers, one each in the

Departments of Biblical Studies and of Systematic Theology and Church History. Following Council approval, permission was requested from the Finance and Staffing Commission to advertise, interview and make appointments in time for the beginning of the academic year in September (See Appendix 2, 'Additional Appointments'). Overtures to implement appropriate changes in the Code are submitted.

Stonework Restoration

40. **Phase 1.** This is complete apart from a small amount of snagging work. The tender sum was £779,000, professional fees £97,375 and VAT £175,275, giving an overall total of £1,051,650. The NIEA grant aid offer was £403,610 and £396,400 was been paid to date. A further claim for grant has been made for the outstanding amount of £7,210. It is estimated that the contract may end up some £16,000 over the tender sum, c£13,000 of this due to unforeseen dry rot remedial work to the library roof.

41. **Phase 2.** Due to the withdrawal of the NIEA grant scheme across Northern Ireland, the original Phase 2 was split into Phase 2A (completion of the front of the building and the south west corner) and Phase 2B (the residential block along University Avenue).

42. **Phase 2A.** This is also complete apart from a small amount of snagging work. It was a less complex job than Phase 1. The tender sum was £336,900, professional fees £42,113 and VAT £75,803, giving an overall total of £454,816. It is estimated that the contract may end up some £30,000 below the tender sum. However, this does not include the cost of reinstatement of the front grass. Due to the withdrawal of the NIEA grant aid scheme upon which budgeting had been based, no NIEA grant was available for Phase 2A. The Committee remain deeply grateful to the Trustees who, as reported to the General Assembly last year, agreed in principle to make a grant from their Discretionary Fund to match what the NIEA grant might have been.

43. **Phase 2B.** The external wall of the residential block has bulged by up to 90mm (3.5 inches). The bulge is more pronounced towards the front of the building and less pronounced towards the rear. While there is no danger of the block itself collapsing because the floors are supported by the wall's inner leaf, which is sound, the same cannot be said for the outer leaf. Advice from a structural engineer's report is that the outer leaf of the wall needs to be 'tied in' to the inner leaf by the insertion of steel ties at appropriate intervals. The Committee examined the following options:

- Do nothing. Estimated cost £1,000 (improved signage).
- Install wall ties to stabilise the area of the wall with the significant bulge (partial stabilisation). Estimated cost: £86,000 including reinstatement, contingencies, fees and VAT.
- Install wall ties to stabilise the entire wall (full stabilisation). Estimated cost: £127,000 including reinstatement, contingencies, fees and VAT.
- Restore the stonework and windows of the residential block and install wall ties to stabilise the entire wall. Estimated cost: £760,000 including site works, fees and VAT.

44. Given the structural engineer's report, it was agreed that Option 1 was inappropriate. While Option 2 reduces significantly the risk of the wall collapsing

and Option 3 eliminates this risk, both have disadvantages, e.g., subsequent stonework restoration will be more difficult and therefore more costly, the longer it is deferred the more costs will rise, the area beneath the wall must continue to be fenced off. The Committee unanimously decided on Option 4 as the preferred option, and consideration is being given to its financing. It should further be noted that as part of preparation for the stonework restoration, £45,610 including VAT was paid for fees associated with design work for the residential block stonework.

HA DUNLOP, Convener

RECEPTION OF MINISTERS AND LICENTIATES COMMITTEE

45. The Committee has met twice this year with a further meeting planned before the General Assembly.

46. Eight people contacted the RMLC during the year for information about transferring to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland but have not followed through as yet with a formal application.

47. The Rev Gunther Andrich of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa did submit an application and completed a guided week of exploration in Irish Presbyterian churches including preaching at a Sunday morning service. As a result he wished to pursue his application and was interviewed on 14th April. The interview Panel recommended his approval and, if received by the Council, he will begin his two-year assistantship later in the year.

48. The Rev Jared Stephens continues his assistantship in West Church, Ballymena, and his progress is being assessed.

49. A review of application procedures took place during the year with an additional short form compiled to facilitate initial contact. *HealthLink360* has agreed to meet with interview Panels to advise of any issues requiring clarification. Assistantships for those who have applied through this Committee are being assessed more rigorously. A list of core questions on fundamental issues have been drawn up for interviews in the future.

50. After an enquiry the Committee discussed the status of retired Ministers who had previously left the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and wish to return with the status of 'Minister without charge (Retired)'. It was agreed not to change the recently established rule that they would not be accepted into ministry again but could be rendered eligible to preach in vacancies, act as stated supply or as an assistant to a convener.

51. The Committee has considered its responsibility of making recommendations to the General Assembly regarding requests from Presbyteries for authorisation to retain individuals with the status of Minister or Licentiate without charge (*see Code Par 219(3)*). For the sake of clarity: this is not related to Recognised Ministers of the General Assembly serving in particular ministries not under the Assembly's control. It has agreed that, apart from those who are retired, all Ministers and Licentiates without charge ought to be actively considered before submitting their names to the General Assembly. A list of names will be submitted with the supplementary reports: for this year it is likely that all will be

recommended for retention, but a more thorough consideration will be given next year with the possibility that some will not be recommended for retention.

ANDREW FAULKNER, Convener

Recognised Ministries

The Rev Dr WJP Bailie, Mission Africa, writes:

52. Mission Africa (The Qua Iboe Fellowship) is one of Ireland's oldest mission agencies. We look forward with humble yet confident expectation to the years ahead, praying that God might continue to be pleased to use the mission for His sovereign purposes.

53. The mission concentrates on four areas of ministry: evangelism and Church planting; the strengthening of existing Church bodies through theological education; medical mission; and compassionate ministry, especially amongst disadvantaged and abused children. These ministries are carried out in partnership with various evangelical African denominations, and often with like-minded western mission agencies.

54. The mission continues its work against a background of financial challenge, an ever diminishing interest in foreign mission amongst western Churches and at a time when many within the Church cannot adequately distinguish mission and aid and development work. Nevertheless, we continue to send out full time missionaries. We continue to operate a short-term programme of teams and medium term placements. We also continue to operate branches in Scotland and England. Mission Africa is a member of Global Connections (Evangelical Missionary Alliance) and Mission Agencies Partnership. I am particularly pleased to report a close working relationship with the Council for Global Mission.

55. As Chief Executive I have responsibility for strategic planning; pastoral care of Missionaries; administration of personnel and finance; partner relations with a variety of Churches and agencies, and I am particularly involved in promoting theological education in Africa.

56. I am also grateful to be able to record that my status as a Minister in recognised service permits me to play an active role within my Presbytery (Ards) and in the Council for Training in Ministry. I am particularly glad to serve the Church through part-time teaching at Union Theological College and participation in the Accredited Preacher and Auxiliary Ministry Schemes.

The Rev Dr Ruth Patterson, Restoration Ministries writes:

57. This year marks the 40th anniversary of my ordination. Two of the highlights have been, firstly on January 29th, 2016 a celebration of my ordination and of women's ministry in general hosted by Harmony Hill Presbyterian Church and Restoration Ministries, and on March 5th, 2016 'Remembering the Future' at Newtownbreda Presbyterian Church, in conjunction with the Presbytery of Belfast South, celebrating 40 years of women's ordination to ministry and 90 years of women's ordination to the eldership.

58. 2016 also marks for me 25 years of full-time work with Restoration Ministries. I am continually grateful to God for all the doors that continue to open to spread the good news of forgiveness, reconciliation and peace. During the last 12 months there have been many such opportunities:

- Giving retreats and conferences within Ireland and Europe;
- Faith and Friendship's annual gathering in May marked 19 years of a movement that continues to be vibrant and encouraging for people who seek for better understanding and respect in the midst of increasing diversity. Six groups from across Northern Ireland meet monthly to share their faith in an atmosphere of friendship, based on Scripture Guidelines prepared annually by me;
- Spiritual Direction at our home base in Restoration Ministries continues to grow;
- Our Listening and Prayer Ministry, based on the hospitality of God toward us and our resulting hospitality to others is a hidden and vital part of our work;
- As always, prayer is the heartbeat of everything we seek to be and do. As we pray for others, we are conscious and thankful for the supportive prayers of our friends from around the world.

59. Our Board of Directors, drawn from the Presbyterian and Catholic denominations is encouraging in every way. My colleague Rose Ozo and I feel privileged to be engaged in the journey of Restoration Ministries backed by such a supportive team.

60. The Gaze of Love, my latest book, published by Veritas, is available from late Spring 2016.

The Rev. John Peacock, Youth Link Programme Leader, writes:

61. I can report another successful year for Youth Link and the degree programme for which I am responsible.

62. This year our fifth cohort of students graduated, giving a total of 80 graduates to date, and I am pleased to report that, as in previous years, almost all are working in the areas of ministry. In September, 2016, there will be a further 20 new students joining the programme, giving a total of 50 students across the three year groups. All classes are now held at our Youth Link training and resource centre on the Springfield Road and this has helped to create an enhanced sense of community among students and staff and allows more flexibility in our teaching pattern.

63. Graduates are working in Australia, North America and England, though the majority have remained in Northern Ireland. Most graduates remain in youth ministry roles in local churches although some use the skills developed in other contexts. The fact that at every level we seek to encourage and enable students to inter-relate theology and youth work theory and practice and apply these to their practice contexts means that our graduates are well prepared to minister in a wide variety of roles.

64. The course provides an intentional environment where students can develop their awareness of a maturing Christian character, youth work skills and the qualities and skills that enable them to minister with competence in a variety of contexts, particularly focused on young people in the age range 4-25.

65. As the reputation of the quality of the qualification continues to grow, the impact on the sector is increasingly notable. We continue to be grateful for the support of PCI Churches that recognise the value of the course and are prepared to provide a placement for the student to undergo training. The Churches in turn experience the benefit that a student can bring to their ministry amongst young people.

66. The training of students for ministry and mission is a very labour intensive process and over 100 people are actively involved in teaching, supervising and supporting the students on the course. We have an excellent team of module tutors, who are mostly practitioners, with expertise in their particular area of teaching. As a result we are able to integrate theology, youth work theory and practice into every aspect of the course.

67. Once again I wish to record my thanks to the large number of Presbyterians who have supported the development of this work in the last 12 months through prayer and encouragement as well as those who have worked as module tutors, professional practice tutors or line managers in Congregations who have provided practice contexts for our students.

DEACONESS SELECTION AND TRAINING PANEL

68. The Panel is responsible for matters concerning the recruitment of Deaconesses, including procedures involving their selection and training. Requests to recruit Deaconesses are made by the Council for Mission in Ireland which oversees the ministry of Deaconesses in the Church, with funding for training being supplied by a partnership of the Council for Mission in Ireland and Presbyterian Women.

69. Trainee Deaconesses are normally required to undertake a two year course of full-time study at Union Theological College along with two Congregational placements. On successful completion of the course, trainees are awarded a Certificate in Diaconate Studies. These years of full-time study are followed by a Probationary Year of full-time placement in a Congregation, after which trainees become eligible to be called as a Deaconess. At present, there are two trainee Deaconesses, namely Miss Rachel Cubitt and Mrs Heidi England, both of whom are in their second year of study.

70. The Council for Mission in Ireland has requested that a cohort of up to five trainee Deaconesses be recruited, with the intention that they would begin study at Union College in September 2017. The Panel is taking the steps necessary to meet this request.

71. Prior to the Church's new structures being established, responsibility for Deaconess recruitment and training lay with the Board of (now Council for) Mission in Ireland. Consequently, it has been a steep learning curve for the Panel as it has been dealing with issues about which many of its members had little previous experience. The Panel is indebted to the Rev David Bruce, Secretary of the Council for Mission in Ireland, and Mrs Charlotte Stevenson, Acting PW General Secretary, for the wisdom and experience they have brought. Overtures are submitted to bring the Code into line with current arrangements.

TD ALLEN, Convener

ACCREDITED PREACHER AND AUXILIARY MINISTRY PANEL

72. Seventeen candidates successfully completed the most recent Accredited Preacher Course and received their Certificates of Accreditation at a service in Saintfield Road Presbyterian Church on Sunday 22nd May 2016.

73. The Belfast intensive course has begun with the main teaching scheduled for the week of 27th June 2016. Eleven students are participating. This

experimental format will be reviewed but may become the best way to deliver the course in the future.

74. A second Auxiliary Ministry Course has begun with seven participants. This course will be due to finish in March 2017 and those who are successful will join the ten previously trained and able to apply for Auxiliary Ministry posts as they are created. To date only one post has been created and the Panel continues to remind Sessions and Presbyteries to consider the Auxiliary Ministry as a possible solution to ministry provision for example in smaller charges with multiple linkages, and larger Congregations with busy teaching programmes.

NIGEL MCULLOUGH, Convener

PASTORAL CARE OF MANSE FAMILIES PANEL

75. Part of who we are as a Church within the 'family of the worldwide Reformed Churches' suggests by its name that we should always be open to change under God's direction. A large part of the Panel's work over the last few years has been to put in place services that will meet and serve the needs of our Ministers and those who live in a Manse.

76. The world and society have changed so much and ways of ministering are being questioned. Issues are brought to the media's attention which constantly challenge our faith and Biblical understanding. All of this has a knock-on effect on our Ministers and their families. Ministry has changed, congregational life has changed and how we respond and care for those involved in Ministry has to change so that it can meet the resulting needs. This defines the core purpose of our Panel and why it needs to keep communication lines open and transparent with Ministers and Presbyteries so that it can respond in the best way for all – Jesus took care of His needs by prayer, meeting with disciples/friends and sharing the load.

77. Last June in both Banbridge and Randalstown a Forum was held to bring together those responsible for the care of Ministers and Manse families within our Presbyteries. People were open, sharing their situations, and also mutually helpful in the different ways they offered support. Two of several issues highlighted were the need to consider compulsory training in taking care of self and the fact that Ministers in training and those applying often do not understand the 'cost' of ministry. In April a second Forum, facilitated by Dr Lena Morrow will pick up on the issue of 'taking care of self'.

78. The second avenue of communication was to meet with 19 recently licensed assistants to help make them aware of the services our Church provides and where to find help and not to be afraid to do so. A copy of the Panel's new leaflet was given to each Licentiate. This is something the Panel will seek to do each year towards the end of students' 3rd year studies and before licensing.

79. The Panel works well under the new Council. Having the Dean of Ministerial Studies and Development and the Deputy Clerk as part of it has made such a difference and widens areas of communication enabling it to be more aware of what is happening within our Church. It thanks God for the privilege of having this responsibility of being a part of how we care for His servants.

GAJ FARQUHAR, Convener

CONCILIATION PANEL

80. A very small number of conciliation cases have come to the Panel during the past year. While this can be seen as very positive it is hoped that issues are being dwelt with at a local level and are not being buried only to re-emerge in months or years to come when they are very difficult to resolve.

81. A new information leaflet about the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's Conciliation Service was made available to Congregations.

82. During the year the Panel has worked on a conflict prevention strategy aiming to support Clerks of Presbytery in their roles with Congregations. A number of short one- or two-hour courses have been developed with Elders and local congregational leaders in mind. These include: Managing Change Effectively, Healthy Decision Making, Skills for Handling Conflict, Living with Difference and Understanding Conflict and its Causes. All of these courses are offered and can be delivered to Elders, organisation leaders, a Presbytery evening or to groups of teaching Elders. In addition short DVD clips are available to explain the process of conciliation within PCI and the need to attend to relationships while progressing the work of the Kingdom within our Congregations.

83. Clerks of Presbytery have been briefed and reminded of the Conciliation Panel and how the Panel can be of service to Clerks in accessing and reporting to them on Congregational issues.

JOE CAMPBELL, Convener

APPENDIX 1**SCHEDULE OF STUDENTS**

ARDS	Alan Marsh	Union
	Richard Tregaskis	Union
ARMAGH	Edwin Frazer	Union
	Craig Jackson	Union
BALLYMENA	Jonathan Boyd	Union
	Matthew Boyd	Union
	Richard Patton	Union
	James Porter	Union
	Chris Wilson	Union
NORTH BELFAST	Philip Houston	Union
	Jonathan Newell	Union
SOUTH BELFAST	Andre Alves-Areias	Union
	John Martin	Union
	Seth Wright	Union
EAST BELFAST	Sam Bostock	Union
	Andy Downey	Union
	Ben Johnston	WTS
	Steve Kennedy	Union
CARRICKFERGUS	Stuart Hawthorne	Union
	Robert Orr	Union

COLERAINE & LIMAVADY	Richard Morrison	Union
	John Torrens	Union
DERRY & DONEGAL	Robert McFaul	Union
	Jonny McKane	Union
DOWN	Michael McCormick	Union
DROMORE	Robin Aicken	Union
	Jamie Maguire	Union
	Philip Poots	Union
DUBLIN & MUNSTER	John Brogan	Union
	David Curran	Union
	Kevin Hargaden	–
	John O'Donnell	Union
	Joanne Smith	Union
IVEAGH	Keith Parke	Union
	Michael Rutledge	Union
MONAGHAN	Jonathan Porter	Union
NEWRY	Campbell Mulvenny	Union
TYRONE	Philip Leonard	–

APPENDIX 2

ADDITIONAL APPOINTMENTS

Background

1. The Board of Christian Training Report to the General Assembly in 2009 recommended a new structure of three departments: Biblical Studies; Systematic Theology and Church History; and Practical Theology and Ministry (Reports 2009 p 229). In this context the report stated: “*It is envisaged that a Junior Lecturer post will be created in the Department of Systematic Theology and Church History, but only when budgetary constraints permit.*” (p 230). The Assembly approved the new structure (Minutes 2009 p86 Resolution 14): “*That the General Assembly agree that the new three Department model within Union Theological College be adopted...*”

Rationale

2. Although the three Department model was implemented, the retirement of the Professor of Old Testament permitted a review of current staffing arrangements in the light of the vision and recommendations of the Review Panel. A number of options were considered: (a) maintaining the *status quo* by appointing a Professor of Old Testament (b) making one appointment in either Biblical Studies or Systematic Theology/Church History (c) making two appointments at a junior level in both the Biblical Studies and Systematic Theology/Church History departments.

3. It was noted that:
- the 2009 Review Panel’s recommendation that Dr Desi Alexander be appointed as Senior Lecturer in Biblical Studies had been implemented;

- with some rationalisation and enhancement, current staffing with full-time and part-time teachers in the Biblical Studies department, would allow the continued delivery of the OT curriculum without the replacement of the current professorial position;
 - currently the greatest curricular challenge is in the area of New Testament which requires additional resource due to the long-term illness of a part-time teacher who has taught extensively in the NT department;
 - the 2009 Report identified the need for additional help in Systematic Theology/Church History, a need that still exists and is exacerbated by the retirement of a part-time teacher in Systematic Theology;
4. Moreover, the Committee believes that:
- the appointments allow the implementation of the vision set out in the last review of theological education;
 - they relieve a significant overload in the teaching commitments of current full-time Faculty and reduce 'risk' in certain key areas;
 - they allow current full-time Faculty to engage in more writing and research;
 - they allow enhanced delivery of the current curriculum by increasing the range of expertise and specialisation available to students;
 - they allow the recruitment of additional postgraduate students and to develop a research culture;
 - they allow the improvement of pastoral support of students and enhance the assessment and feedback processes;
 - they allow the development of skills and gifts of younger teachers with a view to developing suitable candidates for any future vacancies in the full-time Faculty.

Costs

5. The proposal is to appoint two lecturers, one in Biblical Studies and one in Historical Theology, both at Executive Scale 2 (£26,725-£32,149). The total annual costs would be approximately £72,000. The retirement of the Professor of Old Testament releases some financial resources. The appointment of two Lecturers will also result in a potential savings in our current part-time teacher costs. A detailed analysis of the part-time teacher costs in the two most recent semesters shows an anticipated savings of £14,000 although the exact amount will depend on the academic profile and competencies of the persons appointed.

6. By relieving the pressure on current full-time faculty, this development would allow for the recruitment of additional students, particularly international postgraduate students, and thereby increase the College's tuition fee income. As well as postgraduate research students at Masters and Doctoral level, this initiative would allow us to move forward with other initiatives that would increase tuition income.

Confessional Commitment

The present position of our Church is that the only roles which require subscription to the Westminster Standards are the ordained offices of Minister and Elder. Licentiates also subscribe as those who are understood to be on a

pathway to Ordained Ministry. Senior lecturers are asked to commit to the subordinate standards of the Church by responding to the following questions, which may take place at a Commissioning Service similar to that for Deaconesses and Auxiliary Ministers:

Do you accept the Westminster Confession of Faith, as described by the Clerk, to be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God; as such do you acknowledge it as the confession of your faith; and do you approve of the Catechisms compiled by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster and received as the Catechisms of this Church?

Adhering to the fundamental doctrines of the faith, set forth in the Standards of the Church, and accepting the also the Presbyterian form of Church government to be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God, do you promise to adhere to and to support the same and to yield submission in the Lord to the courts of this Church?

The personnel specification for the proposed lecturer positions states: 'Must evidence an understanding of, and commitment to, working within the Christian ethos and doctrinal framework of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.'

We anticipate that there may be some applicants for these posts who are not Presbyterians, but who would fulfil all the other essential and desirable criteria. In order to ensure their orthodoxy, we propose asking the following questions at the interview:

1. What do you understand to be the key theological features of the Westminster Confession of Faith?
2. Do you have any personal reservations or take exception to any of the doctrines which are described in the Westminster Standards?
3. Is there anything that would prevent you from accepting that the Westminster Confession of Faith is founded on and agreeable to the Word of God or from acknowledging it as the confession of your faith?
4. If appointed, in what church, denomination or fellowship would you be a member?

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the following candidates, their nominations having been sustained by the Council for Training in Ministry, be accepted as students for the Ordained Ministry, and placed under the care of their Presbyteries:

Name	Congregation	Presbytery
Peter Burke	Carryduff	Dowry
John Graham	Vinecash	Armagh
Gareth Keaveney	Rathcoole	North Belfast
David Morrison	1st Donaghadee	Ards

2. That the General Assembly approve that the final year in which Ministers will be entitled to take sabbatical leave will be during the year in which they reach the age of 60, rather than 62 and that this be phased in.

3. That the General Assembly approve that Post Ordination Training take the format of two non-residential Training Days each year for the first five years of ordination.

CONSOLIDATED RESOLUTION

4. (a) That those reported by Presbyteries as Licentiates and Ministers without Charge be retained as such on the Church's current records.
(b) That the assessment for the Ministerial Development Programme be set to raise £100,000.
(c) That the assessment for the Students' Bursary Fund be set to raise £400,000.
5. That the Report of the Council for Training in Ministry be received.

COUNCIL FOR MISSION IN IRELAND

Convener: Rev STEPHEN SIMPSON
Secretary: Rev DAVID BRUCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Council met on the 14th October 2015 and 15th March 2016, with each of its Committees, Panels and Task Groups meeting regularly to progress their work.

2. The remit of the Council from the General Assembly is:

- Developing PCI's strategic priorities in all-age mission in Ireland, and planting initiatives at General Assembly level where appropriate;
- Considering new Church development and Church planting;
- Overseeing all aspects of the Home and Irish Mission, including the Irish Mission Fund;
- Overseeing the deployment and ongoing support of Deaconesses;
- Supporting a chaplaincy service in the Forces, Healthcare and Prisons;
- Supporting mission and ministry in Universities and Colleges through chaplaincy services.

3. The work of the Council includes oversight of The International Meeting Point and Nightlight. Among other work including the allocation of Mission Grants, these projects report to the Strategy for Mission Coordination Panel. Under the revised structures it is irregular for a Panel to have other Panels reporting to it. A resolution is appended requesting the General Assembly to appoint a Strategy for Mission Coordination Committee to replace this Panel.

4. In 2016, reports to the General Assembly have been completed from The Belfast Task Group and The Alternating Ministry Scheme Review. These Reports are appended.

5. Council work is only possible because of the generous giving of time and the sharing of talents by the many volunteers who serve in membership of its Committees, Panels and Task Groups.

6. The Council calls or supports 40 Home and Urban Mission Ministers, 25 Deaconesses, 5 Irish Mission workers and 2 Nightlight evangelists. It calls and supports full and part-time Chaplains in Hospitals (54), Prisons (4), Forces (15), Universities and Colleges (10). The Council is grateful to God and gives thanks for every way in which these committed men and women serve him. Their names and spheres of work appear in this Report, and the Council commends them to the Church for prayerful support.

7. The Council is grateful to the staff of the Mission Department which serves the needs of the Council and the Council for Global Mission with deep commitment. The Council records its sincere appreciation to Kathryn Anderson (Admin Assistant pt); Lorraine Beatty (Support Officer, Property), the Rev David Bruce (CMI Secretary); Evelyn Craig (Admin Assistant pt); Mr Nehru

Dass (Finance Manager); Mandy Higgins (PA to CMI Secretary); Karen Hutchinson (Senior Admin Assistant); Miss Helen Johnston (Mission Support Officer, Member Care); Michelle McDowell (Office Supervisor and PA to CGM Secretary); the Rev Dr Peter McDowell (Mission Support Officer, Partnerships); the Rev Uel Marrs (CGM Secretary); Beverley Moffett (Senior Admin Assistant); Marianne Trueman (Senior Admin Assistant pt).

8. **Following God's lead.** Informing all its work, the Council has sought to be open to the leading of the Spirit of God. In the first half-year of its work the Council has been learning its brief. Since then, it has progressed to reframing most of the policies it inherited from former Boards, and has broken new ground in some key areas as outlined in this Report. The new structures have created opportunities and requirements for working collaboratively with colleagues in Presbyteries and other Councils. Specifically, this involves sharing staff with the Council for Global Mission, and for some projects, with the Council for Congregational Life and Witness. While challenging for the staff-members asked to work this way, the benefits in cross-fertilisation of ideas and methodologies is already evident. It has involved conceiving new structural connections with the Linkage Commission, and imagining new models of decision-making with Presbyteries.

9. **Setting Priorities.** The Council is fully committed to the processes of the newly-formed Priorities Committee of the General Council which has started its work in earnest this year. As the leadership of CMI has prayed and thought about its role, it has been clear that the way in which the Church begins new projects and continues existing work needs careful management if it is not to be wasteful or become stagnant. Two key words have emerged, which the Council believes will help to shape the Council's priorities looking ahead: Flexible and Sustainable.

10. **Sending people.** The way the Church sends people out to do its work, including recruitment and support, needs to be *flexible*. The context in which the Church is doing its work is much changed. The Linkage Commission and the Council for Training in Ministry have each produced helpful, more flexible approaches to missional and ministry deployment in recent years. Part-time ministry of word and sacrament is now a recognised pathway, and currently five Ministers serve in this way including three within the Home Mission. Auxiliary Ministers provide completely new categories under which the Church may send out gifted and trained people to serve. These may be part-time or full-time positions, honorary or salaried. They are sufficiently flexible to be useful as short-term solutions for projects or Congregations in transition, or for pioneering situations where the denomination is trying to start something completely new. Students for the Ministry may soon find a broader set of options opening up for them in the final stages of their training, as they test their sense of call to kinds of work which may or may not be the traditional settings for an Assistant Minister. The Council is aware that flexibility is already built in to the Home Mission but it could be used more effectively. To that end, in March 2016 the Council commissioned a complete review of the Home Mission as a vehicle for missional deployment in Ireland, and will report its findings in due course.

11. **Congregations, and more.** Repeated statements have been made in Assembly Reports since 2002 that "the Congregation is the basic building block for local mission". On the basis that the long term *sustainability* of any

Christian work depends upon a steady flow of committed volunteers to pray and give financially, there is a compelling logic to this statement. While this is so, the Structures Review helpfully identified that while the Congregation is the main driver for local mission, it is not the only driver. There are some things Congregations cannot do, and which may be better (or only) done together. This raises issues of principle on two important fronts for the Council:

12. **Grants.** The Council currently distributes United Appeal finance as grants to Congregations, both within and outside the Home Mission. For one-off capital grants or repair grants for buildings, the matter is reasonably straightforward. For revenue grants towards mission projects however, the questions are more complex. For example, the provision of a three year CMI revenue grant to a Congregation towards the salary costs of an outreach worker may allow a project to commence, but when the grant is exhausted and local sources of funds are inadequate to keep it going the project may be curtailed or closed altogether. In evaluating the effectiveness of this, it might be argued that the policy breeds a culture of dependence in Congregations; that it encourages short-term approaches to mission; that it unsettles the lives of those employed on short-term contracts; that it leaves the service-users of the project puzzled as to its demise. The Strategy for Mission Coordination Panel continues to look carefully at the policies underlying these decisions, with the aim of producing mission-work that is sustainable over time.

13. **Associated Mission Projects.** These are projects run by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland centrally, but which may have only a tangential connection with a local Congregation. An example from the past is the Shankill Road Mission (which formed a Congregation as part of its work). The Shankill Road Mission was closed among other reasons because it became unsustainable financially, and the Congregation was amalgamated with another one close by. The missional need on the Shankill Road remains, but the central resources to finance a major operation like the Mission are no longer available. Today, Associated Mission Projects include Nightlight, The International Meeting Point, South Belfast Friendship House and possibly Derryvolgie Hall. For these projects to be sustainable into the future a firm understanding of the priorities of the denomination is necessary. Each of them do great work for which the Church can be thankful, but their sustainability depends upon the commitment of the Church acting together, and this in turn rests upon the General Assembly identifying clear priorities upon which it can rest its allocation decisions.

14. **Chaplaincy as Mission.** A helpful 2015 Theos report entitled “*A very modern ministry*” (The Cardiff Centre for Chaplaincy Studies) posits that in post-Christendom UK, where religion is shrinking and Churches declining the “*proverbial man in the street seems as – perhaps more – likely to meet a chaplain in his daily life ... as he is to meet any formal religious figure.*” The author Ben Ryan’s empirical study of chaplaincy, while being focused on the UK, has opened a door for the Council to explore emerging missional opportunities for Chaplaincy within organisational settings. It is significant to note the relatively high proportion of volunteer chaplains working with sports clubs in Ireland who are Presbyterian. Invitations to explore the provision of chaplaincy services to the Police Service of Northern Ireland, and the Irish Defence Forces have been taken up by Conveners during the year. The possibility of Chaplaincy as a vehicle for mission and ministry in the Central Business Districts of our cities is an idea

which may be examined with help from other locations and traditions in these islands and beyond.

STRATEGY FOR MISSION COORDINATION PANEL

The Rev Ben Walker, Convener, reports:

15. CMI and the Linkage Commission. Part of the SMC Panel's remit is to provide CMI advisory comment to the Linkage Commission when requested, particularly, but not limited to, times of Home Mission vacancy and Tenure Review. Stemming in part from the work of the Belfast Task Group, an improved method for this has been developing that enables the report to consider not just the "hard data" from a Congregation's statistical return, but also the "soft data" of the story of its life and the motivations of its leadership. Thus, a group tasked with providing some assessment and comment of this sort is equipped to ask increasingly appropriate questions concerning a Congregation's mission, hear the answers of those involved and provide useful, grounded analysis and feedback for the Linkage Commission.

16. Effective Contemporary Ministry. At the invitation of the Council for Training in Ministry, and along with representatives of the Linkage Commission, members of the Panel have been involved in discussions about Effective Contemporary Ministry. A Task Group has met twice to address issues raised concerning the deployment of students who have a missional interest in urban mission and ministry, in order to link their training with their growing vision within a context where it can be developed. The Council Secretary was able to outline some examples of places where such an approach could be of benefit, both to the Church and to the students.

17. The Panel recognises its involvement in discerning where God's Spirit is at work. Sensitive to this, the Panel seeks to move from a position of being simply reactive at points of transition and crisis, to being pro-active in planning, setting priorities and making wise and strategic decisions about new Church developments. This is a matter of prayer for us.

18. The Panel continues to be aware of and to seek to set aside time for discussion in the following areas:

- the priority of urban mission in Irish cities;
- the need for developing vision and priorities in rural mission;
- the purpose and method of missional consultancy with Presbyteries;
- sustainable models for Church planting.

19. The following Panels and Task Groups have been reporting to the Panel during the year. These reporting arrangements will be regularised should the General Assembly agree to appoint a Strategy for Mission Coordination Committee.

MISSION GRANTS PANEL

The Rev Kenny Hanna, Convener, reports:

20. The Mission Grants Panel receives and processes Irish Mission Fund and Mission Support grant applications, bringing recommendations for approval. Commendable work by the Rev Dr Peter McDowell, along with the Panel has

developed and clarified the process for grant application and for evaluating projects. However, there remains further work to be done over and above the processing of grants. The Panel recognises the need to publicise the availability of grants in the appropriate places, and a leaflet to this effect has been drafted. The Panel, along with others within the Council, is addressing the wider question of the effectiveness of the current grant offerings in developing sustainable mission in Congregations and projects. This may include a short-term grant to assist students for the ministry undertaking work in urban situations.

NIGHTLIGHT PANEL

The Rev Danny Rankin, Convener, reports:

21. Nightlight reaches out into the entertainment areas of Belfast. The project involves groups of volunteers reaching into the Golden Mile, the Cathedral Quarter and the Odyssey areas of the city, mainly at the weekends. They encounter young people including students, city workers, party-goers, homeless people, rough sleepers, concert audiences, security staff, Police, street cleaners, and many others. Each story is different, and in each case the gospel is shared, sometimes with a hot drink of tea, always with love and compassion. The two evangelists employed to work with Nightlight spend part of their time in support of the Dock Café, particularly with students at the Belfast Met., and on a temporary basis, with South Belfast Friendship House.

INTERNATIONAL MEETING POINT

The Rev Dr Peter McDowell (Mission Support Officer, Partnerships) writes:

What the International Meeting Point does

22. The International Meeting Point provides a valuable service to visitors from a wide range of backgrounds. Approximately two thirds of the clients are from overseas, and many are in or have come through the asylum system. The other third are local people, many of whom are on the margins of society. The drop-in centre opens from Monday to Thursday with between 60 and 100 people attending each day and over 15,000 lunches being served over the year. The centre has computer facilities with internet access, an informal seating area and table tennis and pool tables. In addition, three English classes operate each week with 9 teachers and 40 volunteers teaching over 70 students. A solicitor offers *pro bono* advice to clients, with assistance from volunteers from the Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers. Donations of food from local supermarkets, foodbanks and other outlets are regularly distributed to clients. A considerable stock of second hand clothes has also been donated for distribution. Connections with local Congregations and other groups have been fostered, with seven PW groups cooking lunch in the drop-in and a local primary school choir performing on two occasions.

23. IMP is a model of holistic mission, engaging with the full range of its clients' needs. Each week four Bible studies take place, two in the Farsi language for the significant number of Iranian visitors. Several IMP clients have come to faith and between 20 and 30 are now regular attenders at Windsor Presbyterian

Church, with two being elected to the eldership in recent months. On the second Sunday of each month there is a bring-and-share lunch after the service in Windsor and on the third Sunday of the month there is a Farsi language service.

How the IMP is run

24. A Management Group has been formed to formalise the governance of IMP. The group consists of three representatives of the South Belfast Presbytery, three representatives of the Council for Mission in Ireland and two representatives of the volunteers working in IMP. The Project Leader is invited to sit and deliberate at meetings. The Group reports to the Strategy for Mission Coordination Panel of the Council, and to the Presbytery, reflecting the partnership at the heart of the project.

IMP staff

25. The success of IMP owes a lot to the leadership of Keith Preston who has guided its development as it has grown. In March 2015 Sharon Heron was appointed as a Deaconess to IMP (75%) and Windsor Presbyterian Church (25%). Sharon has developed work in crucial areas including Bible Studies for women. The continued growth of IMP has led the Management Group to recognise the need for a third member of staff, resulting in the advertising of a post of Assistant Project Leader in March 2016. It is envisaged that when this person is in post, IMP will be able to open five days a week, to expand the provision of English classes and develop the work in other ways.

Review of the Alternating Ministries Scheme (Mission Partnership Forum)

26. At the 2014 General Assembly and Methodist Conference, resolutions were passed directing the Mission Partnership Forum to “review the purpose of and principles underlying the operation of the Alternating Ministry Scheme between the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland and bring proposals regarding the future of the Scheme to the General Assembly/Conference”. The Forum appointed Mr Mervyn McCullagh (ICC Secretary) as the independent Chair of the Review Group, and commenced work. The Council, in receiving the draft report in March 2016, recorded its warm thanks to Mervyn McCullagh for his committed work in bring this Review to completion. The full Review Report is included as Appendix 1. A resolution is appended.

BELFAST TASK GROUP

The Rev Robert Bell, Convener, reports:

27. The 2013 General Assembly passed the following resolution:

That the General Assembly encourage the BMI in its reflection upon the challenges of mission in urban situations, and in particular in its discussions with the Union Commission in seeking to secure sustainable models for resourcing Presbyterian mission in our cities.

It is important to note that while the major piece of work emerging from this resolution was the formation of the Belfast Panel, the resolution encompasses all the cities of Ireland.

28. The aims of the Belfast Panel were agreed as follows when it was initiated in September 2013:

to develop a fully inclusive discussion between Union Commission, BMI and the three Belfast Presbyteries about the challenges and opportunities for developing a sustainable model of Presbyterian presence for mission across the city of Belfast;

to outline a series of options for urban mission by which to extend the range of present opportunities;

to report to the General Assembly 2014, providing an analysis of the issues and a series of directions of travel.

29. Very quickly, it became apparent that the existing decision-making systems in place for the allocation of resources, granting leave to call, initiating new work and dealing with crisis were cumbersome and confusing, especially for Congregations which were seeking permissions and funding decisions from multiple bodies which appeared to have competing agendas. There was an evident need to bring the relevant groups together in a way which would allow decision-making to be streamlined.

30. The Panel therefore proposed that a Consultative Group for Belfast be formed, made up of representatives of the BMI, the Union Commission and the Presbyteries. In January 2015, the Task Group (as it became following the Review of Structures) presented its work to the three Belfast Presbyteries. These gatherings provided an opportunity to cast a vision for re-imagining future Presbyterian presence for mission in the city, address the issue of how to assess sustainability and to test the concept of the formation of a joint Consultative Group for Belfast. The meetings were well attended and feedback was noted. As outlined elsewhere in the Council's report, the ability to develop sustainable and flexible models of resourcing mission in a context of shrinking central resources remains the challenge. How can this be achieved in Belfast?

31. **Belfast Research Project** – A significant piece of research was commissioned with the Ulster University to collect relevant statistical data about each Belfast Congregation's locality for mission. This has now been completed and compiled as a dossier. It will allow Belfast Congregations access to a snapshot of their setting for mission, including the most relevant demographic trends in their area. This dossier will be provided in accessible form and will also serve to aid Presbyteries and other relevant bodies in devising future missional strategy and in taking key decisions. A further aspect of the research maps developments in Belfast at a citywide level enabling a realistic, rather than speculative view of how the urban area is developing. This in turn will help to guide our missional responses.

32. Throughout its life and work, the Belfast Task Group has intentionally sought to bring together the relevant bodies of Presbytery, the Council for Mission in Ireland and the Linkage Commission in addressing the issue of the future shape of mission to the city. The building of a unified vision and approach by these bodies is an absolutely crucial component of harnessing the energies of the denomination to rise to this task. However, it has been challenging. The Task Group was charged with the job of producing detailed recommendations for approval to the 2016 Assembly, and these are now included as Appendix 2 for decision, with an appended resolution.

BEN WALKER, Convener

HOME MISSION, IRISH MISSION AND DEACONESS COMMITTEE

33. The Committee has responsibility for all aspects of the Home Mission, Irish Mission and Deaconess provision in the Church, including calls, deployment, support and oversight. The Committee records its thanks and appreciation to Miss Helen Johnston (Mission Support Officer, Member Care), for her valued work in support of Irish Mission Workers and Deaconesses, through the Irish Mission Workers and Deaconess Panel.

34. **Serving personnel.** The directory of Ministers serving with the Home Mission, Church Planters, Irish Mission Workers and Deaconesses is included as Appendix 3.

35. *Arklow:* Mr Nathan Duddy received a Home Mission Call as Minister in Arklow. A service of ordination, installation and induction is scheduled for 28th May 2016.

36. *Bray.* The Minister of Dun Laoghaire has been appointed as Stated Supply to the Home Mission Congregation of Bray.

37. *Sandymount.* The Minister of Sandymount has been appointed as Stated Supply to the Congregation of Blackrock.

38. The Council received reports from the PW General Secretary (Acting) on the progress of two student Deaconesses in training at Union Theological College, and, with the support of the PW, approved the recruitment and training of a number of new Deaconesses.

39. At its October 2015 meeting, the Council marked the retirements of Deaconesses, Mrs Jenny Robinson and Miss Muriel Cromie.

40. At its March 2016 meeting, the Council noted the retirement of Mr Harry Moreland, Irish Mission Worker in Cork.

41. The Council issued a Deaconess Call to Mrs Heather McCracken to serve as Assistant to the Chaplains in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (RVH and BCH).

Home Mission Charges

42. *Irvinestown, Pettigo and Tempo:* A Home Mission vacancy assessment report has been completed and transmitted to the Linkage Commission, pending consideration of an application for Leave to Call. Some issues regarding the manse are being addressed separately with the Presbytery and Congregations through the CMI Property Panel.

43. *Sligo with Boyle (Stated Supply):* A Vacancy Assessment visit is scheduled, and a report will be sent to the Linkage Commission. Discussions are ongoing with the Methodist Church and the Church of Ireland concerning future patterns of ministry in the Congregation of Boyle.

44. *Dundalk:* The Council approved an application from the Kirk Session of Dundalk, supported by the Monaghan Presbytery that the Congregation become part of the Home Mission.

Proposed review of the purpose of the Home Mission

45. As part of the Council's aim to develop flexible and sustainable models of missional development, it has been proposed that a complete review of the

purpose of the Home Mission be undertaken.

- There are currently 73 Home Mission Congregations, including Church-plants.
- There are 39 Home Mission Ministers.
 - ◊ 27 of these serve in charges which are under Home Mission Calls.
 - ◊ 12 serve in composite charges.
- There have been 3 Home Mission Church-plants in the last 12 years; Maynooth, Donabate and Cliftonville Road, Belfast. Two of these have become Congregations in their own right, and are still within the Home Mission.

46. The Home Mission purpose as described in the Code (Pars 114, 231 and 300) is largely focussed on Congregations, and their staffing by ordained Ministers.

47. The denomination now faces a significant challenge in continuing to maintain a significant number of smaller Churches in areas which are either marginal (in terms of their potential for growth), or outside our stated priorities for mission. Pressure is sometimes put upon the Home Mission to keep Congregations open, as if this was its primary function. While amalgamating or linking Congregations can be painful and is not done lightly, the opportunities for new work thus created cannot be ignored. The denomination is not in a position where it can afford to maintain its historic presence everywhere, while also commencing new innovative and pioneering work. The remit of the proposed review is under discussion by the Council, and a resolution is appended.

BRIAN COLVIN, Convener

HEALTHCARE, PRISONS AND FORCES CHAPLAINCY COMMITTEE

48. Healthcare Chaplaincy: The following Chaplains have retired recently, and the Council thanks them for their service and witness in this role.

- The Rev Dr Jack Richardson (Lagan Valley, Lisburn)
- The Very Rev Dr Andrew Rodgers (South Tyrone, Dungannon)
- The Very Rev Dr Donald Patton (Antrim Area).

49. The Rev John Gilkinson is covering the work in Antrim Area and the Rev Leslie Patterson in Lagan Valley, both on a temporary basis. Steps are being taken by the Trust to fill the position at South Tyrone.

50. The South Eastern Trust which covers the Lagan Valley and Downe Hospitals has proposed appointing a full-time protestant Chaplain for both sites with responsibility for piloting a chaplaincy service to GP clinics. The Council drafted a response to this proposal which was submitted for consideration by the Trust.

51. Deaconess Heather McCracken has been appointed assistant to the Presbyterian Chaplain on the Royal and City sites of the Belfast Trust.

52. Discussion is ongoing with the management at Altnagelvin regarding a reduction in Chaplaincy hours.

53. Following reports submitted to the meetings of the Church Leaders, the Secretary and Convener attended an inter-denominational meeting (including the Secretary to the NIHCA) held on 2nd March 2016, to discuss mutual concerns about the direction of Healthcare Chaplaincy. Further meetings are planned. The Committee have still to consider the relationship with the NIHCA. The Committee has approved a questionnaire to be forwarded to Healthcare Chaplains as a means of consultation regarding what is happening in the various sites and to shape future thinking and decision making.

54. **Prisons Chaplaincy, and the work of the Prisons Review Task Group:** Following the proposal of a new Funding Agreement between the Churches and the Northern Ireland Prison Service, objections were raised by most of the Churches to some details within the proposals. The draft agreement was withdrawn by NIPS. The financial cuts anticipated for 2015/16 have been applied, and this has had an inevitable effect on the provision of PCI chaplaincy services in the three prisons estates.

55. The Council thanks Mr Norman McCorkell who has been covering the Presbyterian work in Magilligan for the past three years. This arrangement has now been brought to an end. The Rev Rodney Cameron now covers Magilligan for one day each week. The Rev Rodney Cameron has been re-appointed as the Lead (now Co-ordinating) Chaplain for Maghaberry.

56. The Rev Graham Stockdale has reallocated his duties between Maghaberry and Hydebank Wood.

57. The Rev Colin Megaw is Chaplain to Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre. Mr Megaw is presently filming a DVD which will be given to all the young people as an introduction to what the chaplaincy service can offer them, to the Christian Faith and to other professional help which they can access.

58. Recent events including the required involvement of the Co-ordinating Chaplain in the funeral arrangements for convicted child killer Robert Black, and the tragic murder of Prison Officer Adrian Ismay serve to illustrate the demanding nature of Prisons Chaplaincy work. The Council commends the Prisons Chaplains to the prayers of the Church.

Chaplaincy in other contexts

59. Police: The Secretary and the Convener attended an inter-denominational and inter-faith consultation on 5th February 2016 at the invitation of some senior officers of the PSNI to discuss the possibility of arranging voluntary chaplaincy to the PSNI. A further meeting is planned for April 2016.

60. Sports: The Committee invited the Rev Andrew Thompson to its meeting on 1st March 2016. He brought the Committee up to date on the involvement of several PCI Ministers who are engaged in informal chaplaincy to a variety of sports clubs under the auspices of INSPIRE, Sports Chaplaincy UK. Presently about 60% of this chaplaincy in Northern Ireland is provided by Presbyterian Ministers.

FORCES CHAPLAINCY PANEL

The Rev Prof JP Taylor, Convener, reports:

61. The following is a directory of Forces Chaplains currently serving, including part-time:

PCI FORCES CHAPLAINS	
Rev Mark Donald	Army Reserve, (part time)
Rev Mark Henderson	Army
Rev Colin Jones	Army
Rev Ivan Linton	Army
Rev Graeme McConville	Army
Rev Norman McDowell	Army
Rev Heather Rendell	Army
Rev Dr Paul Swinn	Army
Rev Dr Philip Wilson	Royal Air Force
Rev Joseph Andrews	NI Wing Chaplain, Air Training Corps (part time)
Rev Kenneth Crowe	Army Cadet Force (part time)
Rev Richard Graham	Air Training Corps (part time)
Rev Dr Ivan Neish	Air Training Corps (part time)
Rev Prof Patton Taylor	Air Training Corps and Officiating Chaplain (part time)
Rev Derek Weir	Officiating Chaplain (part time)

62. **Forces Chaplaincy in the Irish Republic:** The Panel Convener has met with representatives of the Irish Defence Forces to explore the possibilities of developing a Presbyterian Chaplaincy. The numbers of serving Presbyterians in the IDF is very small. A meeting with the IDF Chief Chaplain is proposed.

63. The Panel has been considering ways for Congregations to provide pastoral support for Forces personnel and their families. Armed Forces Sunday in the last week of June each year may provide a Congregation with an opportunity to reach out to families with a connection, and who have an involvement with the Forces.

64. **Recruitment of Chaplains:** The Interview Panel has met several Ministers and Licentiates considering Forces Chaplaincy. Ministers and Licentiates considering this work in a full- or part-time capacity will need to navigate the selection procedures of the branch of the Forces they apply to, and be interviewed by the Council's Panel. An early conversation with the Convener of the Panel is recommended. There are full and part-time vacancies available at present.

65. **Centenary of the Battle of the Somme:** Given the many events marking the centenary of the Battle of the Somme, which commenced on 1st July 1916, the Council appends a resolution encouraging Ministers to mark this important anniversary at services of worship close to the date. The Panel noted events planned elsewhere and by other organisations. The Church will be formally represented as appropriate.

Reception of Forces Chaplains

66. Those serving Chaplains who are able to do so will be present at the Assembly. As is our custom, they will be presented to the Moderator for prayer.

DONALD PATTON, Convener

UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES CHAPLAINCY COMMITTEE

67. Arguably University and College Chaplains are among those in PCI who work closest to the fore-front of the changes in our post-modern secular society. For example, although their positions are officially recognised by the university and college authorities, in practice they increasingly vie for position with other religions and philosophies, and are conscious of the need of the institutions to be even-handed. Some regret the change to the central role that Chaplains may have had in the past, but others see that challenge as an opportunity to do things differently and adopt a more missional approach.

68. Over the past year the Committee has established closer links with the Chaplains through visits, the encouraging of each Chaplain to provide an annual evaluative report to share with their colleagues and the Committee and, more recently, prayer requests. There is, however, more to be done to strengthen these links and support networks. The Committee's hopes of bringing Chaplains together once a year has proved difficult because of their scattered locations and other responsibilities. As can be seen in the directory below, almost all the Chaplains are part-time and their parish work is, more often than not, entirely separate because the parish is at a distance from the university or college, or because the parish is socially and culturally very different or because traditionally the roles have always been separate. The basis on which the Chaplains' appointments have been made, the duties attached to each post, the time afforded, the accountability structures and the level of remuneration are all variable and so how the job is done and the expectations set by the Chaplains are also variable. These issues beg questions around how we see the role of a Chaplain, what training is necessary for Chaplains, how far chaplaincy should be linked to an all-age worshipping community which can embrace the university or college community as part of its missional goal, and to what extent an interdenominational or collaborative approach with other agencies may be developed.

69. The directory of those serving as University and College Chaplains is as follows:

UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES CHAPLAINS	
Rev Karen Mbayo	Queen's University, Belfast (full time)
Rev Cheryl Meban	University of Ulster, Jordanstown and Belfast (full time)
Rev John Coulter	Ulster University, Coleraine Campus (part time)
Rev Nigel Craig	Ulster University, Magee Campus (part time)
Rev Julian Hamilton (MCI)	Trinity College, Dublin (part time)
Mrs Gillian Kingston (MCI)	University College, Dublin (part time)
Rev Brian Brown	Letterkenny Institute of Technology (part time)

Rev John Faris	University College, Cork (part time)
Rev Helen Freeburn	University College, Galway (part time)
Rev Vicki Lynch (MCI)	University College, Limerick (part time)
Rev Dr Keith McCrory	National University of Ireland, Maynooth (part time)

70. Since the beginning of 2016, the UCC Committee has made some progress on implementing the recommendations from the report of a Review of UC Chaplaincy in Greater Belfast. Two Task Groups have been formed to progress the findings of the Review, under the convenership of Mr Craig Lynn, (QUB) and Mr Josh McCance, (UU). Although the context of Queen's University (QUB) and Ulster University (UU) are very different, the essential question being explored is how chaplaincy can be more closely integrated with an all-age worshipping community. In the case of QUB, those discussions have involved representatives from Fitzroy, Fisherwick and Windsor Presbyterian Churches along with Union College. The UU Task Group has representatives from Carnmoney, which has been successfully running Alpha courses in the Titanic Quarter of Belfast. In addition there is representation from the North Belfast Presbytery City Quays Panel and a member of UUU academic staff with expertise in area planning. One of the questions being explored in the UU group is how far these strands of work might connect with the Chaplain in mission and discipleship. Each of these task groups is due to report by the end of June 2016.

DERRYVOLGIE HALLS AND CAFÉ GRACE MANAGEMENT PANEL

The Rev Johnston Lambe, Convener, reports:

71. A Management Panel has been appointed and is currently carrying out a review of the condition of the Derryvolgie and Grace Café premises. The work of the new Panel will both reduce the burden on the Chaplain and inform the work of the UCC Committee. It will be particularly helpful in relation to Grace Café, which has reduced its operation in a bid to address the considerable financial losses being sustained year on year. A schedule of work with associated costs has been formulated.

72. The first report in respect of Derryvolgie Halls was considered in detail by the Panel. The Report finds that the Derryvolgie Halls building has been well maintained over the 20 years of its life, but that there are now substantial works required to ensure that it is made compliant with current residence legislation and fit for purpose going forward as student accommodation of 88 beds. Works proposed over a five year phased programme include replacement of old timber framed single-glazed windows, the installation of a replacement boiler (gas fired), the installation of solar panels to reduce electricity bills, upgrading of security systems including electronic locks to external doors, upgrading and replacing of sanitary ware, re-design and replacement of all kitchens, upgrading of ventilation systems to shower rooms, upgrading of fire-protection structures in roof spaces. This represents only the main points of a comprehensive schedule of necessary work identified as needed between 2016 and 2021, which in total is costed at £1.3 million, plus VAT and fees. Funds are being secured to progress the initial essential work (mainly to ensure regulatory compliance) on Derryvolgie.

73. Further decisions on Café Grace are pending.

74. **Universities and Colleges Chaplaincy as mission:** The work PCI Chaplains do poses a significant question for PCI because right at its heart it asks how do we do Church in a post-modern society where we can no longer rely on a privileged relationship with the state and ‘a come and see’ model of parish ministry. Rather our role is a ‘go tell’ one where we need to take the message of Jesus into the world and (in the case of Belfast alone) to 60,000 students.

MAUREEN BENNETT, Convener

PROPERTY PANEL

Sale of the Shankill Road Mission Building

75. The premises continue to be regularly inspected while the property has been on the market for sale. Following lengthy negotiations with delegates from the Argyll Business Centre, the sale of the Shankill Road Mission premises has been agreed in principle, subject to the following conditions:

- General Assembly permission to sell the property (according to the terms of the Deeds). A resolution is appended.
- A non-returnable deposit to be paid, from which the Presbyterian Church in Ireland would continue to insure and maintain the property until formal transfer of title.
- Following payment of this deposit, the option to purchase would be taken up on or before 1st June 2017.
- The purchaser would have no use of the premises for activities or development until title to the premises had been transferred with payment.

76. Since these negotiations, the purchaser has indicated that funds are in place for completion. The matter, having been discussed and agreed in principle by the Trustees of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, is now before the Assembly.

77. **Maynooth New Church Building:** Congregational representatives await further comment from planning officers in Kildare County Council before the purchase of the identified site for a new Church can proceed. In the meantime initial discussions have been held with architects regarding Church layout and design.

78. **Donabate new Church building:** Due to revised local area plans, Fingal County Council has withdrawn the original proposed site from the market. Further discussions will be held when possible new sites are made available for sale.

79. **Trinity Presbyterian Church, Cork:** Substantial essential conservation repair works have been completed to high level defective roof flashings and dressings to parapets along with external stonework mortar pointing. A property repair grant of €80,000 has been made.

CYRIL CAVAN, Convener

FINANCE PANEL

80. **Capital projects.** The Panel has prepared projections of income and expenditure for the Council’s capital programme. It is known that new Church buildings will be required in Maynooth and Donabate. The project in Maynooth

has moved forward and a significant financial commitment will be required in 2016 and 2017. The projections for capital expenditure prepared reveal a major monetary shortfall and as a consequence the Council intends to seek additional funding from the United Appeal for at least each of the next five years even if the considered asset disposals proceed on more favourable terms than currently exist.

81. **Cost control and Budget:** Expenditure within the Council's complete control continues to be well managed and improvements made in areas of new work, following the implementation of the structures review.

82. **Grants:** Grants are considered in conjunction with the Strategy for Mission Committee and the Property Panel. It must be noted that uptake of grants in relation to mission objectives has not been high and steps are being taken to advise Presbytery Clerks that funding is available, subject of course to the necessary financial scrutiny.

83. **Summary:** It was said previously "Testing times lie ahead for the finances of the Council". We are now in the middle of those financially testing times and indeed foresee such times continuing for some years ahead. We are nonetheless thankful and grateful for all that God has provided for the continuing work both by way of people and finance.

DENIS GUILER, Convener

APPENDIX 1

REVIEW OF THE ALTERNATING MINISTRIES SCHEME

1. Terms of reference for the Review Group

In 2014 the following resolution was passed by the Presbyterian General Assembly and the Methodist Conference.

"That the General Assembly/Conference direct the Mission Partnership Forum to review the purpose of and principles underlying the operation of the Alternating Ministry Scheme between the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland and bring proposals regarding the future of the Scheme to the General Assembly/Conference in 2015."

In October 2014 the Mission Partnership Forum [MPF] agreed that a review would take place under an independent chair with the following remit:

To review "the purpose of and principles underlying the operation of the Alternating Ministry Scheme [AMS] and bring proposals regarding the future of the Scheme..."

With regard to each part of the remit, the following areas were covered:

- (a) **Purpose of the Scheme**
 - Historical narrative and assessment of the original purpose
 - Current situation and needs
- (b) **Principles underlying the operation of the Scheme**
 - Missional purpose
 - Governance arrangements
 - Understanding of these principles in each centre

(c) **Proposals regarding the future of the Scheme**

- Recommendations and conclusions made

2. Membership of the Review Group

The chair of the Review Group was appointed by the MPF with the following membership nominated by their respective traditions:

Independent Chair

Mr Mervyn McCullagh

Joint Secretaries

Rev David Bruce (Secretary, PCI Council for Mission in Ireland)

Rev Dr Heather Morris (Secretary, MCI Home Mission Department)

Methodist Church in Ireland [MCI]

Rev Roy Cooper (Chair, Inter-Church Relations Committee)

Mr Doug Edmondson (Treasurer, Home Mission Department)

Ms Gillian Kingston (Convener, Church Relations Committee)

Presbyterian Church in Ireland [PCI]

Very Rev Dr John Lockington (Chair, Union Commission)

Rev Dr Keith McCrory (Convener, Dublin and Munster Presbytery Mission Standing Committee)

Rev Ben Walker (Convener, Strategy for Mission Co-ordination Panel)

3. Methodology

Discussion papers were prepared on a range of topics including historical context, missional priorities, the Methodist – Church of Ireland Covenant, pastoral models and strategies for mission.

Field visits to the three Congregations operating the Scheme took place to gather informed learning on how the Scheme operates and has developed in practice.

An interim report was brought to Assembly and Conference in 2015.

A thorough interrogation of all the available information was undertaken in order to draw together agreed conclusions.

4. Key questions

Following discussions the review group identified the following key questions for exploration within the review:

- (a) What was the historical motivation and basis for the Scheme as evidenced through the history of agreements from 1921 to present?
- (b) What are the present day default missional positions of each tradition? Are they compatible and why has the Alternating Ministries Scheme ceased to be a default position?
- (c) If similar conditions that inspired the Scheme were experienced again in other geographical locations in Ireland would the Scheme be a viable option for today?
- (d) What are the current strategic priorities of mission for each tradition?

- (e) Are single denominational models most successful or put differently, do formal, agreed Schemes limit missional potential?
- (f) What, if any, models of pastoral ministry has the Scheme enabled and how have these models related to social change in Ireland?
- (g) Is there any symbolic importance to the Scheme, the removal of which would have missional consequence and what are the perceptions of the public in terms of credibility, strategic location and evidence of two reformed Churches working together?
- (h) What is the identity of Congregations born out of the Scheme, what happens if they separate from or return to the parent tradition?
- (i) What, if any, might be the impact of Methodist – Church of Ireland Covenant on the Scheme?
- (j) The suitability of the governance arrangements with particular reference to:
 - Transitional arrangements between tenures
 - Finance
 - Oversight, both local and District/Presbytery
 - Ownership by traditions
 - Representation at Church Courts
- (k) What is the sustainability and missional potential of these Congregations?
- (l) How are Ministers supported pastorally given their relative distance from other Methodist and Presbyterian ministry colleagues?
- (m) Are there other models of collaboration that should be expressed beyond or complimentary to the formal Scheme?

This report does not provide detailed answers to each of the questions, nor provide a detailed portrait of each of the Congregations visited. They are rather listed to indicate the scope of the issues considered and the thought process of the Review Group both of which have led to the final conclusions and recommendations.

5. Missional priorities and strategies for mission

Clear points of commonality were identified in both the missional purpose and strategy of each tradition. Both traditions have a rich theology of mission and see mission as flowing out of the Great Commission in Matthew 28. This charge stands as an overarching mandate to all Christians regardless of denomination.

The mandate is to make and baptise disciples into a worldwide communion under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It is not to make specific denominational adherents. These disciples are then ambassadors for Christ in the world in which they live. This concept is a whole-life discipleship where each believer should engage in ‘mission’ in whatever location each is placed – at the ‘front-line’ of everyday life.

(a) For MCI

Mission is best developed in the public square rather than in the pew. Stephen argued in the High Council; Paul debated on Mars Hill; Philip discussed with the Ethiopian in his carriage; Paul preached in prison, and also sought to support himself financially. In similar vein Wesley,

and others, have preached across the Britain and Ireland, as it then was, in barns, in halls, at cross-roads and in homes.

For Wesley, and thus MCI, the exercise of faith is not humanity's escape to a more tolerable heavenly realm but, rather, it is active participation, now, in God's redemptive enterprise. Effective participation will inevitably emphasise the cost of discipleship as we confront the 'principalities and powers' at work in this world and as we speak truth to power.

Through the direction of the Holy Spirit, Wesley spearheaded a movement whose spiritual heritage still seeks to encourage experimentation, diversity and flexibility of approach in 'Mission' all the time supported by an analytical appreciation of what is happening in society around us.

MCI espouses this vibrant approach today. Its members are encouraged to engage in evangelism, in social participation, and in sacrificial living for the benefit of others. MCI does not advocate a specific action model for mission. It rather seeks to encourage its members to develop models, within the umbrella of the Great Commission, that are appropriate for their local conditions.

(b) **For PCI**

The denomination's historic commitment to reaching Ireland for Christ has been warmly expressed through the formation of the Irish Mission and the Home Mission, reflecting the Church's reformed ethos of contextual and incarnational mission.

For almost the past decade, the vision of the PCI, from its Board of Mission in Ireland has been to move further towards "vibrant communities of Christ serving and transforming Ireland." In itself, that too carries a rich theology of mission emphasising the place of the local Congregation.

This strategy has been informed by several broad-brush priorities, largely summed up in the idea of "going where the people are". In particular focusing on:

- The eastern seaboard (Following the European route E01 from Larne to Rosslare).
- Ireland's six major cities – Belfast, Dublin, Londonderry/Derry, Limerick, Galway, Cork.
- Population centres with no other reformed witness.
- Places where the Presbyterian Church has had an historic presence.

Presbyterians are a people who desire to hold onto the best of what has gone before and yet are convinced that they must be always reforming. Thus, PCI's recent structural changes, resulting in the new Council for Mission in Ireland, mean that its priorities and strategy in mission are at a new point of refinement intending to be fit for purpose in a contemporary context.

(c) **Implications for the Scheme**

It was clear to the members of the Review Group that the Congregations currently operating the Scheme fell within the common emphases of the two traditions. It was also noted however that in neither Church had collaboration been assumed as each established/developed its own priorities for Mission. Nevertheless, as a consequence of the Scheme,

and over the course of time, three living Churches have emerged from a context of decline.

6. Chronology and impact of the Methodist-Church of Ireland covenant

1968: The CoI, MCI and PCI formed a Tripartite Consultation with a view to seeking unity.

1988: A Tripartite Theological Working Party was proposed, and though accepted by the CoI and MCI, PCI voted not to participate. The CoI and MCI thus formed a Joint Theological Working Party (JTWP).

2002: Following ten years' discussion and reflection, the CoI and MCI discerned that the time was right to deepen their relationship by entering into a Covenant to work towards unity, with a particular emphasis on mission. After due process, the Covenant was signed in September 2002. Thus the Joint Theological Working Party was replaced by the Covenant Council. PCI is an observer on this Council.

In understanding the new and important relations that now exist between MCI and CoI it was made very clear that there was no desire on the part of MCI that the Covenant would have a negative effect on relationships with PCI. Furthermore, account will be taken by Stationing of the particular characteristics of United Presbyterian-Methodist Congregations.

7. Contextual changes

The ecclesiastical landscape of Ireland in 2016 is radically different from that existing when the Alternating Ministries Scheme was conceived.

In a relatively few years, attitudes to the established Churches in Ireland have varied from apathy to anger to suspicion. Thus assumptions about the place of the Churches in Irish society need to be constantly refreshed.

At the same time our towns and cities are increasingly multi-cultural; there are continuing socio-economic shifts and our Congregations reflect this new diversity.

Churches which we might previously have imagined would close within a generation are now thriving and are continuing to grow despite economic recession and reverse migration.

Possibilities for mission beyond the traditional boundaries of denominational affiliation exist where they previously did not. The emergence of a wide variety of new expressions of Church entities, formal and informal, present both opportunities and challenges.

There continues to be a genuine need for Presbyterian and Methodist witness as distinctive voices among the several Christian voices in Ireland, even where their numbers may be small. Many hundreds of people still find a spiritual home with both because of their long traditions. Recent efforts to plant new Presbyterian and Methodist Churches have been successful.

8. Field visits

Field visits to the three Congregations operating the scheme were carried out to learn how the scheme operates and has developed in practice. In meeting with the Minister and congregational representatives the Review Group sought to understand:

- the encouragements and challenges faced
- the contemporary identity of the Congregation
- the missional vision and potential
- the denominational support and the impact of the scheme within this
- the suitability of the present buildings owned by the Congregations
- transitional arrangements at times of change of tenure
- Church governance
- pastoral support and the Minister's and Congregation's relationship with each denomination

The members of the Review Group wish to express their sincere thanks for the way they were hosted and welcomed by the Congregations.

These visits were significant in highlighting a number of areas. Members of the review group described what they witnessed as inspiring, discovering where a maintenance missional model has ultimately led to thriving Congregations in unique, strategically important, city locations. This transformation took place over a significant period of time but the fruit of the partnership was evident.

Each of the Congregations demonstrated the life of the Spirit and openness to God's leading as He takes them forward in Mission. Each had active members and valued their Ministers. Each spoke of their present identity as being fueled by the two denominations but manifested as essentially United. This was shown in the repeatedly heard phrase expressed in a matter-of-fact manner: "the Congregation is united, it's the Minister who alternates". One Congregation described their United identity as a missional advantage in reaching to diverse and multicultural communities but able also to draw on the richness of two identifiable and credible traditions. Significant responsibility therefore rests on each of the Ministers to pay attention to each denomination and those seeking to minister in these Congregations need to be people who respect both traditions.

Some concern was expressed that the terms of Elders (who are ordained for life in PCI) and Committee (who are elected to serve for three year periods in MCI) mean that the stable, life members of the committee will always be Presbyterian. This could create an inherent imbalance and it is recommended that this be considered further by the MPF.

There are still significant challenges in times of transition, particularly where, given both the passage of time and differences in governance models, experience gained from a previous transition, cannot be assumed to be present. Therefore there needs to be both local and central anticipation of the need to prepare Congregations in advance of transitions so that they will have sufficient capacity to manage them successfully.

Overall the Working Group was highly encouraged by these visits. The Congregations are alive, impacting the communities in which they serve, including many marginalised and vulnerable people, and will need our continued support, both in prayer and in finance.

9. A brief timeline tracing the history and mechanism of alternating ministry

1921: The cooperation between the PCI and MCI, particularly in the area of Home Mission, began formally when both the Presbyterian General Assembly

and Methodist Conference received a document entitled “*General Principles for Joint Worship by Members of the Two Churches*”

Both Churches were concerned about offering pastoral care in contexts where there were declining numbers. Thus, initially the “scheme” was need-driven, primarily where there was no resident Minister. The legislation was permissive but not directive.

1958: The Assembly and Conference received revised and updated versions of these General Principles which referred to the existence of a Joint Negotiating Committee formed between the two Churches, and reporting to the MCI Conference and the PCI Inter-Church Relations Board.

The emphasis in the report was that federation was a better option than agreed withdrawal. What would eventually become the Alternating Ministries Scheme was born out of this philosophy. In a time when the complete disappearance of reformed witness in towns and cities, particularly in the Irish Republic, was a strong likelihood, this level of close collaboration seemed a sensible way to preserve our shared witness.

Thus by 1958 it is established that there could be co-operation between both traditions to enable a joint rather than united scheme. The Congregation moves to one Church building. Communion may now be more than quarterly. Members had to choose one denomination and are recorded as such. For each Minister (from one tradition) there is an identified corresponding Minister to serve specific needs of members. A Presbyterian/Methodist Joint Meeting was held regularly which supervised the arrangements in existing locations, and agreed new ones.

1973: The present Alternating Ministries Scheme was proposed to the General Assembly and Methodist Conference, and the Joint Committee was formed which would supervise the operation of the Scheme for the next 32 years, until the formation of the MPF in 2005. In the 1973 document the concept of “co-operation” had changed to “unity”.

By the end of the 1970’s there were schemes operating in Limerick, Sandymount, Waterford and Enniscorthy/Wexford/Gorey. However, attempts to start similar schemes in Kilkenny, Tullamore, Athlone, Birr, Portlaoise, Mountmellick and Athy had been unsuccessful, largely due to local opposition to the concept.

A reading of the Minutes from this period demonstrates that this policy was driving the strategy of both the MCI and PCI Home Missions departments. 1970-76 was not just a time of massive change but also carried a sense of emergency and in this context the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches were closest natural allies. They had very little co-operation with the Church of Ireland [CoI] or others and there were key people within each tradition who were able to generate the necessary support from within the Assembly and Conference.

1980: Proposals to introduce the Alternating Ministries Scheme appeared to be the default position of both denominations in areas where numbers were small or declining. Thus, by this time, Galway, Sligo, Killarney, Dundalk, Carlingford, Casteltellingham, Lucan, Tallaght, Greystones, Bray, Wicklow, Drogheda, Skerries and Cavan were all under consideration by the Committee, in addition to the four established schemes. However, the Committee may have been ahead of local opinion as none of these options, with the exception of Galway, ever gained local acceptance.

1983: The Scheme had settled to five circuits/linkages:

- Limerick
- Sandymount
- Wexford, Enniscorthy and Gorey
- Waterford and Tramore
- Galway and Ballinasloe.

In addition, both Churches had *ad hoc* arrangements in place to share buildings or other variants of local collaboration:

- Greystones
- Skerries
- Boyle
- Braniel
- Taughmonagh
- St Andrews, Rosetta
- St Columba's, Lisburn
- Firhouse

Therefore the pathway of the life of this Scheme moved from functional to contented co-operation to a "Divinely guided" understanding, and the corresponding practice moved from joint worship to federal to united.

The mid-eighties saw the development of a more intentional single identity model of mission.

1994: It was agreed that Ministers in alternating appointments would be invited to the Conference/Assembly of the other tradition.

2000: It was agreed that Ministers attending would be non-voting delegates at the Courts and Councils of the other tradition, and that all would have access to the printed reports of both traditions.

It was also agreed in 2000 that, in the light of new Methodist legislation on flexibility in the itineracy, the period of ministry would be normally eight years but that consultation, from the Presbyterian side, to facilitate call, could take place earlier than the seventh year. New regulations for the filling of mid-term vacancies were proposed, agreed, and successfully implemented. It was noted that in this and in many other matters, a measure of flexibility is essential to enable appropriate procedures of MCI Stationing and the PCI Linkage Commission to take place.

2006: The Alternating Ministries Scheme in Wexford, Enniscorthy and Gorey was ended. Gorey joined the local Methodist circuit, and Wexford and Enniscorthy became a Linked Home Mission charge within PCI. The latter Congregations retained the descriptor "United Presbyterian and Methodist Church".

2009: The Alternating Ministry Scheme in Waterford ended with the United Congregation coming under the pastoral care of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

10. Conclusions

In light of all of the above the Review Group wishes to celebrate that the conversations which have taken place have been rigorous and that the process has been completed – with a strengthened desire to forge co-operation between our two traditions for the cause of the gospel.

A summary of the main findings is as follows:

(a) What the process discovered

- That the field-visits uncovered Churches in the Irish Republic with a strong identity, and sense of purpose. They have a strong missional vision for their contexts.
- That it is unlikely that these Congregations would be in existence if the Alternating Ministries Scheme had not been implemented in the 1970's.
- That their identity as Congregations has evolved over time from being Presbyterian and Methodist Churches, to being United Churches and that this "unitedness" has forged a fresh and unique identity consistent with 'The rock from which they are hewn'. The heritage of the two denominations remains important to them and to their mission, as it provides a point of clear recognition for 'New Irish' coming from other cultures.
- That new future mission plants will inevitably emerge from the mission agencies of each tradition.

(b) Finance

- That each of the Congregations benefits from resources released from the central structures of Methodism and Presbyterianism. That each of the Congregations is not financially viable and unlikely to be so in the short to medium term. Central funds from the two denominations will still be required over time. A recommendation in this regard is appended.

(c) Transition

- That points of tension arise typically during transition between ministries, both with Methodist Stationing and the Presbyterian Linkage Commission. That each tradition has its own process of assessment of the viability of Congregations at times of transition and that these mechanisms of assessment analyse the narrative of the life of the Congregation over time and not merely capture a snapshot at a particular moment.
- That Congregations should be prepared and supported in advance of transitions to ensure they have sufficient capacity and understanding to approach alternate models of transition.
- That if the scheme is to be successful going forward it needs to continue to evolve, to be agile and to be flexible in its implementation.
- That solid and regular communication between the two Mission Departments of Presbyterianism and Methodism is crucial to the success, both of the Mission Partnership Forum and the Alternating Ministry Scheme.

11. Recommendations

- (a) That the MCI and PCI continue their commitment to the Scheme as it stands. By the Scheme is meant its outworking in current situations today. That the existence of the Scheme and the continued commitment of both traditions to it will not preclude either tradition from developing its missional vision as led by the Spirit of God. Nevertheless, a duty of

courtesy exists to maintain positive relationships through our joint and individual missional activities, both locally and centrally.

- (b) That the Mission Partnership Forum provides a space for the generous exchange of future missional opportunities. This may or may not result in further implementations of the Scheme as it is understood but may also include opportunities for co-operation and, or, collaboration in new missional settings. The purpose is to bless each other and partner in mission where appropriate. It is important not to codify how these collaborations and co-operations may be managed, since each will develop according to need.
- (c) That the Mission Partnership Forum consider how best to realise balanced and sustainable models of local governance which honour both traditions.
- (d) That the rules for deployment of ministerial personnel under each tradition shall be applied during their period of tenure. If either tradition wishes to change the allocation of ministerial duties, either in tenure transition or midterm, that the Mission Partnership Forum considers such changes in advance, and makes a recommendation to the relevant denominational bodies.
- (e) That a composite funding model be considered whereby the costs of ministry are shared between the two traditions, rather than alternating according to the tenure in place at any given time.
- (f) That in light of the adoption of these recommendations, the remit of the Mission Partnership Forum be revised to encompass its additional responsibilities.

APPENDIX 2

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BELFAST TASK GROUP

1. Introduction

In considering a way for the Belfast Presbyteries, the Linkage Commission and the Council for Mission in Ireland to collaborate in resource allocation decisions, the Task Group was asked to draw up several options for consideration, showing their respective advantages and disadvantages. These options are as follows:

2. Options

Option A: A centralised model

In this approach the Linkage Commission and the Council for Mission in Ireland would determine the broad priorities for mission and ministry in the city of Belfast and would use these priorities for resource allocation decisions, whether for new or existing projects – or Congregations at times of transition such as Leave to Call, Tenure Review etc.

Advantages:

Since the process would take place within the committee structures of the Council for Mission in Ireland and the Linkage Commission, there would be clarity of decision making and its basis. Authority to act and responsibility to finance lie, in effect, with the same body. It is likely to facilitate quicker decisions.

Disadvantages:

Presbyteries (and through that vehicle, Congregations) would have little say, other than through their representatives on the Linkage Commission and the Council, as to the setting of these priorities. This may foster feelings of distrust of “the centre”.

Option B: The status quo

In this model the Council for Mission in Ireland and the Linkage Commission collaborate in resource allocation decisions, whereby the Linkage Commission seeks advisory comment from the Council, at its own instigation, and where the needs demand it. Such circumstances typically include:

- where Additional Pastoral Personnel are sought in a Congregation in augmentation
- where Leave to Call is sought in a Congregation with Urban Mission Status
- where missional comment is sought in a situation determined by the Linkage Commission
- where the local context demands such an opinion.

Advantages:

It is well tried and systems are in place, including executive decision making systems which release funds from the Central Ministry Fund or the grant making facilities within the Council for Mission in Ireland.

Disadvantages:

Presbytery has a limited say in these strategic decisions. Presbytery priority setting may be limited to its stated position in mission plans drafted in 2009 (as revised).

It is painfully bureaucratic and slow. This is one of the original reasons given for seeking an alternative.

It often engenders tension between the three key players, which can escalate to conflict. This is surely a poor witness.

It is reactive, rather than proactive, in that it deals almost exclusively with problems or difficult decisions thrown up at times of vacancy.

Option C: The formation of a Consultative Group for Belfast

In this approach the Linkage Commission, the Council for Mission in Ireland and the three Presbyteries act together. They collaborate to draft priorities and to assess projects. They collectively arrive at decisions by agreeing to set aside elements of their autonomy.

Advantages:

Each Presbytery retains a significant say in the decision-making within their bounds, and indeed gains a say beyond their bounds within the city of Belfast.

Each Presbytery has a role in the setting of priorities for the city of Belfast.

There is collective wisdom in the room producing a more nuanced outcome from the multiple perspectives of

- big picture urban mission strategy (CMI)
- local knowledge and insight (Presbytery)
- reality about financial sustainability and monitoring of progress (LC)

Disadvantages:

Each of the 3 participants (Presbyteries, CMI and Linkage Commission) are required to set aside a degree of their autonomy and to cede aspects of their powers, in order to act collaboratively in the Consultative Group. For some, this has proved challenging.

Option D: The Belfast Conference

In this approach the Linkage Commission and the Council for Mission in Ireland act collaboratively, as they currently do. The Council offers advisory comment in certain circumstances as requested by the Linkage Commission. Resource allocation decisions are arrived at by this route for allocation of funds (from the Central Ministry Fund) and CMI grant making funds (through its Mission Grants Panel).

In addition, however, the CMI would convene a permanent Conference for Belfast, made up of representatives from each of the three Belfast Presbyteries. This would be chaired and facilitated by the Council for Mission in Ireland, whose job would be to set priorities for mission and ministry within the city of Belfast. Resource allocation decisions, from the Linkage Commission and the Council for Mission in Ireland, would be tested against these priorities.

Advantages:

Each Presbytery acting alone would retain its remit to set priorities within its own bounds, but this would be informed by the Permanent Conference deliberations.

The Presbyteries talking together would have the main say in the setting of strategic priorities for mission and ministry within Belfast.

The Council and Linkage Commission will bring a wider-Church dimension to the discussions.

Disadvantages:

Historically, Presbyteries have found it difficult to achieve the setting of priorities, when asked. There is a concern that when such work is done, the priorities which emerge prove to be too general to be meaningful. Proximity to neighbours makes this even more difficult.

The model does not resolve the initial problem identified in this process; the separation of functions:

- the authority to set priorities (the Conference)
- the capacity to allocate resources (The Council and the Linkage Commission)

While the CMI is the one partner common to both, its position may become untenable over time, as it may be pressurised to advocate for both local and central interests.

3. Recommendation

- (a) The consensus of the Task Group following debate is that Option D is preferred. This option allows the regulatory bodies to function without setting aside the powers they have been given by the General Assembly, while also ensuring that it is the Presbyteries which set missional priorities within their bounds. It has the added advantage that the three Belfast Presbyteries act together rather than separately in this important task, while not setting aside the principle that a Presbytery is *“responsible for corporate oversight of the Congregations and causes within its bounds...and the advancement of Christ’s kingdom generally within its bounds.”* (Code Par 69(1))
- (b) The place of Presbytery Mission Plans was discussed, and it was noted that to be meaningful, these would need to be revised and updated.
- (c) The specific opinion of the Conference would not be sought in every vacancy or for every project proposal.
- (d) The process of facilitation of the Conference would require the input and support of the Mission Development Officer.
- (e) Priorities, to be meaningful must not be general statements of intent, but specific, considered judgements:
 “Here, and not there.”
 “This and not that.”

APPENDIX C

Directory of Home and Urban Mission Charges, Ministers and Church Planters, Irish Mission Workers and Deaconesses serving under the call of the Council for Mission in Ireland

HOME MISSION MINISTERS	
Rev RS Agnew	(1st Monaghan) and Smithborough
Rev RSG Beacom	Lisbellaw, Lisnaskea, Maguiresbridge and Newtownbutler
Rev Janice M Browne	(Kerrykeel, Milford) and Rathmullan
Rev A Carroll	Donabate
Rev D Conkey	Enniscorthy and Wexford
Rev Molly Deatherage	Ballina, Killala, Ballymote
Rev Nathan Duddy	Arklow (from 28th May 2016)
Rev AJ Dunlop	Howth and Malahide
Rev DTR Edwards	Drum, Cootehill and Kilmount

HOME MISSION MINISTERS	
Rev JG Faris	Cork and Aghada
Rev H Freeburn	Galway (Alternating Scheme)
Rev S Glendinning	Moville, Greenbank, Carndonagh and Malin
Rev WJ Hayes	Tullamore and Mountmellick
Rev KA Jones	(Waterside) and Fahan
Rev Chris Kennedy	Bray (Stated Supply)
Rev SJ Lockington	Corboy and Mullingar
Rev Vicki Lynch (MCI)	Christ Church, Limerick (Alternating Scheme)
Rev Dr DK McCrory	Maynooth
Rev Gary McDowell	Greystones
Rev IT McKee	(Aughnacloy) and Ballymagrane
Rev G Jean Mackarel	Drumkeeran, Killeshandra, Cavan and Bellasis
Rev Colin McKibben	(Convoy, Carnone, Donoughmore) and Alt
Rev Katherine P Meyer	Sandymount (Alternating Scheme)
Rev Alan Moore	(Cavanaleck) and Aughentaine
Rev W Montgomery	Fermoy and Cahir
Rev M Proctor	Naas (part time)
Rev SW Rea	Carlow and Athy
Rev DW Reid	(Ardstraw) and Douglas
Rev D Reyes Martin	Kilkenny
Rev SJ Richmond	Donegal and Stranorlar
Rev S Stewart	Clones, Stonebridge, Ballyhobridge and Newbliss (pt)
Rev RB Thompson	(Badoney, Corrick) and Glenelly
Rev Dr DJ Woodside	Drogheda
Rev Andrew Watson	Carrigart and Dunfanaghy (pt)
Vacant	1st Bailieborough, Corranearry, (Trinity Bailieborough)
Vacant	(Frankford, Castleblayney), Corvalley and Ervey
Vacant	Inch (Stated Supply)
Vacant	Irvinestown, Pettigo and Tempo
Vacant	Kells (under review)
Vacant	Sligo with Boyle (Stated Supply)

URBAN MISSION MINISTERS	
Rev M Gibson	Westbourne
Rev R Love	Taughmonagh
Rev I McDonald	New Mossley
Rev D Rankin	Strand, Belfast
Rev L Webster	Craigavon

CHURCH PLANTERS	
Rev Dario Leal	Cliftonville Road. The Living Room

IRISH MISSION WORKERS	
David Boyd	Adelaide Road, Dublin
Tom Dowling	Kilkenny
Keith Preston	International Meeting Point, Belfast
William Workman	Athy
Philip Whelton	Arklow

DEACONESSES	
Sonya Anderson	Shore Street, Donaghadee
Eileen Black	1st Magherafelt
Jenny Clegg	Ballycrochan, Bangor
Amanda Cooper	Deaconess without charge
Doreen Draffin	Whitehouse and Hospice Chaplaincy Team
Eleanor Drysdale	Wellington, Ballymena
Joanne Dunlop	Chaplaincy Teams, Antrim and Craigavon Hospitals
Sharon Heron	Windsor and International Meeting Point
Roberta Irvine	Greystone Road, Antrim
Christine Kyle	Ulster Hospital Chaplaincy Team
Phyllis Linton	West Church, Ballymena
Heather McCracken	Belfast H&SC Trust Chaplaincy Team
Sadie McCullough	Whiteabbey
Lynda McFaul	1st Carrickfergus
Amy Magee	Muckamore
Tracey Nicholl	St James, Ballymoney

DEACONESSES	
Julie Peake	Deaconess without Charge
Michelle Purdy	Ballyclare
Hazel Reid	1st Broughshane
Margaret Robertson	Elmwood, Lisburn
Kathleen Spence	Deaconess without Charge
Rosemary Spiers	1st Antrim
Evelyn Whyte	1st Lisburn

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the report of the Mission Partnership Forum's, *Review of the Alternating Ministries Scheme* (Appendix A) be received, and its recommendations adopted.

2. That option A/B/C/D [one option to be chosen] in Appendix B of the report of the Council for Mission in Ireland (*Belfast Task Group*) be adopted.

3. That a review of the Home Mission be undertaken on terms agreed by the Council for Mission in Ireland, and that a report with recommendations be brought to the General Assembly, ideally in 2017.

4. That the General Assembly authorise the sale of the Shankill Road Mission building on terms agreed by the Trustees of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

5. That the sacrifice of those who fought and died at the Battle of the Somme, and marked on its centenary anniversary on 1st July 2016, be acknowledged at services of worship the Sunday following, or another suitable occasion.

6. That the work of PCI Chaplains in Healthcare, Prisons, the Forces, Universities and Colleges be commended to the Church for prayer, both privately and at services of worship.

7. That the General Assembly agrees to the formation of a Strategy for Mission Coordination Committee, and place it under the Council for Mission in Ireland, with the Convener and membership to be nominated by the Nominations Committee.

8. That the Report of the Council for Mission in Ireland be received.

COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL WITNESS

Convener: Rev Dr T J McCORMICK
Secretary: Mr LINDSAY CONWAY, OBE

1. The Strategic Plan of the Council for Social Witness (CSW), presented as an Appendix to The General Assembly (2015), identified three vital applications:

- to enable the Council to stay focused on the work and responsibilities remitted to it by the General Assembly;
- to give a structured account of the work of the Council to the General Assembly;
- to relate to statutory agencies, regulatory authorities, service users and others, the particular focus and ethos of the Church's work in this particular area.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. This report indicates the effective implementation of this approach.

3. **The Council Report** addresses the general work of CSW (Strategic Objective (SO 1)¹ and endeavours to communicate its work to its members, the wider Church and community (SO 7)².

4. **Disability Services Committee** reports on the Day, Residential, Supported Housing and Respite Care in four locations, along with the ongoing and developing work of Kinghan Church for the Deaf. Inspiration from the 'Christmas Cracker' project is also shared (SO 2).

5. **Older People Services Committee** reports on the extensive work carried out in Residential and Nursing Homes in 9 locations. It also highlights the consistently high quality of residential care provided by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland which is an acknowledged Witness within the Health and Social Care world (SO 3).

6. **Taking Care Committee** reports on a comprehensive programme of training for leaders, designated persons, Ministers, and Taking Care trainers and on the detailed work required to address the issue of Adult Safeguarding (SO 4).

7. **Specialist Services Committee** reports on work in 3 sheltered housing locations with those with addictions, and/or offending behaviours. Initiatives to address issues such as Suicide Awareness and Domestic Abuse are also included (SO 5).

8. **Business and Finance Panel** reports on the management and stewardship of funds, personnel and property. Attention is drawn to the

1 **Strategic Objective 1:** "The COUNCIL shall deliver an effective Social Care service for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and to the wider community by the provision of Residential Nursing Supported Housing, Respite and Day Care and Community Based Programmes."

2 **Strategic Objective 7:** "The COUNCIL shall effectively communicate to its members, the wider Church and community the work, services and achievements of the Council."

challenging financial environment in which the Council serves, and the necessity of balancing vision with prudence (SO 6)³.

9. The introductory statement of the **Adult Safeguarding Task Group** has an application to all aspects of the Church's work:

“Christ calls us to love, care for and value everyone.

This gospel imperative of loving our neighbour as ourselves leads us to respect all as individuals, treating each with dignity and empowering them to reach their full potential.

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland seeks to reflect Christ's compassion for everyone and to safeguard all those who come into contact with the mission and ministries of the Church, by preventing harm and protecting those at risk.”

MAIN COUNCIL REPORT

10. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland, through its Council for Social Witness, continues to provide a wide range of services, as follows:

Residential Care – for older people

- Adelaide House, Belfast – 44 Beds
- Ard Cluan House, Londonderry – 13 Beds
- Corkey House, Belfast – 35 Beds
- River House, Newcastle – 29 Beds
- Sunnyside House, Bangor – 45 Beds
- York House, Portrush – 32 Beds

Residential Care – for those with Learning Disability

- Aaron House, Dundonald – 16 beds

Residential Respite Care – for those with a Learning Disability; Physical Disability, Sensory Impairment and Older People

- Lawnfield House, Newcastle – 20 beds
- Aaron House, Dundonald – 2 beds

Nursing Care – for Older People

- Harold McCauley House, Omagh – 32 Beds

Day Care – for those with Learning Disability

- Aaron House – 9 service users

Supported Living

- Willow Brook, Coleraine (learning disability) – 9
- Topley Terrace, Coleraine (physical disability) – 3

3 **Strategic Objective 6:** “BUSINESS AND FINANCE PANEL – will monitor the Financial Management, Personnel Functions, Information Technology and Property Management of the Council supported by the Finance and Staffing Commission.”

Supported Housing – Older People

- St Andrew Bungalows, Mallusk
- Tritonville Close, Dublin

Work with People with Addictions

- Carlisle House – 12
- Gray’s Court – 7

Work With Offenders

- Thompson House – 19
- Fresh Start Initiative at Hydebank Wood Prison and Young Offenders Centre

Ministry To The Deaf

- The Kinghan Church
- New work in Ballykelly

Taking Care

Advice, Support and Training, in collaboration with Council for Congregational Life and Witness (CCLW), and the appropriate regulatory bodies

Staff Training

- In partnership with appropriate organisations to meet the requirements of regulatory bodies and provide high quality care and enhance the lives of residents and service-users.
- Volunteering – supported by raising awareness and providing induction training through the ‘Getting on Board’ scheme and ‘Fresh Start’ Initiative.

Disability

- Raising awareness of disability, health and wellbeing in collaboration with CCLW.

Family Work

- CSW remains connected with the work of South Belfast Friendship House during the Review process.

11. The Council has overseen this work, on behalf of the Church, in 17 locations:

- providing 373 bed spaces
- employing 450 staff
- utilising 200 volunteers
- with an operational budget of £9.5 million

12. CSW has responded to this commission in the face of **SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES**, in particular:

13. **Increasing Standards and Expectations:** The Council recognises that all aspects of the Church’s work and witness operate in a closely monitored and

regulated sector. Throughout the year inspection reports have commended the standard and range of care that is provided and several have had no recommendations for further action. Nevertheless there are occasions when upgrading of facilities or revision of policies are required to meet amended standards and procedures. Often this impacts on financial resources and staff time.

14. Service users, and their families, come with their own expectations in terms of standards of facilities and care, additional opportunities and resources, past experiences and future security. Not all of the Council's property is "purpose-built" and while there have been programmes of routine maintenance and required upgrades it is not always possible to fulfil the expectations of potential residents or users in terms of en-suite facilities, single level buildings, etc. Focused work has been undertaken on some older properties to consider how provision can be continued in the future.

15. While endeavouring to satisfy, and often surpass, reasonable expectations, CSW provision is understood to be a witness in both word and action with a concern for the whole person. In the Homes/Units a range of opportunities and resources are provided for ministry and spiritual nourishment, including daily devotional times, weekly worship, Bible study, and distribution of devotional books and literature.

16. **Financial Pressures:** The financial climate in which the Council operates remains challenging. The Business and Finance Panel in monitoring financial, property and personnel issues has kept the realities of current deficit budgets and the necessities of future provision before CSW. One consequence has been the reluctant and regrettable adoption of the principle of introducing "Additional Charges" in the Older People Services facilities.

17. The Council's endeavours to maintain budgetary control are further complicated by a lack of clarity in future funding arrangements by some external bodies and agencies. The withdrawal of Special Needs Management Allowance by the Department of Health and Social Services and the introduction of the National Living Wage have brought additional pressures on finances. In the not too distant future the question of how much of this work PCI wants to/is able to sustain with internal financial support from the denomination will have to be addressed.

18. **Expanding Needs and Opportunities:** The Council is also aware of a multiplicity of needs all around. Human Trafficking, Domestic Abuse, Exploitation of the Elderly are just a few that have hit the headlines. Meanwhile some new areas of opportunity have been presented: further sheltered housing and supported living projects, and the development of the 'Christmas Cracker' programme.

19. In addressing these challenges the words of John Stott in 'Basic Christianity' bring encouragement and guidance; "We must trust in him as our Saviour and submit to him as our Lord; and then go on to take our place as loyal members of the Church and responsible citizens in the community."

20. The Council has been able to respond to this commission with the **SUPPORT and COLLABORATION** of a wide range of individuals and agencies.

21. To fulfil the Church's responsibilities to all service users and staff CSW staff have ongoing interaction with a diverse range of regulatory and statutory bodies and the wider voluntary sector; in particular Regulation and Quality

Improvement Authority (RQIA); Northern Ireland Social Care Council; Criminal Justice Inspectorate; Probation Board Northern Ireland; Supporting People Initiative (NI Housing Executive); and Health and Social Care Trusts, and partner housing associations.

22. Staff are a key resource whose professional skill, diligent commitment and human tenderness are foundational to the care that is offered. Regular training and professional development is available to all staff, and the Key Staff Forum for senior staff provides updates on new requirements and initiatives for senior staff.

23. Conveners and the Senior Team proof all the activities of Council against the Strategic Plan. Each Committee monitors progress at each meeting and the Annual Away Day brings the Key Staff Forum and Conveners together to carry out the annual review.

24. A vast number of people are engaged as volunteers: the Local Support Committees, 'Friends-of' groups, and volunteers in the 'Getting on Board' programme. CSW is committed to developing the role of volunteers in CSW projects and in an increasing number of both familiar and innovative projects initiated by Congregations, groups and individuals. The Council believes this will engender further engagement and deepen the sense of partnership throughout the Church.

25. During this year CSW has had helpful engagement with other PCI Councils and Departments and appreciates the developing sense of collaboration. In particular, Council for Congregational Life and Witness, Council for Church in Society, and the Creative Production, IT, Finance, Personnel and General Secretary's Departments.

26. Social Witness will engage with other Councils in setting priorities and those of the denomination. Council would anticipate that this process will strengthen the links with Congregations, who provide so many social witness programmes and initiatives at a local level.

27. All of this work is heavily dependent upon the professional standing and immeasurable commitment of Lindsay Conway, Linda Wray, Deborah Webster, Denise Keegan, Laura Kelly and David Hooks, who guide, develop and enhance all of CSW's work. The day to day functioning of the Council is facilitated by Julie Sykes (Office Manager); Gail Gamble; Wilma Steele; Jennie Telford and Cathy Mullin and to each the Council expresses sincere thanks.

28. CSW has endeavoured to engage others in this commission by **SIGNPOSTING** and **COMMUNICATING** significant issues, achievements and events. The Council is aware of the diverse and complex needs and issues faced by many in the Church and community today. While CSW has neither the resources nor expertise to address every situation the Council is developing a signposting initiative to give accessible information to members of PCI. The Council trusts this will be a help to the whole Church and a benefit to many individuals.

29. The Council's celebration of significant anniversaries at Aaron House, Sunnyside House, and the Staff Award Scheme for long-service and training initiatives are indicative of commitment to service and personal professional development. Each has also provided opportunity to make both the Church and wider community aware of the Council's work. In the words of John Wesley, "Our witness for Christ does not take place in private. A private witness for Christ is a powerless witness for Christ. Our witness is meant to be public for everyone

to see. The reality is that many more people will be influenced by your actions than by your words. People are influenced by the lives Christians live on a daily basis. The way that people see us matters because they see the example of Christ. We are the ambassadors of Christ and we are His representatives in this world.”

30. Council Conveners and Staff appreciate invitations to speak at services, and other meetings, believing there needs to be a constant flow of information to members of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the wider community. The Council continues to work towards a revitalised communications policy which will include news-sheets and updates, website, and prayer bulletins. The Council believes that the investment of staff time and finance in such a programme will expand the awareness of this work, encourage prayer support, and stimulate engagement and support.

DISABILITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Strategic Objective:

“DISABILITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – will deliver a high standard of Day, Residential, Supported Housing and Respite Care in all of our Units; oversee the Ministry of the Kinghan Church and wider Ministry to the Deaf; contribute to the Disability, Health and Wellbeing work of the wider Church in partnership with the Council for Congregational Life and Witness.”

31. The Committee continues to be encouraged by the work being done and care provided in each of the facilities with positive outcomes being received from RQIA visits and inspections.

32. Committee meetings this year have been held at Lawnfield House, Newcastle, and the Kinghan Church. This gives Committee members the opportunity to see at first hand these particular areas of work.

33. Last September saw Aaron House, Dundonald, celebrated 20 years’ of service to some of the most vulnerable members of society. Residents / staff / family / friends and representatives from PCI attended a family fun day which included a brass band, magicians and a barbeque.

34. In partnership with Presbyterian Women the refurbishment of bathroom facilities in Aaron House is a major improvement and the Council is grateful to PW for their generous donation towards this work.

35. Council agreed to the purchase of a new minibus which is used to transport residents to day-care placements, outings and medical appointments. Their “old” minibus has been transferred to Lawnfield House to replace their 8-year old minibus. The Committee has been shocked at the rates which people with a disability have to pay and the difficulties which exist to access disability taxis.

36. Willow Brook and Topley Court, Coleraine, continue to deliver a high standard of support to the tenants. In the summer of 2015 tenants holidayed in Enniskillen while Aaron House residents holidayed in Portaferry.

37. Lawnfield House, Newcastle, has seen improved occupancy levels but still has some way to go to reach its full potential. The Committee is trying

to increase publicity within Social Care Trusts, PCI and the wider community to encourage greater use of the respite, holiday and short-term care facilities available. The Committee welcomes the support of The Presbyterian Children's Society re the funding of Adult Respite Care in Lawnfield House to give relief to young carers.

38. The social enterprise scheme for young adults with a learning disability is beginning to take shape on the Denegarh House/St Andrew Bungalows site at Mallusk with the help of two teams from *The Prince's Trust*. They have cleared out one of the bungalows, painted two of them and created a number of vegetable plots in the grounds in preparation for the scheme to be launched.

39. 'Christmas Cracker' was held in three locations in 2015. One additional venue has already been agreed for 2016, with the possibility of at least one other.

40. The Kinghan Church's ministry among the deaf community continues to grow in Belfast, while supporting an outreach work in Ballykelly on the first Sunday of each month.

41. The Moderator, Dr Ian McNie, conducted the 20th Anniversary Service of the opening of the refurbished Kinghan Church on Sunday 17th April – a time for celebration for the Congregation and the wider deaf community.

42. The withdrawal of the 'Special Needs Management Allowance' from April 2016 will have major implications on an already very challenging financial situation in this field of Learning Disability, Residential and Day Care.

43. Members of the Committee have agreed to undertake, with the Council's Residential and Supported Services Manager, monthly monitoring visits.

44. The Disability Services Committee appreciates the role of Local Support Committee members and 'Friends of' groups who enhance the work through their roles of provision of activities / outings / fundraising / spiritual input / quality auditing, etc.

PETER DICKINSON, Convener

OLDER PEOPLE SERVICES COMMITTEE

Strategic Objective:

“OLDER PEOPLE SERVICES COMMITTEE – will deliver a high standard of Day, Residential, Nursing and Respite Care to all our users and campaign and raise awareness on behalf of older people issues and services; support the development of the Pastoral Support of those requiring support in their own homes.”

45. The Older People Services Committee oversees the residential and nursing care for older people in its various homes in Northern Ireland and in Dublin. Recent inspection reports from RQIA have been most encouraging and it is obvious that this ministry to older people is carried out by a dedicated and willing staff in a thoroughly professional manner. Ongoing staff training is a regular part of the programme, and the Christian ethos is vital in what is an important part of the Church's mission to older people.

46. The work of Older People Services provides a vital ministry for many older people across the island of Ireland, and to their families, and I am pleased to report on a work that constitutes a significant witness to Christ.

47. During this year the Moderator of the General Assembly, the Rt Rev Dr Ian McNie and Mrs McNie have visited many units. This has been a great encouragement to staff and has greatly influenced the Moderator's year in office.

48. In September 2015 Sunnyside House celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the new facility in Bangor and a Special Thanksgiving Service was held in the Home. The Northern Ireland Amenity Council Best Kept Awards awarded Sunnyside House first place in the Residential Home category in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust Region. River House in Newcastle was runner-up.

49. The Committee is also pleased to announce that a Dementia Garden is being created at Corkey House. This will enhance the quality of life for all residents living here.

50. The Committee is actively exploring the relocation of Ard Cluan and York House (as detailed in Strategic Objective 2 of the Strategic Plan).

51. The Republic of Ireland Panel has raised the issue of the need for facilities such as sheltered housing in the Republic. The Council for Social Witness is happy to pursue with the relevant bodies the need for sheltered accommodation.

52. In an organisation with some 440+ employees there is necessarily some turnover of staff, but at a ceremony in Assembly Buildings in February awards were presented to staff members for long service (20 years) and also for additional training qualifications. The staff in the homes as well as in Assembly Buildings are a vital asset and so many go well beyond the call of duty; to them all we owe much gratitude. The Council is also grateful for so many volunteers and support groups connected with the various homes.

53. At present Older People Services provides 229 beds across its homes. Of these 44 are registered as being for residents with a diagnosis of dementia. In 2015 the occupancy rate target of 95% was reached by most of the homes. Over the course of the year we had 293 'permanent' residents and 34 'respite' residents.

54. Social Care is a vital part of the Health Service, and if the one is in crisis then so is the other. Older People Services is a member of the Independent Health and Care Providers, a non profit-making organisation representing private, voluntary, charitable and Church-affiliated providers of health and social care. This body has been making its concerns known to government since the cost of additional care for the growing number of residents with dementia, as well as the impact of the introduction of the National Living Wage will directly impact its members' ability to continue to provide services. Already some private homes in the province have been forced to close. An increase in funding by the government in February-March 2016 is a most welcome indication of its recognition of the difficulties, but of itself it is but a 'drop in the ocean'. The Health and Social Care Board's announcement of the regional nursing and residential home tariff rates for 2016/17 indicates an increase of 5% and it is hoped that these will take account of the range of financial pressures experienced by providers from the independent care sector.

55. The Council for Social Witness at its February meeting passed the following resolution: "Having exhausted all avenues of possible funding

allowed by current PCI structures we see ourselves obliged to propose with great reluctance the imposition of additional charges on new residents who require or are in receipt of additional services or facilities.”

56. The Committee were encouraged that the role of Activity Co-ordinators in Adelaide House, River House, Sunnyside House, York House and Harold McCauley has enhanced the range of activities/outings being offered to residents.

JOHN SEAWRIGHT, Convener

TAKING CARE COMMITTEE

Strategic Objective:

“TAKING CARE COMMITTEE (The Safeguarding Programme of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland) – creating a safe environment for all our members, users, volunteers and staff.”

57. The Committee reflected on the fact that a Child Protection Policy for children had been established and expanded over a 20 year period throughout the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, while the Committee continues to update and revise policies and training programmes to keep abreast of developments in this field of safeguarding. Two policies were approved this year; one dealing with an Allegations Procedure and the second which relates to Quality Assurance for Trainers. A Kirk Session training module is being piloted with the intention of providing it to all Congregations.

58. There were 137 Taking Care training sessions during 2015 – 29 Foundation; 98 Refresher and 10 for Designated Persons. There were 2,048 police checks for new leaders processed – 1,845 for Access NI and 203 for Garda vetting. Twenty incidents were reported to the Taking Care Team and advice was sought on a variety of situations. As well as dedicated staff who oversee the management and functioning of Taking Care, we acknowledge the work of all those volunteers whether on Committee, acting as Trainers providing foundation and refresher training throughout Ireland, together with the Designated persons in all Congregations.

59. In December 2015, the Committee set about addressing the major issue of Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults. A Task Group, members of which have a wide range of relevant expertise, began to develop a policy statement and guidelines and this is ongoing. It is intended that this will be combined with the present Taking Care Two, into a final policy entitled “Taking Care of All”. The General Assembly is being asked to approve the following ‘Taking Care for All Statement: “Christ calls us to love, care for and value everyone. This gospel imperative of loving our neighbour as ourselves leads us to respect all individual, treating each with dignity and empowering them to reach their full potential. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland seeks to reflect Christ’s compassion for everyone and to safeguard all those who come into contact with the mission and ministries of the Church, by preventing harm and protecting those at risk.”

60. The Task group agreed that as a Church PCI has a duty to protect all who are members or participate in the life and work of the Church community.

Harm, abuse or exploitation can happen anywhere, even in Churches. **Relevant legislation and policies in both jurisdictions**, together with PCI's well established Taking Care Programme, will ensure that the risk from harm, abuse or exploitation is reduced for all within the Church. The Presbyterian Church should have a zero tolerance approach to all forms of harm, abuse and exploitation.

61. Adult Safeguarding is not restricted to Older People and those with additional needs, but will protect all who are at risk of harm, abuse or exploitation.

62. The Panel recognises that Safeguarding is everyone's business and should be given a high priority within Congregations and not seen as another burdensome policy, but as the living out of the Gospel imperative to love and care for another.

63. The purpose of the guidelines will be to add to the well established Child Safeguarding Guidelines as contained within Taking Care. Many of the core values and principles are similar, will distil the 'Adult Safeguarding – Prevention and Protection in Partnership Policy' and provide good practical advice for all involved in the work and life of the Church.

64. The Panel has agreed that a 'Training Strategy' will be built into the final submission and that Interim Guidelines will be issued by Council to enable the 'Road Testing' of all draft material for Council activities and Congregations.

PAMELA MARSHALL, Convener

SPECIALIST SERVICES COMMITTEE

Strategic Objective:

“SPECIALIST SERVICES COMMITTEE – will deliver a high standard of service to those with Addictions, Offending Behaviours and who require Supported Housing.”

65. The Specialist Services Committee meets regularly and is currently giving intentional focus on its agenda to developing an increased understanding of issues surrounding Domestic Abuse in wider society. In response the Committee has been addressed in the past two meetings by two representatives from ONUS and Women's Aid and considered the Churches' response to these serious issues. Specialist Services, in response to its extended remit will continue to seek ways of informing the denomination, for prayer and awareness for members, of appropriate agencies which are well equipped to help anyone suffering from domestic abuse. This also assumes inter Council cooperation within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland as a denomination.

66. Work at Thompson House, Carlisle House and Gray's Court continues to provide timely accommodation and support to its residents. The missional aspect to the work, in all areas, is of paramount importance to the Specialist Services Committee and to the Directors of units and to this effect spiritual ministries sit alongside the therapies and practical professional advice and intervention. Christianity Explored is frequently employed in Thompson House and quarterly Bible reading notes are issued to each resident under our care. Conversations of a spiritual nature are often enjoyed by residents linking with full time staff and approved volunteers.

67. In conjunction with the Business and Finance Panel, the Committee is determined to establish a protocol for the review of serious adverse incidents. This is viewed by the Directors as a welcome and supportive model of good practice.

68. The staff at Thompson House, Carlisle House and Gray's Court are thanked for their ongoing dedication and for the fact that they have upheld good professional practice in light of many day to day challenges.

69. The finance and funding aspects associated with the work will reflect elements of significant encouragement in recent times as is evidenced in the finance report delivered to Council.

70. The Specialist Services Committee covets the Churches prayers as it seeks to fulfil the defined remit in the service of God and in a spirit of faith.

COLIN MEGAW, Convener

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the General Assembly approve the 'Taking Care of All Statement' in paragraph 58 of the Report of the Council for Social Witness.

2. That the General Assembly welcome the introduction of the 'National Living Wage' and call on the Northern Ireland Assembly to adequately fund the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to increase

3. That the General Assembly give thanks to God for one hundred and fifty years of the Presbyterian Children's Society (formerly The Presbyterian Orphan and Children's Society) and express thanks to the Governors, Office-bearers and all who have supported this work by their generosity and their prayers.

4. That the Report of the Council for Social Witness be received.

FOR INFORMATION

The following funds are not under the control of the General Assembly and the Reports are included for information only.

OLD AGE FUND, WOMEN'S FUND AND INDIGENT LADIES' FUND

The Rev W P H Erskine reports:

1. The Directors report that, during the last financial year which ended 31st December 2015, 98 beneficiaries (44 in the Old Age Fund, 35 in the Women's Fund and 19 in the Indigent Ladies' Fund) received grants.

2. The changes in beneficiaries during the year is as follows:

Beneficiaries Receiving Quarterly Grant	Old Age Fund	Presbyterian Women's Fund	Indigent Ladies Fund	TOTAL
At 1 January 2015	38	30	17	85
New Grants Provided	5	2	1	8
Deaths	(2)	(3)	(1)	(6)
Grants no longer required	(3)	(1)	–	(4)
As at 31 December 2015	38	28	17	83
Beneficiaries receiving one-off donations	1	3	1	5
Deaths and Grants no longer required (as above)	5	4	1	10
No of Beneficiaries receiving assistance during the year	44	35	19	98

3. The total distribution of the Funds in Grants, Donations and Gifts was £152,166 (£67,161 from the Old Age Fund, £57,970 from the Women's Fund and £27,035 from the Indigent Ladies' Fund).

4. An annual grant of £1,440, paid quarterly, was sent to beneficiaries during the year (2014:£1,400).

5. A 'Special Gift' of £360 (2014: £350) was sent to every beneficiary prior to Christmas.

6. During the year the Directors responded sympathetically to various problems which had been brought to their attention. They gave one-off donations, as needed, to assist in particular cases where immediate financial aid was more appropriate than annual grants. Ministers are asked to bear in mind the possibility of help from these funds in similar cases connected with their own congregations.

7. The Directors assure the Church that all monies that come to the Funds are carefully and wisely spent.

8. The Directors of the Funds deeply appreciate the kindness and thoughtfulness of those who have remembered the work of the Funds either by gift or bequest, and hope that their example may encourage others to support this vital aspect of the Church's outreach.

9. The Directors of the Funds wish to thank the Staff for the sensitive and sympathetic way in which they carried out the efficient administration of the Funds during the year.

FOR INFORMATION

The following body is not under the control of the General Assembly. The report is for information only.

PRESBYTERIAN CHILDREN'S SOCIETY

Dr Paul Gray (Executive Secretary) reports:

1. The Presbyterian Children's Society (formerly The Presbyterian Orphan and Children's Society) exists to help Presbyterian children in Ireland. It provides support for the families of these children in order to alleviate poverty and financial hardship. This support is delivered mainly through regular and other grants but also through Presbyterian projects and programmes geared to children and their families.

2. The Society is not directly under the control of the General Assembly, being a separate charity with its own governing document and Board of Governors. Nevertheless it is closely associated with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, providing for children of the Church and operating through its Ministers. Having been founded in 1866 the Society marked its 150th Anniversary by holding a celebration meeting in the Assembly Buildings on 10th May, 2016. Nowadays only a few beneficiaries are, strictly speaking, "orphans" and the term may deter some families who are in need from seeking help, so the Society has changed its name to "The Presbyterian Children's Society". Since 1866 around 43,000 children within 17,500 families have been helped and at present there are on the roll about 740 children in 210 Congregations, including around 16 per cent in the Irish Republic.

COUNCIL FOR CHURCH IN SOCIETY

Convener: Very Rev Dr TN HAMILTON
Secretary: THE CLERK

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council for Church in Society 2015/16

1. The report begins with a brief account of the work of the Council over the past year, including actions taken on the resolutions passed by last year's Assembly on receiving the Council's report.

Abortion Task Group

2. The Abortion Task Group's report is designed to assist the General Assembly in setting out their position on abortion. The report focuses in particular on abortion in cases of 'fatal fetal abnormality' and sexual crime, given the recently proposed changes to Northern Ireland's abortion law.

Community Relations and Reconciliation Task Group

3. The Community Relations and Reconciliation Task Group tables a revised version of the General Assembly's Peace Vocation entitled 'Vision for Society' for consideration and adoption. The Task Group also reports on its ongoing work with political parties and others in the public square on the subject of reconciliation.

Dealing with the Past Task Group

4. The Dealing with the Past Task Group set out a proposal for a research project entitled 'How did Presbyterians respond to the Troubles?' The Council believes that this proposal will make a positive contribution to the ongoing societal discussion about how to deal with the past.

Freedom of Conscience Task Group

5. Mindful of the resolution passed by last year's Assembly encouraging gracious and informed discussion about the role of conscience in the public square, the Freedom of Conscience Task Group presents a paper designed to help move the discussion forward.

State Education Committee

6. The State Education Committee reports on the various strands of its work. It also reports on the work of the Transferor Representatives' Council (TRC).

Republic of Ireland Panel

7. The Republic of Ireland Panel reports on its work since being established in September 2015. The Panel has focused in particular on education but is also seeking to demonstrate kingdom values in other areas, such as health and rural affairs.

REPORT

8. The Council for Church in Society has met four times since last year's General Assembly. Its Task Groups, Republic of Ireland Panel and State Education Committee have also met as required throughout the year, and there is regular engagement with outside groups. The Council's work continues to be very demanding due to the complexity and seriousness of the issues that need to be addressed, and at the outset it is important to put on record the deep thanks of the Council to the many people who have given so willingly of their time, energy and wisdom.

9. Identifying issues that the Church needs to address and developing the Church's thinking in these areas is a major part of the Council's remit. A critical element is to ensure that issues are thoroughly and Biblically explored, so that comment can be informed, rigorous and grace-filled. There is a particular challenge in seeking to bring grace into public debate, when so much attention is given in the media to those whose tone is often strident and demeaning. The papers submitted by the Abortion and Freedom of Conscience Task Groups demonstrate the high-level work of Council members in addressing complex subjects. Over the next year the Council will be proactive in detecting emerging issues and attempting to shape the public agenda. A key ingredient to success is the input of those in our denomination with expertise in areas relevant to public policy, such as medical ethics, health and social care, economics and welfare, criminal justice and legal affairs, and the environment. The Council encourages anyone with such expertise interested in getting involved in PCI's work in the public square to contact the Convener.

10. The initial operating model of working mainly through Task Groups has served the Council well in its first year of operation. Consideration is currently being given to future structures and the establishment of more permanent panels to work on subjects with which the Church is likely to find itself regularly involved over the coming years, such as medical and scientific advances.

11. The Council continues to build relationships with those in government and others in civic society. The Council Convener and Public Affairs Officer have accompanied the Moderator and the Clerk in representing the denomination at meetings with parties of the Northern Ireland Executive. To date, meetings have been held with Sinn Féin, the Ulster Unionist Party and the Alliance Party. At these meetings, PCI emphasised the need to tackle poverty, promote reconciliation, improve the quality of public debate and provide adequate support for refugees arriving in Northern Ireland. The Convener also addressed the annual SDLP Party Conference, speaking on the theme of reconciliation. In the year ahead, the Council will continue its engagement in the public square, working particularly hard to establish new contacts in the Oireachtas. Journalists and others working in the public arena have expressed the opinion that the Council's name does not make its role entirely clear to those operating outside Church structures. The

Council is therefore asking the General Assembly to change its name to the Council for Public Affairs.

12. A strategic objective for the Council is to equip members of PCI and others to think Biblically about important issues facing society. To this end, the Council continues its partnership with Union Theological College in organising events under the theme of *The Church in the Public Square (CIPS)*. ‘Economic Hope: a Biblical Roadmap for a Just Society’ and ‘The Future of Our Past: Remembering and Reassessing 1916’ were successful conferences addressing topical issues. The latter conference in particular attracted a large crowd of over 350 people and much media attention. A seminar series on ‘Being Human’ and a major conference on education are the next events planned in the CIPS programme in October/November 2016 and early 2017 respectively. Material from CIPS events is made available online at www.presbyterianireland.org/publicsquare. The Council is aware, however, of the need to further develop how it communicates with and provide relevant and useful resources to those in Congregations. In this regard, accessible materials will be produced relating to the five CIPS conferences held to date.

13. In addition to responding to consultations (see below), the Convener, Secretary and Public Affairs Officer work closely with the Press and Web Officer to ensure that the Church’s voice is heard in the public square. Throughout the year, the Convener has taken part in radio discussions and has written articles which have appeared in various media publications. Whilst the Convener should and will remain a key spokesperson for PCI on public policy issues, it is hoped that a wider team of spokespeople representing the diversity of, and expertise within, PCI can be built up over the years ahead.

Consultations responded to

- Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety’s draft consultation on ‘Co-operating to safeguard children and young people in Northern Ireland’.
- Draft Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.
- Department of Employment and Learning’s ‘The Higher Education Big Conversation’.
- Department of Employment and Learning’s Consultation on Part-time and Postgraduate Student Finance.
- Shared Education Bill (through the TRC).
- Addressing Bullying in Schools Bill (through the TRC).

14. The Council also made a written submission and gave oral evidence to the Northern Ireland Assembly’s Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety on Jo-Anne Dobson MLA’s Human Transplantation Bill. The Bill sought to move Northern Ireland away from the current ‘opt-in’ system of organ donation to a form of ‘soft opt-out’ system with family safeguards. The Bill also sought to place additional duties on the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to promote and increase awareness of transplantation. In responding, the Council emphasised that organ donation is a profoundly Christian act. The Council also urged legislators to affirm and uphold life as a gift. Ultimately, the Bill’s sponsor did not move it forward; however, the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, which at the time of writing is awaiting Royal Assent, places

new duties on the Department of Health to promote transplantation. The Council believes that the Church must play its part in increasing the opportunities for the gift of life to be given through organ and also blood donation.

Action relating to 2015 Resolutions

2015 Resolution	Activity
<p>That the General Assembly affirm their commitment to civil and informed political discourse; acknowledge that fractious and poor quality public debate damages community relations and weakens confidence in political systems; and urge all those who speak in the public square to do so with conviction, knowledge and civility.</p>	<p>The need for civil and informed political discourse has been raised in meetings with political parties and in various press releases and opinion pieces by the Council Convener. The Council will continue to raise this issue at every appropriate and available opportunity.</p>
<p>That the General Assembly encourage the Council for Church in Society to develop partnerships for the common good with other Churches and organisations, whilst maintaining its distinctive voice in the public square.</p>	<p>The Council Convener, Secretary and Public Affairs Officer have met regularly with those of other Churches and organisations. The Public Affairs Officer has made contact and built relationships with his counterparts in various organisations.</p>
<p>That the General Assembly encourage gracious and informed societal and political discussion across Ireland, north and south, about how to develop the concept of reasonable accommodation in law for matters of conscience.</p>	<p>Freedom of conscience has been raised in meetings with political parties and by the Council Convener through the media. The Council's Freedom of Conscience Task Group has produced a paper on conscience which discusses the concept of reasonable accommodation. It is hoped that this comprehensive paper can be further distilled for wider use in the public square.</p>

ABORTION TASK GROUP

The Very Rev Dr Norman Hamilton reports:

15. The Task Group was established to assist the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) in reviewing its position on abortion. A report on abortion was last presented to the General Assembly in 1981 and the following resolutions were passed in 1982:

That the General Assembly declare:

- (a) their opposition to abortion on demand for purely social reasons, or as a means of birth control;
- (b) that in exceptional cases, where medical abortion might be necessary, the most stringent safeguards should be provided to prevent abuse;
- (c) that much greater emphasis should be placed on the provision of adequate care by Church and State for those with unwanted pregnancies, and for the infants when they are born.

16. This is PCI's current position. Although these resolutions were agreed over a generation ago, the theological and ethical issues surrounding abortion remain basically unchanged. Nevertheless, the task of Biblical, theological and moral reflection is an ongoing one and we have to be attentive to changing circumstances in medicine, law and society.

17. The report presented here is occasioned by developments in relation to abortion law in Northern Ireland. Against the background of a consultation on amending the criminal law on abortion launched by the Department of Justice in 2014, the High Court of Justice in Northern Ireland ruled on 30th November 2015 that NI abortion law breaches Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, by failing to provide an exception to the prohibition on abortion in cases of 'fatal foetal abnormality' (FFA) and pregnancies due to rape and incest ("sexual crime").¹ Appeals have been lodged against this ruling. Subsequently, on 10th February 2016, amendments to the Justice (No. 2) Bill designed to legalise abortion on grounds of FFA and sexual crime were voted down by the Northern Ireland Assembly. On 25th March 2016, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety published Guidance on the termination of pregnancy, following its approval by the Northern Ireland Executive. The Guidance states that '[t]he law in Northern Ireland does not allow interventions that have as their sole purpose the ending of the life of the fetus'. Rather, any intervention must only be carried out to preserve the life of the mother, which has been interpreted by the courts as including protection against 'real and serious' and 'permanent or long term' physical or mental health issues.² This is for a medical practitioner to assess on a case by case basis.³ The Guidance further states that

[f]etal abnormality, including an abnormality which inevitably means that the fetus will not survive, is not in itself grounds for a termination of pregnancy in Northern Ireland. However the impact of fetal abnormality on a woman's physical or mental health may be a factor to be taken into account when a health professional makes an assessment of a woman's clinical condition and recommends options for her ongoing care.⁴

1 The Court ruling cannot be reduced to this, of course, but this was at its heart and is our present concern. The full judgement and a summary are available at www.courtsni.gov.uk.

2 Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, *Guidance for Health and Social Care Professionals on Termination of Pregnancy in Northern Ireland* (March, 2016) pp.3, 5, 6.

3 *Ibid.*, p.5.

4 *Ibid.*, p.7.

18. At the time of writing, the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety has begun the process of establishing a working group to consider and make recommendations regarding FFA.

19. The paper attached as Appendix 1, we do not address the legal question before the courts, which is the relationship of the provisions of the abortion law in NI to the stipulations of the European Convention on Human Rights. Rather, it is confined to theological and moral reflection, with the aim of helping PCI to set out its position on abortion, particularly in relation to the proposed changes to NI law mentioned above.

20. It is important to make three observations from the outset. Firstly, although the paper does not discuss General Assembly declaration (c) above this is not a sign that it is comparatively unimportant.⁵ On the contrary, a Church which emphasises theological reflection and makes personal care secondary is scarcely worth listening to. We cannot emphasise too strongly how futile it is to express our views on abortion if our Churches do not strive to be communities of love. In its contributions in the public square, PCI has sought to emphasise the importance of comprehensive care in the perinatal period for women facing crisis pregnancies. As a denomination, we have stressed that ‘a key issue...is the provision of comprehensive care in every part of Northern Ireland for every woman facing a pregnancy crisis’ and ‘if we truly want Northern Ireland to be a place that affirms life, wellbeing and human dignity, then providing excellent perinatal care services, including practical, emotional and spiritual support, must be a top priority.’⁶ We recognise and commend the medical personnel, charities and voluntary organisations that work to make this vision a reality. We also acknowledge the support provided to women and their families by Churches both directly and through the funding of local pregnancy support services. There is, however, a perception that Church and State can and must do more. Whilst it is not within the remit of this Task Group to address the question of the provision of support for women, this is an issue that warrants further consideration.

21. Secondly, although it is our responsibility to reflect dispassionately on the issues involved, not a line of our paper is written in a spirit of detachment. We are well aware of the deep human pain and tragedies with which we are concerned and what we say is said with that constantly in mind.

22. Thirdly, and connected with this, we believe that our paper will be cogent only if the reality of abortion and the stories of women who have gone through or refrained from going through it are heard and heeded not as a kind of appendix to theological reflection but as a context for it.⁷ These include stories of male pressure on women to have an abortion. Indeed, it has been argued by some feminists that a liberal abortion policy is a means by which men can exploit and

5 We recognise here that although declaration (c) of 1982 refers to ‘unwanted pregnancies’, we must be mindful of our phraseology, as in many cases a pregnancy will have been ‘wanted’ but an abortion is ultimately sought due to, for example, the distress caused by the unborn child being diagnosed with a life-limiting condition.

6 www.presbyterianireland.org/News/Article/2015/High-Court-ruling-on-Abortion

7 One resource for these stories is www.careconfidential.com

manipulate women.⁸ We are well aware that this is only one perspective, but in a cultural climate where the abortion debate is so often publicly presented in terms of a collision between women's rights and religious perspectives, it is important to bear it in mind.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND RECONCILIATION TASK GROUP

Mr Edgar Jardine, Convener, reports:

23. As the twentieth anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement approaches, it is hard to deny that our society has in many ways changed for the better. Yet one only has to look at the demeaning and scornful language often used in public debate to see the distrust and animosity that remains between those of different political traditions. Some in the public square have spoken of the need for 'reconciliation', and over the autumn and winter months the Task Group has been considering what this might look like in theological and political terms. This work is ongoing. The Task Group's actions to date can be divided into three strands:

24. First, if the Church is to speak on this issue, the Task Group felt it important, useful and appropriate that PCI reaffirm its commitment to building a more peaceful society. The Task Group is therefore bringing to the Assembly a revised version of the 1994 Peace Vocation entitled 'Vision for Society' (attached as Appendix 2), which it is asking the Assembly to accept as a basis for action in the public square by the denomination, Presbyteries and Congregations. The Task Group believes that the statement will send a strong and positive message to political parties and others that the Church is committed to playing its part in helping to build better relationships in civic life and in local communities. Without being prescriptive, it is hoped that Presbyteries and Congregations will also reflect on the statement and take appropriate steps that are open to them in their situation.

25. Second, the Task Group has sought to identify opportunities for the Council to speak on the issue of reconciliation in the public domain. Members of the Task Group have worked closely with the Council Convener in preparing articles for publication in various media outlets and his speech to the SDLP Party Conference in November 2015. Discussion has taken place about reconciliation with representatives from different political parties and it is hoped that this work can be further developed over the year ahead.

26. Third, the Task Group is considering the possibility of organising several civic forum events at venues across Northern Ireland to open up discussion about how to 'make Northern Ireland work for the common good'. It is envisaged that this could be beneficial in bringing people with different constitutional aspirations together to discuss mutual values and hopes for the future. This idea is at a rudimentary stage and, at the time of writing, the Task Group is consulting those with expertise in community relations work to establish the potential contribution, usefulness and feasibility of such events.

8 See John Wyatt, *Matters of Life and Death: Human dilemmas in the light of Christian faith* (Nottingham: IVP, 2009) 146-147.

DEALING WITH THE PAST TASK GROUP

The Rev Tony Davidson reports:

27. The failure to find a consensus on dealing with the past as part of the Fresh Start Agreement exposed again the continuing hurt and pain of many people affected by 'The Troubles', and the reality that in Northern Ireland we still have sectarian memories as well as sectarian communities. Not only is there no agreement in the public space about what happened during the Troubles, there is also no consensus about how we can go about finding a shared history. Recent conversations around what occurred one hundred years ago in 1916 have further highlighted the lack of agreement in this regard.

28. As a Church we are called to be peacemakers in the place and time where God has called us. We have one Lord, one King and Head of the Church, Jesus Christ. All our memories should be interpreted through his life, death and resurrection. Moreover, as Christians we have a future when God will establish a Kingdom of peace, justice and truth in his new creation. We are called by grace to work for and in that new Kingdom. Therefore, will we wait for others to make progress in dealing with the past? Or will we take the risk of prophetically and pastorally examining our own history, and offering what emerges for the benefit of our Church, the wider Church and the common good?

Proposal: A research project, coordinated by the Council for Church in Society, to address the question 'How did Presbyterians respond to the Troubles?'

29. The project aims to uncover a wider story about Presbyterian responses to the Troubles than has to date been available, to recognise that which is good, and to identify and reflect upon the times when we failed to be faithful peacemakers. Doing so will enable us to contribute more effectively to the wider societal discussion on dealing with the past.

30. The Task Group believes that the Council's first priority should be given to those who are connected to our Church and who have first-hand experience of being victims and survivors of the Troubles. Those who have been bereaved, injured, or post-traumatically stressed often provide the most valuable insights into the pain and suffering of Jesus. Experienced members of the Council for Church in Society, and of the denomination generally, will be identified who can listen carefully to victims and survivors of the Troubles, after having been given some guidance on to how best to do so. Listening offers our denomination an opportunity to see where further energies can be placed to respond to need, and also to see its own shortcomings in care and response. The Task Group is open to suggestions as to how the Council might make contact with victims and survivors in such a way that they will be encouraged to tell their stories within the fellowship of our Church environment. The Council will, of course, also discuss with victims and survivors how best they want their stories to be recorded, and whether they wish those stories to be in the public domain.

31. Secondly, the Task Group knows that many Ministers were involved in pastoring victims and survivors, engaging with paramilitaries, visiting in hospitals and prisons, and in peacebuilding work that often held back violence. Beyond these stories are those of many other Presbyterians including health

and social care workers, members of the security services and those who were involved in paramilitary organisations. These experiences are often overlooked in the way in which the past is addressed. Recording these stories will enable PCI to see its own history, successes, failures and participation in both peacemaking and sectarianism. If this material is gathered, it will also contribute to the proposed archive of the Troubles, enable PCI to self-reflect and build trust in the public square, and help our wider society to address the legacy of the past. Urgency is needed if this task is to be taken forward, for whilst many with first-hand experiences are still able to communicate them, memories will fade and may soon be lost forever.

32. Individual responses will include stories gathered from many Presbyterians, including:

- Ministers;
- Chaplains;
- Youth Workers;
- Health and social care professionals, others who worked in other emergency services, and first responders;
- The security services i.e. RUC, UDR, Army;
- Prison Officers;
- Politicians;
- Members of the Loyal Orders;
- Those involved in paramilitary organisations; and
- Others who might be identified.

33. There will be a wide geographical base, ensuring that the experiences of Presbyterians from the border areas and those in the Republic of Ireland are included.

34. To enable PCI to fully reflect on how Presbyterians responded to the Troubles, people outside the denomination will also be listened to i.e. those critical friends who are able and willing to share their perceptions of our response.

35. Through these listening and recording exercises, and using other relevant and appropriate sources, a coherent historical record will be produced as the basis for the publication of a book, and for other 'conference type' events. Individual and denominational responses will be included. Denominational responses will include the work of the former Church and Government Committee and other Committees, and formal statements such as the Coleraine Declaration and the Peace Vocation.

36. The Council for Church in Society will seek the help of sympathetic local academics to help shape the interview questions and provide ongoing analysis on the emerging stories. The Task Group also believes that within the Church there are those who can be called on to help write the core narratives and analyses that are needed, and the Council will be asking others to help in this task.

37. Apart from the costs of publishing the book, the costs involved in this project are very minimal, and book sales should minimise even this outlay. The aim is to complete the work within 18 months. With sensitive listening, writing and editing, the Task Group believes that much of the material gathered could be made available to the Church and wider public, which will help all to identify areas for change and celebrate that which is good.

FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE TASK GROUP

The Rev John Kirkpatrick, Convener, reports:

38. At different periods in history circumstances have arisen that call for reassertion and restatement of core Christian values. The day in which we are now living is such a time. What once we assumed as normative values and principles are now being challenged, questioned and in some cases removed altogether. While this should not surprise nor alarm Christian people, as it has ever been so in the flow of history, it has exercised the minds of those charged with engagement in what has been called the public square.

39. Regularly the Church must define what it believes in new contexts. This is needed to give encouragement and assistance to those who find themselves in direct conflict, or potentially so, with societal norms. As our society has recently debated the place of conscience in public life, PCI has been given the opportunity to speak out on this important issue. As our denomination encouraged a comprehensive and grace-filled discussion about how to manage the moral and religious diversity of contemporary society, we needed to further develop our own thinking on these matters. The Council for Church in Society established a Task Group to help the Church to do so.

40. The Task Group met on several occasions from mid-2015 to March 2016 and produced a paper on 'Freedom of Conscience' (attached as Appendix 3). It is the Task Group's prayer that the paper will be of help to the members of the PCI and others who are seeking to think Christianly about the big issues facing us now and in coming days. It is also hoped that the paper can be distilled to create further resources for use by the Church in its communication with others in the public square, and for consideration by Church members.

STATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

41. The State Education Committee (SEC) has met formally on three occasions since the last General Assembly, with sub-committee meetings held to expedite responses to government policy consultations.

42. The work of the Committee has been within three broad areas:

Issues to and from the Transferors' Representative Council (TRC)

43. Mr Andy Brown (SEC Convener), Mr Gavin Norris (Public Affairs Officer), the Rev Trevor Gribben (Clerk), the Rev Dr Colin McClure and Mr Uel McCrea have continued to contribute to the work of the TRC Executive throughout the year. The TRC continues to represent the policy interests of PCI, the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church, and has considered the following issues throughout the year:

- Support for the delivery of Religious Education in schools;
- Training and support for Transferor Governors;
- Areas of mutual interest with representatives of Roman Catholic education, including Jointly Managed Church Schools;
- Transfer to post-primary education;

- Educational disadvantage and underachievement, with particular reference to Protestant working-class boys;
 - The roles and work of the Controlled Schools' Support Council and the Education Authority, and selection of the Churches' nominees to the above and to the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland;
 - The increasing difficulties faced by teachers, principals and governors regarding the role of the Christian faith in education;
 - The role of collective worship in schools.
44. The TRC responded to two consultations:
- In its submission to the NI Assembly Committee for Education on the Shared Education Bill, the TRC suggested the potential for much good in terms of educational outcomes, efficient and effective use of resources, and the promotion of good relations and community cohesion. However, concern was raised at potential of the inclusion of socio-economic factors in the definition of shared education to limit the effectiveness of its primary aim. The submission also highlighted the absence of any reference to bodies which support schools, such as the Controlled Schools' Support Council, and reminded the Committee for Education of the important role that such bodies play.
 - In commenting on the Addressing Bullying in Schools Bill, TRC welcomed the introduction of the Bill and reiterated the need for schools to be places of safety and welcome for all children and young people. The submission sought some clarification around the roles of governors, asked for detailed guidance to be issued, and considered that more work was needed on how to address bullying through social media and other electronic communication.

Further and Higher Education (FE and HE)

45. The SEC believes that it is of great importance that PCI has a clear and strong voice in the debate over FE and HE, and has therefore placed this area as a standing item on its agenda.

46. In its response to the Department of Employment and Learning's (DEL) consultation on part-time and post-graduate student finance, the SEC challenged the somewhat narrow references to HE in economic terms, highlighting the importance of HE in sustaining, developing and renewing communities through the transfer of knowledge, encouragement of examination and critique, and promotion of moral and ethical virtues. The Committee also outlined the Church's view that part-time and post-graduate provision is a matter of social justice, extending to the disadvantaged the substantial benefits that a university education can provide. Furthermore, the response cited research suggesting that high numbers of students bear severe financial worries and impressed upon DEL concerns over the normalisation of debt.

47. A sub-group of the SEC met to discuss and submit a response through the Council to the DEL Minister's *Big Conversation*, in which concern was expressed at the potential 'brain-drain' which could result from further disinvestment in the FE and HE sectors. It called for a more strategic, coherent and long-term approach to policy, citing the loss of key university departments and a lack of joined-up thinking with other government departments. The response recognised the flexible

nature of the FE sector and the potential, if adequately funded, to further deliver skills so clearly needed by the local economy. The response also stressed the importance of access to FE and HE, especially through Widening Participation, and reiterated its concern about current and future levels of student debt.

48. The SEC is committed to developing its understanding of the important issues and building a network of relationships in this area of public policy. Accordingly, senior officials from the FE and HE sectors will be invited to brief the Committee over the next year.

Issues from Members

49. As representatives appointed from across PCI with a range of expertise and experience within the field of education, the members of the SEC have been instrumental in raising areas of importance which are relevant to the Committee's work. Some of these have formed the bases for future meetings, with the Convener and Public Affairs Officer sourcing appropriate resources in the form of documentation and presentations to facilitate discussion, whilst some have been taken on for discussion at the TRC. Issues considered by the Committee and/or TRC in this regard include:

- Equality of access to education: Dr Brian Cummins of the A3 Centre at Stranmillis University College gave an engaging presentation on widening participation, speaking of the need for a broader strategic framework and approach, and of greater parental involvement, positive male role models and a multi-agency approach. He emphasised the need for mind-set change in communities away from the belief that achievement is impossible;
- The roles and responsibilities of PCI Ministers within local schools;
- The roles and responsibilities of PCI members who act as Transferor Governors;
- The delivery of Religious Education in schools, with particular reference to the primary sector;
- Educational disadvantage in Protestant communities: Following an approach from the Progressive Unionist Party, the party's Deputy Leader, Dr John Kyle, addressed the Committee on their paper *Firm Foundations*, which highlights the issue of educational disadvantage and underachievement in Protestant working class communities;
- The ethos of state education: In addressing this issue, there was much discussion around the introduction of the new Controlled Schools' Support Council. Members are keen to be well informed about the work of the CSSC and, at the time of writing, have arranged for its Chairman to give a comprehensive briefing to the Committee at its next meeting on the role and work of the body, particularly with regard to ethos.

50. The SEC is conscious of its role as part of the Council for Church in Society, which has been tasked by the General Assembly with building partnerships for the common good. The Committee also wants to ensure that education remains a high priority on the public agenda. Therefore, at the time of writing, the Committee is in the early stages of planning a *Church in the Public Square* conference for early 2017 focused on education.

51. It is a key element of the SEC's strategy to build relationships with others working on education issues in the public square. The Convener recently attended a conference in Leicester on Collective Worship in Schools, has been a panel member and workshop facilitator at a Scripture Union NI conference on Schools' Ministry, and delivered the address at the opening service of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers National Conference in Liverpool. The Public Affairs Officer has attended a number of briefings and events, and has also appeared in front of the NI Assembly Committee for Education to give evidence on the Shared Education Bill. The Convener and Committee wish to record their warmest thanks to Gavin for all of his work for and on behalf of the SEC.

52. God is definitely at work in NI education at this time, with a number of conversations, discussions, reports, conferences and events all happening concurrently between a range of Christian stakeholders. He is moving people with a heart for education to keep Him at the forefront of their life and work and it is our prayer that the work of the State Education Committee has and will continue to contribute to this in a faithful and effective manner.

ANDREW BROWN, Convener

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND PANEL

The Very Rev Dr Trevor Morrow reports:

53. Presbyterians are a small minority in the Republic. We have islands of strength around the border counties of Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan and in the greater Dublin area but in Munster and Connaught our numbers are few. Nevertheless, we are honoured as having had a distinctive influence by our presence and witness. The Panel is seeking to build upon that historic acceptance by making credible witness to Christ and his kingdom in an increasingly secular context. Our love for our neighbour and our call to bless them has been the driving influence. The Panel has met on three occasions since its establishment in September 2015. It has chosen a number of areas in which the values of the kingdom of God can be demonstrated as being beneficial not only to followers of Christ but to civil society.

Education

54. An Education Subgroup has been established made up of members with a professional background and/or academic interest in education. At the time of writing, the Subgroup is working on a number of projects, including:

- developing the idea of an 'Education Sunday' to highlight the importance of education, and to show and celebrate the involvement of Church members in education;
- encouraging prayer for students, teachers and schools throughout the year; and
- developing a well-produced video on the theme of Christian faith in education.

55. Mr Johnston Reid also produced a paper for the Subgroup and Panel entitled 'A Presbyterian Ethos', looking at the importance of Christian ethos in school life.

Health

56. A discussion about how to bless others in the area of health led the Panel to focus on the needs of older people. At the time of writing, the Panel is actively exploring, with the Council for Social Witness, the possibility of a new sheltered housing project in the Republic.

Agriculture

57. The Panel is aware of some of the difficulties facing those in rural communities, particularly those who farm. With Ireland, north and south, heavily dependent on food exports, the impact of international developments such as the Russian import ban and economic slowdown in China can take its toll. Extreme weather and rural isolation also pose significant challenges. In early April 2016, the Panel arranged for the Moderator to visit Ballyhaise Agricultural College in County Cavan to hear first-hand from farmers and other rural community representatives about the challenges they face. Following this visit, the Panel is better informed and hopes to raise appropriate issues with government in due course following further consideration. A project to emphasise the value of food and look at food sustainability is also under consideration by the Panel.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

58. The Panel is aware of the desperate situation facing many who have come to our shores, particularly those who have spent many years in holding centres. At the time of writing, the Panel is seeking the advice of experts to help to determine what action can be taken to bless those affected.

APPENDIX 1

ABORTION

The question of abortion: principles

1. The report submitted to the General Assembly in 1981 included a survey both of Biblical principles and the historical position of the Churches before considering the argument for abortion (a) where the mother's life was in danger unless it was performed, (b) in the case of rape and (c) in the case of fetal abnormality. On the basis of a report presented to the General Assembly on the 'Government Inquiry into Human Fertilisation and Embryology', a resolution was also agreed in 1985 '[t]hat the General Assembly accept the position that human life begins at conception and therefore believe that from that moment the human embryo should be treated in a manner in accordance with full human dignity'.

2. Obviously, attitudes towards abortion within Presbyterian Churches, as within other Churches and wider society, have developed over the last three decades. There is a diversity of viewpoints within our Churches today. However, it would clearly be wrong to allow the fact of diversity to determine the position of

the Church on any matter of principle. No Church can credibly allow its position to be determined by the whole range of views expressed by its members at any given point in time. These views are frequently in conflict with each other, so a Church steered by the views of its members could hold no definite position at all on abortion. We believe that it is our responsibility to try to set forth a coherent, persuasive, Biblically and theologically faithful account of our position.

3. Our basic theological conviction in PCI, as expressed above, embraces both a principle and an inference on the basis of the principle. The principle is that human life begins at conception. The inference is that the human embryo should be treated 'in a manner in accordance with full human dignity'. In this report, we proceed to take these two things separately. Firstly, can we maintain the principle that human life begins at conception?⁹ In answering this, we note the fact that some argue that this is primarily a scientific, and not a religious, question. The biological fact is that when the male sperm fertilises the female ovum, a new organism is conceived, the zygote formed and the genotype established. From conception, the new organism has the innate capacity to develop into adulthood. However we describe the relation between scientific and religious explanations, we believe that Biblical and scientific perspectives on the beginning of life are entirely harmonious. Although Biblical writers lacked our biological knowledge, this does not affect either the validity or the relevance of what they say. When the psalmist said that the Lord had 'formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb' (139:13), he was referring to that which was in the body of the mother. What he thought exactly did or did not happen inside her body does not matter. Contemporary science refers in biologically specific terms to the entity to which the psalmist was referring in more general, but still perfectly concrete, terms. The Bible makes occasional mention of children in the womb: Jeremiah 1: 5 and Luke 1: 44 are amongst the texts often cited in this connection and, of course, the miraculous conception of Jesus refers to his intra-uterine life. However, the Biblical writers do not deal with abortion. The celebrated reference to miscarriage caused by physical conflict in Exodus 21:22-25, whether read in its Greek (LXX) or Hebrew version, informs us about the penal code at an early stage in the life of ancient Israel and we cannot infer from it a general principle about the status of the child. We do not enter here into the history of Christian thought on abortion and the status of the unborn child, which includes a range of material from strong condemnation of abortion in the early Christian centuries to medieval speculation about when the soul enters the body of the fetus, to which differing answers might be given, dependent on whether it was a male or female child.

4. In describing the being which or who is in the body of the mother, sometimes our language needs to be precise; sometimes, not. If we wish to be precise, we must be cautious about the way in which we speak about the fertilised ovum. Living human beings can do what the psalmist did and trace their beginning back to their conception. We project backwards from the point of view of a developed human life. However, not all fertilised ova are implanted in the womb and proceed to further human development. Many fertilised ova are flushed out of the mother's body soon after fertilisation without her being aware of it; indeed, it is possible for menstruation to proceed uninterrupted after the

9 'Conception' and 'fertilisation' are not distinguished in this report: the union of sperm and ovum may be described in either way.

fertilisation and subsequent loss of the ovum. In such a case, it surely places a strain on our language if we refer to the fertilised ova flushed out as 'persons'. Furthermore, a fertilised ovum can divide into two (or more) and this results in identical twins. It would be strange to speak of one person becoming two persons. Again, much of the tissue of which the early embryo consists does not enter into the later composition of the fetus. For these reasons, we should question the appropriateness of speaking unreservedly of the fertilised ovum as 'a person' or 'an individual human being'. Although we shall later have occasion to ask about the theological significance of this, at this juncture our point here is essentially semantic. This is of the first importance. We do not subscribe to those ways of making a distinction between embryos and proper persons which deny that, from conception, we are dealing with human life. We definitely reject the position that, in order to count as a person, certain faculties, such as a formed brain, have to be in place and to be functional. In this respect, we reject the distinction between human life and personhood. Questions of biological classification or taxonomy are complex. Nevertheless, it remains broadly true to say that in our working understanding of the world, we think in terms of different *kinds* of things of which the world is made up – rivers and trees, cats and apes.¹⁰ The heading under which the fertilised ovum belongs is that of 'humankind', whatever then takes place after fertilisation. To be begotten of human parents is to partake of human form. It is inaccurate to describe the fertilised ovum as *potentially* human because it is *actually* something and that something is properly described as an embryonic form of human being. We conclude that the principle adopted by PCI that 'human life begins at conception' is consistent with both a Biblical perspective and biological science.

5. The more demanding task, to which we now turn, is the task of asking what is involved in treating the being which has been conceived 'in a manner which is in accordance with full human dignity'. We noted above that the position of PCI is that there are circumstances in which abortion may be permitted and that this is compatible with treating the embryo 'in a manner which is in accordance with full human dignity'. These circumstances were not specified in the relevant Assembly resolution. Circumstances are mentioned and discussed in the 1981 report, but neither the resolution adopted at the 1982 Assembly nor the later resolution adopted in 1985 committed it to all the views expressed in the 1981 report. In referring to these, we are not assuming that the Church must always remain bound to its past: clearly, it is always our responsibility to think and re-think in the present, whatever positions have traditionally been adopted in PCI. Our reason for alluding to the official position of PCI is to indicate the continuity between the substance of its official position and the matters which occupy us today.

6. The present call for provision for abortion in NI to be extended to cases of (a) FFA and (b) rape or incest makes no reference to the question of abortion in situations where it is widely accepted, that is, where the life of the mother is under threat.¹¹ There is provision for abortion in that event in the current

10 Although the account of creation in Genesis uses the language of 'kind' (e.g., 1: 11), the meaning of the Hebrew word cannot be assimilated into standard biological or philosophical meanings.

11 Fatal fetal abnormality (FFA) is sometimes called 'Lethal fetal abnormality' (LFA). It is a sub-set of 'Serious malformation of the fetus' (SMF).

legislation in NI which permits it both where ‘it is necessary to preserve the life of the woman’ and where ‘there is a risk of real and serious adverse effect on her physical or mental health, which is either long term or permanent’. Here, we must counter a popular supposition. The supposition is that, when maternal life is under threat, we are confronted with a situation where it is one life or another. With that in view, it may be argued that, along with the physical ability for us to make a choice in this situation, we should accept that there exists also a moral right to choose to take the life of the unborn child, because life may be taken in order to preserve a life – the tragic circumstance has arisen where the progress of the unborn child unwittingly endangers the life of the mother to which the child owes his or her existence.¹² In clinical reality, the situation is different. It is only extremely rarely a case of *either* mother *or* baby dying. It is a case of *either* mother *and* baby dying or the baby alone dying. In that situation, direct action with the intention or foreseen effect of taking the life of the unborn baby is justified.¹³ While this is not currently at issue, we mention it as an ‘exceptional circumstance’ where we judge abortion justified. The cases of fetal abnormality and sexual crime (rape and incest) are the judicially and politically relevant cases in NI at this stage and it is to these that we now turn.

Fatal fetal abnormality

7. The public debate on abortion in NI and the rest of Europe is shaped largely by notions of human rights. It is true that attitudes towards abortion are often described in terms of ‘compassion’ and those who address abortion in terms of ‘rights’ generally assume that compassionate instincts will help to steer our ideas about rights.¹⁴ However, it is the collision between the perceived right of a woman to have an abortion and the current restriction on abortion provision under NI law which shapes the present discussion. Some voices warn us that the contemporary vocabulary of ‘rights’ stands in tension with a Christian outlook.¹⁵ We sympathise with this. Certainly, to talk of the relative or competing rights of a mother and child can reflect the breakdown of a sense of organic family and social unity; we have become atomised individuals related to each

12 In this situation, we should not be saying that the life of the unborn child *must* be taken in such a situation, as though it were an obligation, only that it is permitted.

13 Arguments here often take into account relatively complex questions surrounding the distinction between intention and foresight, introducing the principle of ‘double effect’. See, e.g., Teresa Iglesias, *The Dignity of the Individual: Issues of Bioethics and Law* (Dublin: Pleroma, 2001) chapter 6. To avoid unnecessary complexity at this point and allow for different points of view, we adopt the formulation ‘intention or foreseen effect’ in our text.

14 If we had space to expand on this, we should note the broad, but definite, shift in the language used over the years by those who advocate a liberalisation of laws in relation to beginning and end of life issues from appeal to ‘compassion’ to an appeal to ‘rights’.

15 See Joan Lockwood O’Donovan, ‘The Concept of Rights in Christian Moral Discourse’ in Michael Cromartie, ed., *A Preserving Grace: Protestants, Catholics, and Natural Law* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1997). For wise caution and discussion of human rights as ‘an emergency measure’, see Helmut Thielicke, *Theological Ethics*, volume 2: *Politics* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1979) 232.

other through legal mechanisms.¹⁶ It misrepresents the way in which the large majority of mothers perceive their relationship with their unborn child, with their deep instincts of care. 'Rights' language is singularly inappropriate here; we are unnaturally pitting a mother's interests over against those of the child by the use of such language. At all events, the language of rights should never marginalise the language of responsibility, whether we are speaking of the responsibilities of the mother or of the State with respect to the unborn child. It is under these conditions that we grant the propriety of 'rights' language, bearing in mind that secular and religious uses may overlap but not be identical in light of our belief that human rights are God-given. Those who both accept that 'rights' language is appropriate and oppose extending abortion to cases either of FFA, rape or incest appeal to the rights of the unborn child or fetus. While Christian thought must clearly be governed by Christian principles, we should challenge those who leap to the conclusion that our beliefs about the rights involved in abortion depend entirely on whether we proceed from a religious or a secular point of view. There are two reasons for this challenge. Firstly, where people with a religious conviction object to mothers claiming the right to abort on the grounds that they have the right to do what they want with their own bodies, they insist that it is not a matter of religion, just a matter of scientific fact, to say that the fetus is not a part of the mother's body. Obviously, no one is disputing the biological facts of the intra-uterine mother-child connection; equally obviously, the fetus has a brain and circulatory system. Secondly, there are secular, non-religious feminists who oppose abortion. Both religious and secular perspectives may be adopted in more or in less informed ways, unthinkingly or thoughtfully. While it is our responsibility in this report to assist PCI in setting out its position on controversial questions surrounding abortion, it would be a mistake to regard our perspective as merely or exclusively 'religious'. A Christian perspective on abortion both takes into account the uncontestable scientific facts and seeks to reason rightly and wisely.

8. In Christian perspective, human rights are ultimately God-given rights, since God is the universal Creator. 'The Christian respect for life is first of all a statement, not about life, but about God.'¹⁷ Some argue that, unless we believe that there is a Creator, no coherent or convincing account of human rights is possible; where that belief is absent, human rights amount to no more than the product of human constructions, lacking any objective grounding in the true nature or value of humans, including unborn children. It is not a debate into which we enter here. The belief that human rights are bestowed by God, the Creator, underlies the following considerations, even if many of the points that we make will command the agreement of some who do not subscribe to this belief and even if we bear in mind the qualification of 'rights' language mentioned above.

9. In holding together both (a) the principle that the human embryo should be treated from conception 'in accordance with full human dignity' and (b) that there are exceptional cases in which medical abortion may be permissible, PCI accepts the obvious fact that calling someone 'human' does not always resolve the question of rights. This is obviously a general truth, whether or not we are

16 See Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: toward a constructive Christian social ethic* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981) 171.

17 Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 226.

dealing with matters of life and death. A ten-year old child is human, but it does not follow that it has the rights of an eighteen-year old to vote; here we correlate rights to *stage* or *capacity*. In matters of life and death, those who (rightly or wrongly) condone capital punishment do not question the humanity of the person convicted of capital crime, but they deny that his or her right to life is absolute. Here, a right is related to *desert* or *behaviour* rather than to stage. These examples are not completely irrelevant digressions. They remind us that calling the embryo, fetus or unborn child a human being cannot be translated immediately into an absolute right to life *just because* of the humanity. We must argue cautiously. However, the purpose of this reminder is simply to encourage us to avoid loose talk. Obviously, neither example directly promotes a case for abortion. A right to vote is not the same as a right to life, the latter being the ground of all other rights. In the case of capital punishment – whether or not we support it – we presume guilt; in the case of the unborn child or fetus, its innocence is axiomatic. Abortion is the taking of innocent human life.

10. The criterion currently legislatively proposed for regarding a given case as a case of FFA is the inability of the fetus to survive independently of the mother beyond an indefinitely short while after she has given birth. In the Consultation mentioned at the beginning of our report, the Department of Justice emphasised that its consultation pertained only to ‘a very narrow range of cases’, these cases being ‘illustrated by the condition of anencephaly’. The phrase ‘illustrated by the condition’ is potentially awkward, for the anencephalic condition may exhibit unique features. For this reason and because of the high profile given to anencephaly in current discussion in Northern Ireland, we add a special word about it in the form of an ‘Added Note’ at the end of this paper. At this point, our discussion is concerned with FFA, as generically understood. Our conviction that human life begins at conception entails that the unborn child in a condition of FFA has the same rights as do other children without FFA and that our responsibility towards the child with FFA is one with our responsibility towards any unborn child. We recall here what we said at the beginning of the report about its emotional underpinning: it goes without saying that we are dealing with an agonising situation for the mother. Yet, we hold that the taking of a child’s life in general cases of FFA cannot be justified. Of course, we accept the propriety of medical intervention which has the foreseen effect of shortening life when the intention is the alleviation of pain. This is a general moral principle which applies across the board, including to unborn life. The unborn child for whom we are responsible comes before us not only in his or her individuality as the child that he or she is, but also as a member of the human race, conceived in solidarity with it, an unwitting and tragic bearer of the rights (if we choose to use that word) belonging to its kind.¹⁸ In refusing to take the life even of the child doomed shortly to die, simply on the grounds of its serious or fatal malformation, we pay proper homage to our co-humanity, honour its Creator and respect the sadly malformed creation. It is true that the process of giving birth is often arduous and we appreciate the *prima facie* force of the argument that abortion should be permitted in order to obviate the need to give birth in a case where the child will not survive. However, whatever the rights of the mother, they reach

18 If we occasionally use a word like ‘its’ for the unborn child, it is to avoid excessively using the phrase ‘his or her’ and not because of any doubt about its full humanity.

their limit when it comes to taking the life of the child. From the outset, we must accept that the decision to try to have a child or to continue the pregnancy should not be taken only on condition that the fetus possesses or lacks certain attributes.

Sexual Crime

11. In the cases of rape or incest, both (a) the circumstances of the sexual act that leads to pregnancy and (b) the legality of conception raise a distinct set of questions. Where incest is presumed to be consensual, a legal issue arises with respect to the consenting parties, but the illegality of the action does not logically affect the morality of the abortion. Despite the nature of incest, it cannot constitute an independent ground for abortion, simply by virtue of its illegality. Therefore, the question we address is the question of abortion in the case of rape (which, of course, may be incestuous rape). Two closely-associated factors distinguish this situation. The first is that the activity which resulted in pregnancy was non-consensual. The second is that there is a form of violence involved which, in the majority of cases, is intensely traumatising, constituting an attack on the mental and emotional health and not only on the physical body of the victim. Does this constitute an exceptional situation in which abortion is permitted?

12. Quite obviously, discussion of this question must attend to the realities surrounding rape and these include the question of what is or what is not possible in reporting it soon after it has occurred and the legal question of determining and proving whether rape has, in fact, occurred. The moral issue is whether abortion should be allowed on the *presumption* of rape. It may appear that the principles of our discussion up to this point rule out rape as an exceptional circumstance which permits abortion. The argument for categorically ruling it out would go like this. The horror of the offence of rape does not detract from the fact that a human being has been conceived and its rights are unaffected by the circumstances in which it came into existence. The fetus is as innocent as is the mother and it is our responsibility to give every support to the mother and encouragement to carry the pregnancy to term and, if she so wishes, help to make arrangements for the adoption of the child. Although we may agree that the mother bears no moral responsibility for the upbringing or nurture of the child, that does not equate with the right to take the life of the child. Dreadful as the offence has been, the mother's right cannot be extended in these cases to include the right to take the life of the child. Is that not the only position consistent with the approach which we have taken so far? That is certainly a judgement that we could make. The following paragraphs (15-17) represent an alternative line of reasoning which we also believe to be consistent with our theological position.

13. In answering this question, we need to dwell on the reality surrounding heterosexual rape, a reality which men are unable to comprehend properly. Rape is not only criminal; it is a heinous act of intimate violation of a woman's body. It is a flagrant breach of the law of God. A child is formed in the womb in explicit violation of God's command.¹⁹ Of course, this may be the case in

19 This in no way diminishes God's care for the child. On the contrary, when children learn of the circumstances of their conception – whether by rape or a one-night stand – it is vital that we tell them that they are claimed, owned, embraced and loved just as they are by God the Creator. The general question of the relation of God's will to God's command is too big for us to enter into here.

pregnancies where there is no rape, where coitus was consensual but outside the moral boundaries of God's law. (Incest is included here.) It is also true that all sin, whether or not connected with sexual activity, is contrary to that law. However, in the case of rape, we are dealing with a situation where the victim, bearing no responsibility for the outcome of the violation, is violently forced into coitus.²⁰ The woman now has to bear the child in her body; the child, as it is sometimes put, embodies the attack.

14. In this case, it is important that we look more closely at the stages of the unborn life, whatever conclusions we proceed to draw. The argument against taking even the earliest post-coital abortifacients (whether or not we want to use that word) is that this risks taking human life; it is not known whether or not conception has taken place, but it may have.²¹ The combination of sexual violence with uncertainty as to whether an ovum has been fertilised or proceeded to implantation compels us at least to consider a different way of reasoning. We do not for a moment assume that the victim of rape is expected to reason coolly in the following terms and to act immediately in accordance with the reasoning. We simply seek to understand the moral dimensions of this question. Is the following obviously mistaken? 'I am not certain whether there has been conception and, if there has been conception, whether there will be implantation. I do know that I bear no responsibility for any conception that may have or has occurred in violation of the command of God. Uncertainty under *these* circumstances mean that I am, before God, prepared to take responsibility for taking life prior to implantation.' It will be clear to some but not clear to others that Scripture or informed theological reasoning enjoins a sanctity-of-life principle which absolutely forbids anyone to reason in this way. The question is whether we can be sure that the innocent being should *under no circumstances* be deprived of life on account of the father's wrongdoing. Does human life have an unconditional right to protection at *any* stage after conception irrespective of the circumstances of conception? Different answers to this question are consistent with PCI's position.

15. Lest there be misunderstanding, we want to underline that all we are doing here is noting the view that there appears to be no definitive *theological* reason to take steps to ensure the non-implantation of an ovum that may have been fertilised in the case of rape. Women's experience may determine our minds one way or another, particularly when we take into account the sense that some women have of abortion as a violation of their motherhood which compounds the initial violation of rape. The question raised in these two paragraphs was whether reasoning simply on a sanctity-of-life principle resolved all the issues before us. We are well aware of the danger that, if we refuse to foreclose the answer to this question, our reasoning in relation to sexual crime may open the door to 'liberal' positions on abortion which collide with our theological principles. Even if the

20 It is not relevant here to discuss various scenarios, including those where it is difficult to draw the line between consensual sex and rape.

21 We acknowledge that 'abortifacient' is a controversial term because it apparently assumes pregnancy. However, 'contraceptive' is also controversial. If human life begins at conception, there is a moral distinction between taking steps to prevent the fusion of sperm and ovum and taking steps to ensure that, if an ovum has been fertilised, it does not implant.

logic of those who take steps to prevent implantation in the case of rape can hold its ground, have we not made our ground harder to hold and left ourselves open to its occupation by cultural forces which move in an entirely different direction from what we believe to be right with respect to abortion? We feel the force of this objection and underline that, since we are dealing with innocent human life, there is no suggestion here of the propriety of taking life beyond the stage of implantation on the grounds that a sexual crime has been committed.²²

Conclusion

16. We acknowledge that in this paper we have not entered into the debate about women's rights. The reason that we have omitted reference to them is that (a) what is at issue is the right to take human life and (b) the fetus is a human life and not part of a woman's body. This sets limits to the rights of any person, female or male – limits which we standardly acknowledge in the case where a child is born. However, no one should conclude from our report that the well-being of women is irrelevant. On the contrary: not only have we appealed to the place of women's experience, but also we are aware of what often goes under the name of 'post-abortion syndrome', the devastating effects on women in later life of an abortion performed earlier.²³ The way in which women suffer from abortion ought to be foregrounded in this debate. If we have not done so in this report, it is because we have sought to balance the emphasis placed on women's rights in the court judgment which occasions our report with a proper emphasis on the rights of the unborn child.²⁴

17. Although it is necessary for the Church to set forward its position on the social and public issues of the day, a report such as this can convey the wrong impression of Christianity. It is not a system of ideas, principles and arguments. It is a proclamation that the one God who made the world in which we live has entered it in the person of Jesus Christ in order to rescue it from its wrongdoing and misery. The gospel is not the imposition of a set of moral laws on the world, but a revelation of the reality of God, humanity and creation and an announcement of the path to life. Only by the response of repentance and faith, obedience and joy do humans flourish. This conviction undergirds and pervades our report.

18. We recognise that the proposed change in legislation does not aim to open the door to abortion on demand. Yet, it is in order to remind ourselves that when Christianity entered the world, it was distinguished, among other things, by its treatment of the weak and the vulnerable, including children in the womb. It endorsed on its own, distinctive basis a medical tradition going back to Hippocrates which stood firmly against abortion and forged the essentials of a code of medical practice which has informed Western medicine through the

22 In this connection, we commend the sensitivity of such treatments as those of Helmut Thielicke in *Theological Ethics*, volume 3: *Sex* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1979) 246. The whole question of borderline situations in ethics is important: see Thielicke, *Theological Ethics*, volume 1: *Foundations* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1979) chapters 29-31.

23 See, e.g., reference to the 2011 study in the *British Journal of Psychiatry*, cited in Robertson McQuilkin and Paul Copan, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics: Walking in the Way of Wisdom*, 3rd edition (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2014) 377.

24 Sometimes women's rights are described in terms of 'the right to privacy'.

ages.²⁵ Gilbert Meilaender refers to ‘the long and arduous history in which we have slowly learned to value and protect...those who are “least” among us.’²⁶ In recent decades, practices of abortion have been introduced and legalised in the West which have increasingly undermined this tradition and this has gone hand in hand with the growing public conviction that there exists no God who is the giver of human life and the accompanying responsibilities and rights. We commonly decide when and how to dispose of human life without reference to God as its creator. This opens the door to a culture of death.²⁷ Christians are rightly ashamed of the way in which the Christian Church, over the centuries, has often capitulated to the lure of power and control and itself been the agent of violence and oppression. If it summons anyone to penitence and faith, it summons itself in the first place.

19. Northern Ireland has witnessed the abuse and public discrediting of religious belief on a large scale and the Churches can take no pride in it. At the same time, it has preserved standards in the protection of the unborn child which mark it out for good from the rest of the United Kingdom. It should strive to retain those standards and, in this report, we have both sought to explain what we believe those standards should be and to indicate why their preservation matters.

Added note on anencephaly

20. Clinical and scientific difficulties arise here which complicate discussion of this sad question. ‘Anencephaly’ in fact embraces diverse conditions and this is, at least potentially, morally relevant. Let us first take the situation where anencephaly is straightforwardly conceived as an effective condition of brain absence; the anencephalic child might possess a brain stem, but we have no grounds to suppose that there is any cerebral functioning or awareness. Neither sentience nor consciousness nor the capacity for them is present. In such a case, we might legitimately ask whether this constitutes a truly exceptional case which could count as an exceptional ground for abortion. Sentience and the capacity for it are fundamental to our humanity, the brain and the respiratory system being the co-ordinate sources of human life. Anencephaly so described is not rightly bracketed with other cases of FFA where sentience or the capacity for it exists in some form. The anencephalic child is unquestionably human. The question is whether it follows from this that we are correct to speak of its absolute right to anencephalic life or our absolute responsibility to preserve it to the point of birth. We should have to ask precisely what is involved for the mother in carrying the pregnancy to term. The experience of women who have

25 See Nigel Cameron, *The New Medicine: the Revolution in Technology and Ethics* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991). Reference to the Western medical tradition is not meant to demean traditions of Eastern medicine. It is merely a recognition of the context in which we are operating. If space permitted, we should discuss the whole question of the need for the medical profession to retain its own code of ethics in a pluralist society.

26 Meilaender, *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997) 33

27 Many decades ago, Karl Barth, in the context of discussing abortion, felt compelled to speak of ‘what one might almost call the secret and open mass murder’ in which civilization was getting caught up, *Church Dogmatics* III.4 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1961) 417.

or have not brought to term an anencephalic child; the relevance or otherwise of 'post-abortion syndrome' in such cases; the risks associated with giving birth – all these must contribute to our decision on the propriety of abortion in these particular circumstances. Women's experience might lead us either to a firm or to a tentative conclusion one way or another. Particular weight must be given to the natural response of most mothers to their born anencephalic child, which is to hold and express love as they would in the case of any other child. This tangibly expresses the very basic truth that this is, indeed, a human being which may be unable to experience the mother's love but which is rightly its recipient. The deep responses of women are vital to our theological understanding. Nor should we forget the corresponding response of the father.

21. For these reasons, we might formulate our position in one of two ways. We might say (a) that it is difficult to justify an absolute prohibition of the abortion of an anencephalic child solely on the grounds of a theological sanctity-of-life principle, but that this does not amount to a justification for abortion because the experience of women has to be taken into account. Alternatively, we might say (b) that the experience of women who have brought to term an anencephalic child convinces us that a sanctity-of-life principle which precludes justification for abortion in other cases of FFA holds good for the particular case of anencephaly too. Into our thinking on all this, we should need to factor into consideration end-of-life issues: if we give theological weight to a condition where both actual and potential sentience and consciousness are missing, what impact does our reasoning have on our treatment of those who are in some form of 'vegetative state'? What we wish to underline here is the need to take into account the range of experiences which women (and others, including members of the medical profession) have had in connection with anencephalic children.

22. Up to this point, we have specified a particular form of anencephaly. However, there are both cases of anencephaly where all the cerebral tissue is absent and cases where there is some residual tissue. Complex clinical judgements may be involved. It is commonly held that there can be no awareness when there is no functioning cortex and subcortical connections. Yet, can we be sure of this? Anencephalic babies may cry or grimace when there is a stimulus, suck, swallow or open their eyes. There is an informed opinion, although at present a minority one, that this probably indicates some degree of awareness accounted for by deep brain structures without the presence of the cortex. In such a case, we are presumably witnessing a developmental stage in the fetus which, in the normal course of events, is overtaken when cortical activity takes over. Quite obviously, PCI is in no position to make judgements on such questions. It is, however, important to reflect on the limits of scientific confidence. Many will conclude that, if PCI is to reflect consistently on abortion, the question of the unborn child's awareness or otherwise is irrelevant. Others, as we have indicated above, will wonder whether the sanctity of the life of a child in an anencephalic condition, if awareness is categorically impossible, categorically rules out abortion. However, where awareness is possible, the anencephalic child is in the same situation as that of others who are victims of FFA.

APPENDIX 2**‘Vision for Society’ Statement****WE, MEMBERS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND,**

saved by grace
and called by God to grace-filled relationships,
in the power of the Holy Spirit
as ambassadors of Christ’s Kingdom
in a broken and divided world;

BELIEVE that the Good News of Jesus Christ
challenges and equips us
to develop radically new attitudes and relationships
with our neighbours throughout the whole of Ireland.

WE CONFESS our failure
to live as Biblically faithful Christian peacebuilders
and to promote the counter culture of Jesus
in a society where cultures clash.

ACCORDINGLY, WE AFFIRM Christian peacebuilding
to be part of Christian discipleship
and reassert the Church’s calling
to pursue a peaceful and just society in our day

WE SEEK a more reconciled community
at peace with each other,
where friend and foe,
working together for the common good,
can experience healing
and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

APPENDIX 3**FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE****Preamble**

1. Managing moral and religious diversity is one of the most important and difficult challenges facing our society. The legal landscape has changed significantly over the past fifteen to twenty years, and recent high profile cases

demonstrate how the law can come into conflict with religious beliefs.²⁸ These cases have also raised fundamental questions about religious freedom in a pluralist society, and in particular, the extent to which people should be able to exercise freedom of conscience – the freedom to act in accordance with their beliefs – in public life.

2. In 2014, Lady Hale, Deputy President of the UK Supreme Court, stated that in matters of religion and belief, the law may not yet have found a ‘reasonable accommodation’.²⁹ Some argue that a hierarchy of rights exists by which the freedom to manifest one’s beliefs in the public square is almost always trumped when it conflicts with other considerations. Others contend that the law already strikes the right balance in providing for freedom of religion and freedom of conscience, and that no change is needed. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland continues to encourage gracious and informed discussion about how to fairly manage the moral and religious diversity which characterises our contemporary society. The purpose of this paper is to advance that discussion by examining the cultural context in which it takes place, setting out what we mean by ‘freedom of conscience’ from a Christian perspective and making some suggestions on the way forward.

3. In the societal and legal context we have briefly outlined, accusations of persecution have developed. It is important for us to state that whilst it may be becoming more challenging to live as a Christian in the UK and Ireland, Christians are not persecuted here. To suggest that we are minimises the suffering of Christians across the world who are oppressed, imprisoned and murdered because of their faith.

4. We also recognise that questions of conscience and religious freedom are relevant to those of all religions and none. Examples³⁰ of cases involving atheists, Muslims, Jews and others serve as a stark reminder that it is not only Christian consciences that are challenged in countries around the world. Notwithstanding, everyone will approach these questions from a particular worldview, and here we attempt to offer some reflections from a Christian perspective.

5. Finally, we must acknowledge the limitations of our work. Phrases like ‘freedom of conscience’ and ‘freedom of religion’ conjure up complex webs of issues and ideas, and it would be unhelpful if not impossible for us to address them all. Our hope, however, is that this paper will contribute to a richer debate about the role of conscience in public life.

The societal context

6. In the late nineteenth century, Friedrich Nietzsche trumpeted the Death of God and the rejection of Christianity as a source of moral principles, but said

28 See, for example, *Eweida and Others v. The United Kingdom* [2013] ECHR 37; *Bull v. Hall and Preddy* [2013] UKSC 73; *Greater Glasgow Health Board v. Doogan & Anor* [2014] UKSC 68; and *Lee v. Ashers Baking Co Ltd & Anor* [2015] NICty 2.

29 Lecture to the Law Society of Ireland, 13th June 2014. www.supremecourt.uk/docs/speech-140613.pdf

30 See, for examples, ‘Atheism, belief and persecution: The cost of unbelief.’ *The Economist*. December 2014; and the European Court of Human Rights Factsheet on Freedom of Religion (September 2015), available at www.echr.coe.int/Documents/FS_Freedom_religion_ENG.pdf

it would take a long time before the consequences became apparent in society. Globally, Christianity is today one of the fastest growing worldviews. However, the process of secularisation continues apace in Western Europe.³¹ Through this process the values of secularism increasingly predominate. Because of it, our contemporary world increasingly resembles the worldview diversity of New Testament times. The crucial difference is that we live in countries with a Christian heritage dating back more than 1,500 years. Christian values still influence our laws and our culture. On the island of Ireland, this tradition remains strong. Yet the Christian faith no longer occupies the position of influence it once did. Globalisation and increased freedom of movement have made our society more plural, with a broader spectrum of religious and other philosophical beliefs. Whilst respect for diversity is preached, those wanting to participate in certain areas of public life are expected to abide by secular norms. Secular humanism, which in practice trumps all other worldviews, religions and belief systems, is diffused through the media and general culture, and through a humanistic understanding of human rights.

7. 'Religion' is widely regarded as irrational and subjective, based on claims that cannot be proven. It is therefore unsuitable to give guidance in public life. In contrast, secularism is seen to embrace science, logic and reason alone, providing objective knowledge with which to order society. Secularism therefore becomes equated with neutrality and is understood as a solid foundation from which to manage public affairs in the midst of an often problematic pluralism.³² As Frederick Gedicks observed:

Liberal government...treats religious beliefs neutrally – as subjective value preferences restricted to private life, rather than as objective knowledge proper to public life.³³

8. With the growth of secular influence, believers in divine revelation are expected to refrain from basing their political positions on religious convictions. The philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff notes that, when it comes to politics, religious people,

are to allow their religious convictions to idle. They are to base their political decisions and their political debate in the public space on the principles yielded by some source *independent* of any and all of the religious perspectives to be found in society.³⁴

9. The prevailing concept of a modern liberal democracy is built upon a number of key ideas and assumptions, including the state's neutrality with respect to religion and belief. The separation of Church and State, and the privatisation

31 Here we apply a wide definition of secular as 'not connected with religious or spiritual matters'. In a public context we are talking about a philosophy that denies the existence and/or relevance of the divine to public affairs. It is manifested in the attempted removal of religious influence from the public sphere and public institutions.

32 Williams, S. 'Reason, law and religious freedom'. *Ethics in Brief*. Summer 2015. Vol. 20, No. 5.

33 Quoted in Williams, S. 'Reason, law and religious freedom'.

34 Wolterstorff, N. 'The Role of Religion in Decision and Discussion of Political Issues'. In Audi, R. and Wolterstorff, N. *Religion in the Public Square: The Place of Religious Convictions in Political Debate* (Rowman and Littlefield, 1997) p.73.

of religion are championed as manifestations of this neutrality. Conscience, regarded as a similarly private and subjective, albeit not necessarily a religious phenomenon, is also relegated to the private sphere.³⁵ Therefore, where religion and secularism are seen to stand in relation to rationality has a major impact on the exercise of freedom of conscience in the public square.

10. Recently, the rationality of religious belief has been the subject of much debate. It is important to note that many people, including atheists, having reflected carefully and thoroughly on scientific discoveries, questions of meaning, the nature of the universe and the mystery of human life consider it entirely rational to believe in God. For many it is belief in God as the authoritative and supreme Creator and Sustainer of all things which provides a foundation for rationality and morality. Furthermore, whilst science and empirical research can provide useful data to help us make decisions, deciding what we *ought* to do often requires us to make moral judgements based on our understanding of basic moral principles. These principles cannot be found under a microscope; we cannot determine good and evil or prove inherent dignity of human beings through scientific observation. Rather, these are immaterial and transcendent claims, and any worldview, religious or secular, that makes such claims functions as a belief system.

11. In light of the above, we must look again at claims of secular neutrality and their effect on the place of conscience in the public square. In highlighting the ‘unexamined ways and preferences’ of the West, Elizabeth Shakman Hurd writes of the traditions of secularism:

They are widely held to be neutral and natural starting points for public deliberations on the subject of religion and politics. They are neither neutral nor natural. They are political settlements and not uncontested dictates of public discourse.³⁶

12. Relatedly, Jonathan Chaplin has written that ‘the religious “neutrality” of the secular state ‘will always be a neutrality “from the standpoint of” some particular, contested political vision’.³⁷

13. The reality is that all worldviews, religious or secular, will be constructed around conceptions of right and wrong, and what ought to be done. Recognising that our actions, including those of the state, will always be influenced by certain values and ethical commitments requires us to take the public role of conscience more seriously.

14. For many people, grounding their public conduct in the truth-claims of their faith is a key part of their religious commitment and, therefore, any form of liberal democracy that prevents them from doing so is seen as profoundly illiberal. This is true for many Christians, for whom Christianity is not only relevant to private life but is also ‘public truth’ which ‘offers a story which is the story of the whole world’³⁸ and serves the common good.

35 Williams, ‘Reason, law and religious freedom’.

36 Hurd, E. S. *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* (Princeton University Press, 2008) p.131.

37 Chaplin, J. *Talking God: The Legitimacy of Religious Public Reasoning* (Theos, 2008) p.23.

38 Wright, N. T. *The New Testament and the People of God* (SPCK, 1992) pp.41-42.

What is conscience?

15. Having made a case for the place of conscience in the public square, we now turn to look in more detail at what we mean by that term. As Christians seeking to promote freedom of conscience, we cannot do so in a vacuum; we must recognise the reservations of others. Appeals to conscience are certainly open to abuse and we do not want a society in which everyone is given *carte blanche* to do whatever they want. At the same time, we have argued that questions of conscience should not be marginalised or dismissed as trivial. The proper place of deep moral convictions in public life must be seriously and carefully considered.

16. In seeking to make a contribution in this regard, we want to set out what we mean by conscience from a Christian perspective, for it is only by creating understanding of each other's views that we can hope to move public discussion forward. Like many in our society, we believe the conscience bears witness to our norms and values, making its presence felt often through our emotions by giving us feelings of anguish, guilt or relief. Crucially for Christians, the conscience exists to point us towards real and objective moral truths. Comparing the conscience to a telescope, Jon Thompson writes that

the conscience is an instrument that is valued for what it helps us to see, and not for its own sake only. A telescope can be out of calibration, and it can be rendered unhelpful by misuse or abuse. But it remains a potentially illuminating guide to the stars. Similarly, the conscience is designed to be looked *through*, to discern a moral situation as it actually is...the concept of conscience formation entails the idea that the conscience should point towards some objective moral law. Otherwise, the idea of forming one's conscience would be analogous to trying to tune an astronomical telescope in a world without starry nights.³⁹

17. There are two supplementary points worth making here.

18. First, we believe that God has revealed His truth to us, and we have responsibilities and obligations to Him as beneficiaries of unmerited grace, whether that grace is common grace, which is available to all people, or particular grace, given to all those who, by faith, rely on the promise of salvation offered to all who believe. Our response to every issue must be underlined by this premise.

19. Second, that the Bible is the ultimate arbiter of what is mandated for faith and practice. The Biblical model of what is required of us is found in the synopsis of the commandments expressed by Jesus to the Pharisee in Matthew Chapter 22, and elsewhere, namely to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

20. Ironically, for Christians, the 'freedom' of conscience we speak of is not freedom or liberty as commonly understood, but rather the ability to accept the constraint that everything we do must conform to Biblical requirements for faith and practice. It follows that freedom of conscience is not a licence to do what an individual may, subjectively, feel compelled to do. Indeed, a misplaced 'vision' cannot justify a clearly evil act perpetrated on the basis that its commission was dictated by 'conscience'.

21. As Christians in the public square, we must look at every issue through the prism of what that Biblical model requires. This means that we cannot endorse anything which is contrary to the clear demands of the law of God, as revealed

³⁹ Thompson, J. *'Here I stand: Conscience and the common good,'* Cambridge Papers, June 2015, p.3.

in Scripture, because to do so would negate our obligation to love God. Nor can we do anything which demeans the God-given value accorded to others, as that would negate our obligation to love our neighbour.

22. There is not, and cannot be, any tension between these two principles. As Presbyterians we believe that there is a Divine plan, fore-ordained in eternity, which governs what lies in the future, just as it does what lay in the past. The exercise of freedom of conscience is only, and can only be, served by the implementation of that fore-ordained Divine plan. Its details are known only to God, and so our responsibility, in exercising freedom of conscience, is to seek to appreciate His will, and to take steps to implement it. But we do know that its implementation lies in our acknowledgment of our 'chief end', namely to glorify God and enjoy him for ever.

23. We are obliged to use our reason to ascertain the Divine will as revealed in Scripture for us to achieve our chief end, and to refuse to subject the exercise of conscience to anything other than the authority of Scripture. As the Westminster Confession has it,

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to His Word, or beside it, in matters of faith and worship.

And therein lies a paradox. For us freedom of conscience is not a right to follow, unfettered, what our own individual will dictates. Rather it is the obligation to know, follow and bear witness to the will of God as revealed in Scripture.

The Christian, the state and conscience

24. It is clear that Scripture places much value and importance on the exercise of conscience. However, does this extend to permitting conscientious objection to laws and policies, given the Apostle Paul's assertion that government is ordained by God and every person is subject to the governing authorities?

25. Government is indeed instituted, authorised and limited by God.⁴⁰ The state is His institution, regardless of whether those in political leadership recognise Jesus as Lord. However, this does not mean that every ruler or government can claim divine endorsement of their policies and behaviour. Rather, it is the vocation of government that is ordained. Political authority is delegated to government by God and rulers are to seek His will. The functions of the state are grounded in a divinely-given remit to fulfil specific tasks, not in any absolute power of its own.

26. The Christian vision of the state is a positive one; that it will administer justice by promoting what is good and punishing those who do wrong.⁴¹ The order created should enable citizens to live in Godliness and peace.⁴² Christians are therefore called to submit to the governing authorities, praying for those in leadership, obeying the law and paying taxes. We are not free to submit out of personal preference, but must do so on the grounds of *conscience*, in the knowledge that government is of divine origin and not simply a human device.⁴³

40 Romans 13:1-7.

41 Romans 13:4.

42 1 Timothy 2:2.

43 Romans 13:5.

However, the fact that conscience is invoked by Paul in his letter to the Romans demonstrates that there is a limit to what can be demanded by any ruler, in that what is against one's conscience should not be done.

27. Indeed, once we accept that governing authority is delegated by God, the requirement to submit cannot stand in situations where wrong actions are commanded. That rulers are 'God's servants' certainly gives them special position but also emphasises that this position is a subordinate one. It is unsurprising, therefore, that we see the call to 'obey God rather than men'⁴⁴ lived out through civil disobedience in Scripture, when believers refused to follow the instruction of governing authorities to murder,⁴⁵ worship other gods⁴⁶ and cease preaching the Gospel.⁴⁷ The diversity of Biblical material clearly demonstrates that there are instances when Christians can and should conscientiously object to laws and policies.

Towards 'reasonable accommodation'?

28. If there is Biblical justification for conscientious objection, then what provision, if any, should political authorities make for the exercise of conscience in public life? And as Christians called, first and foremost, to honour the name of Jesus, what should our attitude be when we find the requirements of our faith in conflict with what is expected of us in the public square?

29. In approaching these questions we must exercise wisdom by trying, as far as possible, to live at peace with everyone, whilst not making morally unacceptable compromises.⁴⁸ Thus, in cases involving direct coercion to act contrary to one's conscience, it may be that civil disobedience is the only option. In other circumstances, a wider variety of responses may be available. The key question that every Christian must ask is what course of action will best serve the work of the Gospel.

30. At the same time, accepting our call to be peacemakers does not negate the appropriateness of Christians asking important questions about the place for dissent and freedom of conscience in society. Indeed, we are mindful of Romans 14, in which Paul appears anxious to ask how Christians should accommodate each other's point of view. The political principle of reasonable accommodation⁴⁹ has been promoted as a mechanism which could provide a better balance of freedoms under the law. In Northern Ireland, it does not appear that we have yet found a way to strike a proper balance.

44 Acts 5:29.

45 Exodus 1:17.

46 Daniel 3 & 6.

47 Acts 4:18-20.

48 Romans 12:17-18.

49 Reasonable accommodation recognises that the characteristics of some individuals, such as their religious beliefs, may prevent them from performing tasks or accessing employment, services or other activities, and that an accommodation of the environment in which they operate could help them to avoid any comparative disadvantage. See Bribosia, E., Ringelheim, J. and Rorive, I., 'Reasonable Accommodation for Religious Minorities: A Promising Concept for European Anti-discrimination Law?' (2010) 17 *Maastricht Journal of European and Comparative Law*, p.138.

31. Questions of conscience are complex, with a wide variety of possible scenarios and no easy solutions. Notwithstanding, there are notable examples from other jurisdictions where a greater degree of flexibility and accommodation appears to have been exercised, albeit in different legal and constitutional contexts.⁵⁰ With this in mind, Northern Ireland would benefit greatly from a thorough and gracious discussion involving stakeholders from across our society and further afield about how those with reasonable and deeply held convictions can express them in a reasonable way in every sphere of life.

32. Our society must move beyond incomprehension and distrust to consider how to fairly manage the moral and religious diversity which exists. Competing worldviews and perspectives should be held in creative tension for the benefit of everyone. Freedom of conscience should not to be a let-out option for any and every preference, nor a licence to unfairly discriminate. At the same time, it is important that the law is not naturally and unquestioningly regarded the optimal standard of morality, and that those with a conscientious objection are not seen as the morally weak who have to be granted concessions by a tolerant democracy. As we argued earlier, the public square is a diverse place and the moral norms upheld by the state will always be biased in favour of certain values. In this context, the curtailing of religious freedom should be carefully scrutinised and strictly limited, whilst freedom of conscience should be the norm, not the exception.

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the General Assembly encourage Church members to join the Organ Donor Register in their jurisdiction, advising their families and close friends of this decision, and ask the Council for Church in Society to liaise with others in the promotion of blood and organ donation.

2. That the General Assembly:

- (a) Reaffirm the position that human life begins at conception and that from that moment the human embryo should be treated in a manner in accordance with full human dignity.
- (b) Restate their opposition to abortion on demand for purely social reasons, or as a means of birth control.
- (c) Recognise that while the termination of pregnancy may be morally preferable to any alternative when continuation of the pregnancy would involve a serious risk to the life of the mother, the most stringent safeguards should be provided to prevent abuse.
- (d) Believe that the provision of readily accessible and appropriate care in the perinatal period for every woman, child and family should be a high priority for society, and ask the governments of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to ensure such provision.
- (e) Welcome the report on abortion as a considered and cogent theological and moral reflection on the issue.

3. That the General Assembly welcome and adopt the ‘Vision for Society’ statement and that:

⁵⁰ For example, Ontario Human Rights Commission v. Brockie [2002] O.J. No. 2375 (Ont. Sup. Ct.).

- (a) 1,500 copies of the 'Vision for Society' statement be printed for distribution to Congregations as a charge on the Incidental Fund.
 - (b) Congregations be encouraged to display a copy of the 'Vision for Society' statement in a prominent position on the Church premises.
 - (c) Presbyteries, Kirk Sessions and Congregations be requested to reflect upon the 'Vision for Society' statement and actively explore how to live out its principles in local communities.
4. That the General Assembly approve the proposal by the Council for Church in Society's Dealing with the Past Task Group (see Pars 29-37).
5. That the General Assembly commend the paper on 'Freedom of Conscience' and encourage the Council for Church in Society to facilitate engagement and discussion within the Church and in the public square on the issues raised.
6. That the Report of the Council for Church in Society be received.

COUNCIL FOR GLOBAL MISSION

Convener: Rev SE HUGHES

Secretary: Rev WS MARRS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Council for Global Mission (CGM) is tasked by the General Assembly with enabling the co-ordination and delivery of global mission where it is beyond the ability of the local Congregation and not being handled by other PCI Councils, partners or agencies. In many respects the Council provides a threshold or bridge between local congregational life and its global context, not least the mission of PCI's partners around the world.

2. In their first full year of activity, the Council's Assembly Committees, Panels and newly formed Task Groups have sought to take forward their work creatively, with the faithful and able support of the Mission Department staff team.

3. What has provided distinctive flavour to PCI's global engagement in the past year?

- Looking back to the 'Listening to the Global Church' session at General Assembly 2015, a particular emphasis on the persecuted Church not only struck a chord with those in attendance but provided much food for thought for the Council moving forward. It led to the Global Concerns Committee encouraging the Council to set up a task group to examine PCI's role in relating to the plight of Christian persecuted minorities. This was followed up by a very valuable 'Faith in the Furnace' event, in conjunction with Open Doors.
- As the year unfolded PCI's generosity was highlighted in the response to the Moderator's Appeal for emergency relief in the aftermath of the Nepal Earthquake, followed by undiminished support for the World Development Appeal 2015 'Forecast:hope' focusing attention on climate change.
- Initiatives in leadership development meant that Leaders in Training (LITs) from Kenya, Malawi, Pakistan, Zimbabwe and Hungary have been practically and prayerfully supported in their studies in the UK, together with many other LITs around the world.
- Focus events on Africa and Europe have highlighted and encouraged support for outreach ministries both long-standing and new.

4. As preparations have been made for the launch of the **2016/2017 Fit For Purpose Theme, 'A Community of Global Concern'**, the Council for Global Mission has been collaborating closely with the Council for Congregational Life and Witness, through its Global Mission Involvement Committee, tasked with giving a lead in unpacking this important theme. It is eagerly anticipated that significant elements of both existing and new work being undertaken by CGM will be highlighted as this theme unfolds during the coming year. The goal is that this will take place in a way that envisions and equips the wider Church to more

fully encompass global horizons, and to continue prayerfully and practically to share in PCI's global engagement, not least through the much valued support of the United Appeal that makes so much of this work possible.

5. The Council for Global Mission met on 11th June and 7th October, 2015 and 16th March 2016 and reports to the General Assembly on the work of its Committees, Panels and Task Groups as follows:

Outreach Ministries Committee (OMC) Pars 6 to 13

Main Issues: Developing partnerships; encouraging mission personnel; the challenge of mission in Europe; reviewing priorities.

Leadership Development Committee (LDC) Pars 14 to 20

Main Issues: Supporting Leaders in Training; encouraging vision for global mission amongst local Church leaders.

World Development Committee (WDC) Pars 21 to 31

Main Issues: World Development Appeal; Moderator-supported special appeal (Nepal).

Global Concerns Committee (GCC) Pars 32 to 39

Main Issues: Syrian conflict and refugee crisis; migration; Islam; environment.

Business & Finance Panel (BPL) Pars 40 to 52

Main Issues: Fit for Purpose Theme; Finance; Staffing; Overseas Visits; Task Groups for Vision Building, Persecuted Church and Principles of Partnership.

Grants & Projects Panel (GPPL) Pars 53 to 55

Main Issues: Distribution of grants to partner Churches and organisations.

Personnel Panel (PPL) Pars 56 to 71

Main Issues: Memorial Minutes; Appreciations; Call to missionary service; Member Care Development.

OUTREACH MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

6. **Great Challenges, Great Opportunities:** In 1792 William Carey wrote that “there are thousands in our own land as far from God as possible, I readily grant, and that this ought to excite us to ten-fold diligence in our work”, yet he argued, that ought not to “supersede all attempts to spread the gospel in foreign (sic) parts”.

7. In seeking to persuade the Church to become involved in Global mission, Carey's challenge to the Church was to “Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God”. The world has changed much since Carey's day, but two thirds of the world still either do not know Christ or make no claim to follow Him.

8. **Developing partnership, encouraging mission personnel:** In the past year, 32 of PCI's mission personnel have been involved in one form of outreach or another in ten countries around the world. Their work covered a number of focus areas: evangelism and Church planting, mission through education, medical mission, sustainable development, and peace building. The Outreach Ministries Committee seeks to have strategic oversight for this mission activity and in this regard to meet with mission personnel and partners, either during their visits to Ireland or in the field. This is an opportunity to offer encouragement and prayerful support. In the past year the Committee were incredibly encouraged to hear of doors that have opened for the gospel to be proclaimed in word and deed, yet also made aware of the tremendous challenges faced by partner Churches and mission personnel.

9. The Outreach Ministries Committee continues to relate to and encourage support of a number of Specialist Service Agencies: Wycliffe Bible Translators, The Bible Society of Northern Ireland, FEBA and SAT-7.

10. The Committee acknowledges that many PCI members are involved in a great variety of mission endeavour in different parts of the globe, and encourages PCI to more adequately recognise and prayerfully support all those serving with other mission agencies. Through the Mission Agencies Partnership (MAP), PCI relates to many mission agencies and societies and values the opportunity that MAP provides for mutual support and encouragement. These relationships will continue to be developed and strengthened, and this will be carried out in collaboration with the Council for Congregational Life and Witness, through the Global Mission Involvement Committee.

11. A further role of the Committee is to ensure information about mission personnel engaged in outreach is appropriately publicised, primarily to encourage awareness and vision for the role played by the wider Church, and not least to strengthen prayerful support. The aim is to ensure news items and articles are prepared for the PCI website and publications, and also that monthly bulletins are promoted.

12. Over the past year, the Outreach Ministries Committee have been particularly exercised by the immense challenge of Church planting and evangelism in the European context. One Committee member described this work as being rather like 'digging with a teaspoon in ground that has not seen water for months'. The Church in Europe and our mission personnel need our prayers that God may tear open the heavens and pour out His Holy Spirit to water this dry ground. Just as Europe has come under dreadful terrorist attacks in this last year, so we realise that it is also a spiritual battleground, and prayer is our vital weapon for defence and attack.

13. **Planning for the future:** In the year ahead the Outreach Ministries Committee plans to look afresh at its focus areas of involvement in global mission. It is important that key priorities are highlighted, especially when it comes to sending personnel and supporting PCI's partners in mission. The Committee calls on PCI as a whole to continue to resource outreach work, both prayerfully and financially, so that we continue as a denomination to "Attempt great things for God" in global mission.

DAVID STEELE, Convener

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

14. The Leadership Development Committee sees leadership development as a process that includes the leader's personal and spiritual attributes as well as their professional and practical knowledge and skills. It encourages leadership development amongst PCI's partners by providing scholarships for Leaders in Training and sending leader-trainers from PCI. It also seeks to encourage leadership development within PCI by contributing to the global envisioning of local leader-trainers.

15. Following an exploratory visit by Helen Johnston, Mission Support Officer (Member Care) the Committee recommended to the Council that a partnership be formed with the Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary (JETS). At its March meeting the Council issued Calls to Colin and Marjorie Dickson to serve as leader-trainers with JETS.

16. The Committee has been working closely with the Council for Congregational Life and Witness on the General Assembly theme 'A Community of Global Concern', with several events being planned for 2016-17.

17. **Leaders in Training Panel:** The Leaders in Training Panel receives applications for scholarships for potential Leaders in Training from partner Churches and organisations. Scholarships may be awarded for study in the UK/Ireland or within the partner's region. Funding for the scholarships comes from the United Appeal allocation and specific bequests, most notably the Lindsay Memorial Fund which provides funding designated for African Christians to study in the UK.

18. In 2016 scholarships totalling £42,926 from the United Appeal allocation and bequests were approved for ten new Leaders in Training studying outside the UK. One grant of £20,000 was made by the Lindsay Memorial fund for study in the UK. This is in addition to four Leaders in Training continuing their training from previous years, all of whom are studying in the UK.

19. The Panel continues to monitor and develop the criteria by which scholarships are awarded. Particular issues currently being addressed are the benefits and relative costs of study in the UK/Ireland as opposed to studying within the partner's region, the increasing number of requests for PhD study and ensuring an appropriate spread of scholarships across PCI's many overseas partners.

20. **Global Envisioning Panel:** The Global Envisioning Panel seeks to encourage an increasing global vision among leaders within PCI. In the past year the Panel has provided a global input to the missiology course for ministry students at Union College and raised the awareness of opportunities for ministry students to incorporate summer placements into their time at college. The Panel has also discussed various ways in which the global vision of PCI Leaders can be developed. It is actively exploring how the experience of particular Congregations and leaders might provide models of best practice that can be replicated by others.

MARIE KANE, Convener

GLOBAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

21. The Prophet Jeremiah highlights that the way in which God's people relate to God and uphold justice for the vulnerable in their society is the indicator of their covenant obedience: *"If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, if you do not oppress the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave to your ancestors for ever and ever."* Jeremiah 7:5-7 NIV

22. This scripture presents a significant challenge to PCI in the context of the estimated 20 million refugees and a further 40 million displaced people worldwide. With 5 million refugees and a further 7 million displaced people as a direct result of the Syrian conflict, the newly established **International Relations Panel** is focusing on the Syrian conflict; looking in particular at the perspective of our partners in Syria and Lebanon. In this regard, an invitation has been extended to the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL) to send a representative to the General Assembly in June, providing them an opportunity to tell their story and so give PCI a greater understanding of the challenges they face.

23. Responses to the refugee crisis have been mixed. Germany in particular has welcomed large numbers. Other countries have attempted to reinforce their borders. The UK's response has been limited but public pressure led the Prime Minister to offer to accept 20,000 programme refugees over 5 years. The Republic of Ireland has also increased the number of refugees it is prepared to take. The whole issue has exposed deep divisions in the European Union. The viability and legality of the new agreement between the EU and Turkey also poses questions.

24. Among the general population, misunderstandings regarding migration, the asylum system and who is entitled to protection are rife. Misleading articles in some parts of the press have not helped the situation. This has been compounded by irresponsible rhetoric by some politicians.

25. In his call to prayer the Moderator clearly spelt out PCI's commitment to "welcome the stranger, love our neighbour and open our arms to those who come to our shores". He also encouraged Church members to contribute to the relief efforts of PCI's development partners Christian Aid and Tearfund.

26. 51 refugees arrived in Northern Ireland in December 2015 as part of the Government's resettlement programme. While the majority of these are, as expected, Muslim, the group includes one Orthodox Christian family. Further groups of families are expected to arrive and be dispersed to provincial centres of population. Although the first group have been shielded from media intrusion, there will undoubtedly be opportunities for Churches to be involved with further arrivals of refugee families.

27. While there has generally been a positive response to the small number of programme refugees arriving, this is in marked contrast to UK government policy towards those seeking asylum through the system. There is anecdotal evidence that this has become more difficult. There is also concern among charities about the number of people whose asylum application has been rejected but who cannot be returned to their country of origin. They are not entitled to any benefits and have effectively been made destitute.

28. How PCI welcomes people in local communities and Congregations is a cross-cutting issue of concern and forms part of the remit of the **Intercultural Relations Panel** which has now been established.

29. Immigration has contributed to a greater number of people of other faiths living on this Island. However, it's clear that there is a great deal of ignorance, misinformation and sometimes prejudice in the wider community and within PCI. The **World Faiths Panel** is seeking to find ways to help PCI better understand these diverse faiths and guide and equip Presbyterians to engage with people of other faiths. PCI's understanding of and engagement with Islam will surely be a priority.

30. The World Climate Change Summit took place in Paris from 30th November to 11th December 2015. Significant agreement was achieved with 195 countries adopting a legally binding climate deal. In tandem with the Summit a number of parallel events took place in Dublin and Belfast. These were organised by, among others, our development partners Tearfund and Christian Aid and PCI were invited to be represented and to contribute. This did not prove easy, however, as PCI has no established position as a denomination on climate change or its causes. Given PCI's Christian responsibility to be good stewards of God's creation, this appears to others – both inside and outside the Church – to be a significant anomaly. Developing a Biblically thought through position on climate change will be part of the remit of the new **Stewardship of Creation Panel**.

31. The Fit for Purpose theme “a people of Global Concern” is obviously one which is particularly relevant to the focus and work of this Committee. The respective Panels are committed, in collaboration with the Council for Congregational Life and Witness, to exploring ways in which they can contribute to this theme during the coming year.

RICHARD KERR, Convener

WORLD DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

32. Under the theme '**Forecast:hope**', the 2015 World Development Appeal took as its starting point the serious effects of climate change which are already being felt most severely in some of the world's poorest countries. The Appeal then highlighted some of the initiatives which are helping people to adapt to their rapidly changing circumstances, and raised for PCI's own Congregations the question of what it might mean for people on the island of Ireland to take climate justice seriously, as a response to the gospel.

33. The projects and partners highlighted in 2015 were in Bangladesh (**Bangladesh Nazarene Mission**) and Ethiopia (**Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus – Development and Social Service Commission**). Both projects focus on the creation of sustainable new livelihoods in areas of climate instability, made possible through the establishment of Self-Help Groups and other cooperative efforts in local communities.

34. The Committee is delighted to report that at its meeting held on Thursday, 11th February 2016, it was able to disburse £440,000 from the 2015 Appeal (£220,000 to Tearfund and £220,000 to Christian Aid). The Committee

expresses warm gratitude to the Congregations and individuals whose generosity and interest have once again given a public account of the hope that is in God's people, and are bearing a powerful witness to Presbyterians' trust in God's grace and sustaining care for all people and all creation.

35. The Committee extends very real thanks also to all Presbytery agents, whose role is crucial in enabling the church-wide witness of the World Development Appeal, and to the Mission Department Staff for their practical and moral support.

36. The Committee are also pleased to report that an additional £145,000 was disbursed in connection with the Moderator-supported Special Appeal for Nepal, launched on 29th April 2015. This Special Appeal has now raised a total of over £600,000. The Committee has been inspired by the gracious and generous response of the Church to this appeal, and can confirm that the funds have been disbursed in equal proportions to Tearfund, Christian Aid, and the United Mission to Nepal.

37. Four PCI partner projects were also supported with Appeal funding in the past year. The Inter-faith Peace Building project (United Mission to Nepal) and the Livingstonia Synod AIDS Programme (CCAP, Malawi) each received £10,000. Hungarian Reformed Church Aid received £5,000 for its work with Syrian Refugees in Budapest, and £2,603 was given to the Presbyterian Church of East Africa's Tuum Girls' Secondary School Bus project, Northern Kenya, to cover short-term costs towards repair, maintenance and employing a driver.

38. Committee members continue to welcome opportunities to deepen their own understanding of development issues, and a number of members attended an inter-church workshop on Effective Development, facilitated by Christian Aid, in October 2015.

39. Finally, the 2016 World Development Appeal will feature projects in El Salvador and Brazil, and will continue to highlight the complex but crucial issues of climate change and climate justice, as all aspects of sustainable development continue to be affected, and in some cases threatened, by ongoing climate change. The World Development Committee is grateful for the prayers of the Church in taking forward the work entrusted to the Committee by the General Assembly, and this interest is welcomed.

KATHERINE MEYER, Convener

BUSINESS AND FINANCE PANEL

40. **PCI Fit for Purpose theme 2016/2017 "A Community of Global Concern."** The Council for Congregational Life and Witness has been given responsibility to take forward this theme for 2016/17 and in doing so have sought to work closely with the Council for Global Mission. In this context it is important for Congregations to recapture new vision for God's mission globally. In developing the theme, there are existing global mission resources that will be given a higher profile as the wider Church are more fully envisioned, equipped and engaged for global mission. An overview of events and resources that will advance key themes shared by the two Councils has been drawn up. As far as possible, the ongoing work of the Council for Global Mission will be worked through the lens of this Fit For Purpose theme.

41. **Vision Building Task Group:** In follow-up to the Council's Vision Building Day Away at Templepatrick Presbyterian Church on 11th June 2015, a Vision Building Task Group was set up and met on two occasions with a view to reporting to the General Assembly in 2017. It is anticipated that ongoing discussions with the Council for Congregational Life and Witness on the current Fit for Purpose theme would not only feed into the Council for Global Mission's future strategy but also into the work of the General Council's Priorities Committee.

42. **Mission Council conversations:** The Council Convener and Secretary represented CGM in conversations between the Mission Councils with a focus on how they should best relate to one another moving forward under the new structures, the process for how missional priorities should be established, and how cross-cutting issues might be handled.

43. **Persecuted Church Task Group:** The Persecuted Church Task Group that reports directly to the Council and is convened by the Rev Liam Rutherford, held its first meeting on 3rd December 2015, engaging in wide-ranging discussion. The Task Group's remit focuses on "how PCI best responds to the Persecuted Church." In discussing this, the importance of prayer, the providing of financial assistance, and advocacy all came to the fore. These responses depend on PCI being well informed about and having good working links with the Persecuted Church.

44. Defining the 'Persecuted Church': How do we define 'the persecuted Church'? Where should it be placed in PCI's priorities in global engagement? There needs to be more information about the needs and opportunities for assistance, and openness to learning from the persecuted Church, through various agencies and PCI's partner Churches.

45. Agencies and Partner Churches: It was agreed that a number of agencies that work with the persecuted Church should be approached in the course of 2016: Open Doors, Release International and Christian Solidarity Worldwide. Reference was also made to Church in Chains, a Republic of Ireland based agency. It would be important to identify PCI's partner Churches who are experiencing persecution, once a definition of 'the persecuted Church' has been agreed.

46. Strategy: The Task Group is not yet ready to bring a full report to the Council, however initial consideration is that a two-pronged strategy should be considered:

- (i) To link individual Congregations (or Presbyteries) with agencies/persecuted partner Churches.
- (ii) To promote awareness of the persecuted Church centrally by means of an events strategy for the whole Church, albeit that this may fall to the agencies themselves to facilitate.

Further consideration needs to be given to the role that may be played by central funding in supporting the persecuted Church e.g. grant funding and/or emergency funding.

47. An invitation was extended by the Rev Farouk Hammo for a small team to visit the Presbyterian Church in Baghdad, and this would need to be given further consideration. The 'Christ at the Checkpoint' Conference took place in Bethlehem, 7th-10th March 2016, under the theme: 'The Gospel in the Face of Religious Extremism'. The Rev Liam Rutherford represented PCI at this conference.

48. **Principles of Partnership Task Group:** Concerns have been expressed regarding developments in the Spanish Evangelical Church in relation to human sexuality, in particular their Mamre statement agreed at their Synod meeting in October 2015, and in the light of these concerns the Council has been asked to review partnership relations with the Spanish Evangelical Church. The Council identified this as potentially being a cross-cutting issue that could have profound implications for PCI's partnering in global mission. Accordingly, the Council agreed at its March 2016 meeting that, prior to a review of partnership with the Spanish Evangelical Church, a task group be set up by the Council to review the principles by which PCI engages in global mission partnerships and report back to the Council. This task group will be convened by the Very Rev Dr Ivan Patterson.

49. **Finance Update:** The Council records its deep appreciation for the United Appeal funding received each year that makes possible so much of its work, together with the enthusiastic support and generous grant received annually from Presbyterian Women. Council for Global Mission accounts for the year 2015 indicated a net deficit for 2015 on the Income and Expenditure Account of £76,841. This, coupled with the fact that £65,448 of realised gains on the sale of properties will not be available in 2016, highlights the importance of identifying potential new sources of income and of cost-cutting measures in the coming year, unless additional funding can be secured from existing sources for 2017.

50. **Mission Department Staffing:** The Rev Dr Peter McDowell joined the Mission Department Staff on 3rd August 2015 as Mission Support Officer (Partnerships). Mrs Kathryn Anderson was appointed as Administrative Assistant (part-time) in the Mission Department from 1st December 2015. A team-building day for all Mission Department staff and Council Conveners was held on Monday, 30th November 2015. Task lists are in the process of being written up for each member of staff to complement job descriptions. In addition to the Departmental Staff Meeting an Executive Staff Meeting has now been introduced. The Council is deeply appreciative of the dedicated service of all Mission Department Staff, and not least for their ability to deal with a lengthy period of transition following the establishment of new structures.

51. **Leadership Development Committee Convenership:** Marie Kane has notified the Council of her resignation as Leadership Development Committee Convener effective from the General Assembly 2016. She has been involved as a member of this Committee since 2008, serving as its Convener from 2013, and again from when it was newly constituted on 1st January 2015. Marie came to the Committee with a rich experience of congregational involvement in global mission, brought a deep commitment to the broad range of leadership development activities, and a special concern for the practical and pastoral support of those who have come from partner Churches to study in the UK and Ireland. The Council expresses its deep gratitude to Marie for her commitment to PCI's global mission, both through the Leadership Development Committee and the broader work of the Council.

52. **Visits to overseas partners:** The following overseas visits have been made since the General Assembly 2015 or are in the planning:

- Rev Uel Marrs to Lebanon, at the invitation of Open Doors, 29th September - 2nd October 2015.
- Rev Uel Marrs to Spanish Evangelical Church Synod, Madrid, 9th - 12th October 2015.

- Sandra Stokes, PW President, together with a PW team, to Coram Deo, Porto Mantovano, Italy, 29th September - 6th October 2015.
- PW team to the Porto Church plant, Portugal, 29th October - 2nd November 2015.
- Helen Johnston to Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary, Amman 4th – 8th January 2016.
- Rev Liam Rutherford to the 'Christ at the Checkpoint' Conference, Bethlehem, 7th – 10th March 2016.
- Rev Liz Hughes to Church of North India, Gujarat Diocese, Ahmedabad, 11th – 15th April 2016.
- Rev Uel Marrs to the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon Partners Conference, Beirut, 10th – 15th April 2016.
- Revs Liz Hughes and John Hanna to partner Churches in Sumba and Timor, Indonesia, 25th April – 5th May 2016.
- Helen Johnston to the General Assembly of the United Mission to Nepal, Kathmandu, 23rd May – 3rd June 2016.
- The Moderator hopes to visit Nepal during the second half of November 2016, a timely visit in the aftermath of last year's earthquake.

LIZ HUGHES, Convener

GRANTS AND PROJECTS PANEL

The Rev Liz Hughes, Convener, writes:

53. The Grants and Projects Panel reports directly to the Council. It distributes individual grants of up to £5,000 per year to partner Churches and organisations for projects of strategic importance. It should be noted that all applications for study scholarships are now dealt with by the Leaders in Training Panel.

54. Grants are distributed from the United Appeal allocation and from bequests designated for specific purposes. In 2016 the Grants and Projects Panel will be allocating grants totalling £53,100 to a range of partners across the regions of Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

55. The Panel is reviewing the grant application process, including the funding criteria to ensure that they are in line with the Council's priorities and that they provide a robust framework within which the Panel can assess applications.

PERSONNEL PANEL

Miss Valerie Clarke, Convener, writes:

56. The newly constituted Personnel Panel met for the first time on 22nd May 2015, and subsequently on 17th September 2015, and 18th February 2016, reporting directly to the Council. The first meeting introduced all the new members, agreed the normal pattern for panel meetings and task group work. The Panel has no executive power, but has professional knowledge and experience. All significant issues requiring decision-making will be presented to the Council and, as appropriate, to the General Assembly.

57. The Panel is responsible for matters relating to the mission personnel of the Council. Specifically: strategic planning for placement of PCI members to partner Churches/organisations; initiating and conducting procedures needed for “Confirmation of Call/Selection Procedures” for all applicants for service with the Council; ensuring appropriate training and ongoing professional development for all appointed to serve with a partner Church/organisations; developing and reviewing policies and guidelines for PCI mission personnel in line with the Code of PCI. The Panel is also responsible for the member care of PCI global mission personnel, specifically to develop and implement member care ‘best practice’ covering the three distinct areas of pre, current, and post, overseas service. Finally the Panel will serve as an advisory body to the Convener and Secretary for matters relating to personnel procedures and member care practice for those under the care of the Council.

58. **Mission Personnel:** Memorial Minutes recording sympathies expressed in respect of the following former mission personnel were recorded by the Panel: Mr Donald McNutt, who served in Malawi 1989-2000, and died 25th March 2015; Dr John Breeze, who served in India 1952-1967, and died 26th April 2015; Dr Anne Watts, who served in Malawi 1973-1984, and died 25th August 2015; the Very Rev Dr John Ross, who served in Malawi 1961-1966, and died 31st August 2015; Mrs Diane Carson, who served in Kenya 1995-2001, and died 25th November 2015.

59. Active participation in the Great Commission and obedience to the Great Commandment are core to the work of the Personnel Panel and the bedrock of thanks to God for His enabling and provision of support for all mission personnel. The Panel give thanks for those currently serving, for those who have recently completed overseas service, and for those about to embark on such service with the Council. Appendix 1 details the varied roles occupied by those sent out by the Council, including the partners in mission with whom they share their lives and service.

60. Appreciation was recorded for Matt Williams who served in Malawi from March 2011 until February 2016, following his resignation as a Missionary. On behalf of PCI the Panel thanked Matt for his humble, hard-working, sensitive and self-sacrificing service in Malawi.

61. Under the Inspire category of service (less than one year) Ivan and Maureen Patterson, members of High Street Antrim, were interviewed, commissioned and served, from September 2015 to January 2016, in Budapest with the Hungarian Reformed Church in roles of theological education.

62. Under the Integrate programme of service (more than two years), interviews were conducted for applicants seeking to enter two new spheres of service. The first of these was with Diane Cusick who, having completed 20 years of service in Malawi, has been called to serve with the Synod of Zambia of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian in the role of Early Childhood Development. Diane hopes to depart for Lusaka during the summer of 2016. The second interview was with Colin and Marjorie Dickson who have been called to serve in the Middle East in theological education and resourcing. They hope to depart to take up these roles during May 2016. At the time of writing, Presbytery confirmation and dates of commissioning have not been finalised.

63. **Human Resources/Personnel and Member Care Development:** The work of the Panel has been progressed by the formation of a number of task

groups, each meeting more than once during the past year between the Panel's scheduled gatherings.

64. **Mission Personnel Handbook Task Group:** Due to the changes resulting from PCI's structural re-organisation, the Panel established this task group to review and update the Handbook for use by the Council and mission personnel so as to be relevant for 21st century living and service. The Panel agreed a direction paper as an overview of the development of this work together with a comprehensive index, presented in sections, to act as a guide and marker of the work completed and for prioritising future effort. Papers on Categories of Service, Allowances, Expenses, Other Provisions, Education of Missionary Children, and Guidelines for Mission Personnel Intending to Marry, were all reviewed and adopted by the Panel. Ongoing work will be completed in conjunction with other task groups and with the direction and approval of the Council.

65. **Terminology to describe mission personnel serving overseas Task Group:** As explained under the Mission Personnel Handbook, the PCI structural re-organisation highlighted the need to review the terminology used to describe or refer to those working in mission with overseas partner Churches and organisations. Examining this was deemed important as it will enable the Council to ensure that the terminology used will be "fit for purpose" and relevant to life both within PCI and in other global locations, and appropriate for 21st century living, language and understanding.

66. The Panel recognises PCI's long tradition of sending personnel to serve in other countries and the value of this work in fulfilling her "*Missio dei*" calling. Fundamentally there are two distinct roles held by our mission personnel overseas: Ministers (e.g. Church planters, pastors or theological educators) and Deacons (e.g. medical professionals, relief workers, educationalists and community development workers – traditionally PCI have used this term for Deaconesses who are based in Ireland). The nature and extent of these roles has changed significantly over time and the term "missionary" has presented difficulties for mission personnel in some countries to the extent that alternative names have to be used in certain circumstances, for example in Central Asia and Pakistan. This inconsistent approach may lead some to question PCI's integrity as it uses a number of different terms within PCI documentation which is widely available both internally and externally via the worldwide web. For these reasons the Panel wish to examine the use of term "missionary".

67. The early considerations of the Task Group led the Panel to conclude that there is more work to be done not only to develop the case for change but also to identify appropriate options for consideration. It has been highlighted that consultation is an essential element of the work to be undertaken and Council members, particularly those representing the 19 Presbyteries will be a key vehicle for ensuring that everyone in the wider Church is involved in the process. This process will also aid understanding at Presbytery level that the case for change is not merely about conforming to worldly expectations but rather a professional obligation at this time of organisational change in PCI. In order to give the task due attention a number of key steps have been identified and outlined as follows:

- Involvement of wider Church via Presbytery representatives as Council members.
- Time for consideration and reflection at Presbytery level during the consultation process.

- Opportunity for review and evaluation by the Personnel Panel at key stages.
- Consultation and learning from others in the global mission field.
- Facilitates presentation of a robust case for change prior to submission to the Council for final decision.

It has been shown that the process to be carried out is comprehensive and requires time and attention by many people. At the outset the Panel sought the Council's view and approval to proceed with the task. This was presented and discussed by the Council during its meeting on 7th October 2015. The first stage of consultation with Presbyteries and other Council representatives is under way and the Panel look forward to presenting these views and deliberations to the Council and, if appropriate, the General Assembly during the 2016/2017 Church year.

68. Deputation Task Group: Due, once again to the changes enacted by the structural re-organisation the 'baton of deputation' has passed from the 'old' Board of Mission Overseas Mission Involvement Committee to the Personnel Panel. Building on past practice, previous discussions, existing purpose statements and strategy the Task Group considered both the purpose and expectations side of deputation together with pattern, frequency and optimum months for it to take place aspects. Combining these considerations the Panel agreed that work needs to continue and should: consider name options that better describe 'deputation' to member of today's PCI; develop guidelines that aid linking Congregations and mission personnel's expectations for sharing stories and influence for global action; and agree and co-ordinate with others, particularly those in the Council of Congregational Life and Witness, appropriate training for mission personnel and guidelines for those in the wider Church wishing to hear and engage with them.

69. Safety and Security Guidelines Task Group: Again the changes experienced in PCI have affected the current provision of enacting the Council's Safety and Security Guidelines, including critical incident and crisis management and prevention, should they be needed. This inadequacy was emphasised during the awful earthquakes experienced in Nepal during April and May 2015. For those in Nepal this was a crisis, for the support team in PCI it constituted a critical incident and as such was managed within the Mission Department. The Panel adopted the draft updated Safety and Security Guidelines which embrace the new structural way of working within PCI. During its March meeting, the Council agreed to the budget needed to engage the services of a security expert and to conduct simulated training to test and refine the new Guidelines. The Panel plan to complete this work during 2016.

70. Pastoral Advisors Group: The Panel discussed the situation presented partly by the changes in PCI's structure but also partly due to a natural moving-on of a number of the 'old Board of Mission Overseas' appointed Pastoral Advisors. The Panel gives thanks to God and celebrates this model of providing Pastoral Advisors and their often under-acknowledged but much appreciated support for mission personnel for many, many years. The Panel also give thanks for the last 11 years (2002-2013) of Annual Retreats (Ireland based) organised by the Board. These Retreats and the Pastoral Advisors and leaders who provided a safe space for mission personnel to be 'pastorally' cared for is much appreciated by the Council. The Panel will express their gratitude with a small get-together with the former Pastoral Advisors.

71. **Future Pastoral Provision Task Group:** The Panel is developing a new category of ‘Pastoral Companion’. This is someone whom the individual or couple serving with the Council identify as their pastoral companion for their journey from candidacy to resignation or retirement. Clarification and guidelines required for this new provision and for use by the ‘companion’, Congregations, the Council and individual mission personnel will be developed and implemented during 2016. In addition the Panel will employ the concept of ‘regional retreats’ for mission personnel and their families with pastoral oversight and input from the Council. This together with the development, in partnership with the overseas partner Church or organisation, of an initial in-country accompaniment for mission personnel and their families when they first arrive in a new location, will strengthen the overall provision of member care for mission personnel and their families.

APPENDIX 1

The names, spheres and category of service of the Council’s overseas mission personnel are listed below and are to be taken together with this report.

INTEGRATE PROGRAMME – service of two or more years

BRAZIL

Naomi Keefe	2004	Outreach Programme, The Presbyterian Church of Brazil (IPB), Recife
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GREAT BRITAIN

Christopher & Nivedita Benjamin	1989	Ministry among Asians in Wembley, London
Edwin & Anne Kibathi	2009	Ministry among East Africans in East London

ITALY

Alan & Tracey Johnston	2014	Associate Pastor, Sola Grazia Church, Coram Deo Ministry Church Plant, Mantova
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KENYA

Stephen &	1985	Outreach and Development Work, Presbyterian
Angelina Cowan	1989	Church of East Africa (PCEA), Tuum
Naomi Leremore	1991	Educational resource development, PCEA, Nairobi
Gary & Mary Reid	2000	Outreach and Development Work, PCEA, Olkinyiei

MALAWI

Neil &	2008	Consultant Pediatrician, Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital and Senior Lecturer, College of Medicine of the University of Malawi
Sara Kennedy Volker &	2010	Teaching, Blantyre Executive Director, Theological Education by Extension in Malawi (TEEM), Zomba
JinHyeog Glissmann Lyn & Johnny Dowds	2011	Teaching, Blantyre Doctor, David Gordon Memorial Hospital, CCAP Livingstonia Synod, Livingstonia
David & Pamela McCullagh	2013	Ministry Co-ordinator Resources Co-ordinator Scripture Union of Malawi, Lilongwe

NEPAL

Stephen & Laura Coulter	2014	Mental Health Peace Building Adviser United Mission to Nepal (UMN), Kathmandu
Peter & Valerie Lockwood	2012	Programme Advisor (UMN), Kathmandu

PAKISTAN

Ron & Hilary McCartney	2007	Teaching, Forman Christian College, Lahore
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PORTUGAL

James & Heather Cochrane	2008	Church Planting, Igreja Christiã Presbyteriana de Portugal, Porto
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ROMANIA

Csaba &	2001	Co-ordinator – SERVANT Mission of Diakonia, Cluj
Ilona Veres	1993	Mera Children's Project, Diakonia, Cluj

SPAIN

Steve Anderson	2014	Community Development and Outreach, Andaluc�a Presbytery, Iglesia Evang�lica Espa�ola, Torre del Mar
Derek & Jane French	2000	Student outreach with Grupos Biblicos Unidos (GBU), Bilbao

CANDIDATES**MIDDLE EAST**

Colin & Marjorie Dickson	2016	Academic Co-ordinator and Lecturer in Practical Theology, Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary (JETS), Amman Academic Department: Assistant Librarian (JETS)
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ZAMBIA

Diane Cusick	1995	Early Childhood Development Officer, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), Zambia Synod, from mid-2016. Pre-school teacher training and Early Childhood Development, CCAP Livingstonia Synod, Malawi from 1995 to 2016
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RESOLUTIONS

1. That the General Assembly, while appreciating the complexity of the Syrian refugee and wider migrant crisis, as recipients of God's generous grace, reiterate their commitment to the value of all people created in God's image, to the right of people to refuge from conflict and to PCI's responsibility to be people of generous hospitality.

2. That the General Assembly, in giving thanks to God for PCI's global mission partnerships both longstanding and new, request the Council for Global Mission to give special attention to PCI's support of and learning from the persecuted church, reporting to the General Assembly in 2017.

3. That the General Assembly, deeply concerned that so many around the world do not know Jesus Christ, urge the Council, in collaboration with the Creative Production Department, to communicate effectively the story of God's global mission and in a manner that encourages renewed commitment by the wider church to resource PCI's global engagement both prayerfully and financially.

4. That the Council for Global Mission, through the Stewardship of Creation Panel, take forward the development of a Biblical position on the causes and effects of climate change and report to the 2017 General Assembly.

5. That the General Assembly, acknowledging the dedicated endeavours of PCI's global mission personnel, give thanks for the faithful, much appreciated and often unseen service to them rendered by former Pastoral Advisors.

6. That the General Assembly give thanks for the exceptional and continuing generosity of the congregations and members of PCI in supporting both the 2015 World Development Appeal and the Special Appeal for the Nepal, and commend the 2016 Appeal to all congregations.

7. That the report of the Council for Global Mission be received.

TRUSTEES OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND

Chairman: Rev WILFRED ORR
Secretary: Mr CLIVE KNOX

1. The following is an extract from the Minutes of the proceedings of the Trustees at their Annual General Meeting held in Assembly Buildings, Belfast, on 15 March 2016.

2. Moved by Mrs M Guiler, seconded by Mr B Scott and agreed that the Very Rev Dr D Clarke, Rev R Cobain, L McKeague and L Cubitt be re-appointed for a further term of 5 years.

3. Moved by the Very Rev Dr D Clarke, seconded by Mr NH McLean, that the Rev WJ Orr be appointed Chairman until the 2017 General Assembly.

4. The Statement of audited Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2015 of the following were laid before the Trustees, and were adopted by them:

- The General Investment Fund
- The Trustees of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland

(Incorporating The Commutation Fund, The Non-Participating Trust Funds, The Magee Fund, The Tops Wilson Trust Fund, The Fire Insurance Trust Fund, The Fortune Mission Bequest, The Lindsay Memorial Fund and Various other Trust Funds).

5. Moved by Mr N Bennett, seconded by the Mr B Scott and unanimously agreed that the Report and the Statements of Accounts be adopted, and lodged with the Clerk of Assembly to be laid before the Assembly in June. The Report and the Statement of Accounts were signed and lodged in accordance with the foregoing resolution.

6. The Trustees also received and examined the Accounts for 2015 of the John Getty Trust, The War Memorial Hostel and Union Theological College and accepted these for inclusion in the volume of Accounts to be submitted to the General Assembly.

7. The Trustees nominated Mr D Crowe and Mrs M Guiler as members to attend the General Assembly according to the provision of the Code Par 97(h)(iv).

Trust Funds

8. A summary Account of the various Trust Funds is included in the Book of Accounts 2015. The following Trust Funds are distributed by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Trustees.

As in 2015, the Trustees have agreed to recommend to the General Assembly that, where the terms of Trust permit, these should be distributed via the United Appeal rather than directly to various agencies.

Mrs A M Davidson Trust: The total income for 2015 available for distribution is £6,627.40. The following recommendation is made to the General Assembly:

United Appeal £6,627.40

Sir Wm V McCleery Estate: The total income for 2015 available for distribution is £34,601.84. The following recommendation is made to the General Assembly:

Central Ministry Fund	80%
Retired Ministers' Fund	10%
Widows of Ministers' Fund	10%

Estate of Miss Irene Scott: The total income for 2015 available for distribution is £7,169.24. The following recommendation is made to the General Assembly:

United Appeal £7,169.24

Estate of Miss Ida Mary McGeown: The total income for 2015 available for distribution is £4,600.96. The following recommendation is made to the General Assembly:

United Appeal £4,600.96

Estate of Mr Victor Morrow: The total income for 2015 available for distribution is £1,499.68. The following recommendation is made to the General Assembly:

United Appeal £1,499.68

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH INVESTMENT FUND (commonly known as The General Investment Fund)

9. The General Investment Fund was originally established under the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 1964. It is a Common Investment Fund in which any charity connected with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland can invest.

10. In accordance with the Scheme Rules, dividends are declared on shareholdings in the fund at 15 April and 15 October and the shares are also valued on these dates. Recent dividend levels and share values are set out below.

11. Investments in the fund or shareholdings tend to arise from trust funds, bequests or donations which often have particular terms or restrictions attached regarding the application of the capital and income.

12. Further details about the General Investment Fund, the investment performance and investment holdings, is available in a booklet available from the Financial Secretary's Department.

13. The Trustees have prepared the accounts of the General Investment Fund for the year ended 31st December 2015 in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice: Financial Statement of Authorised Funds (October 2010). These are included in the Book of Accounts presented to the General Assembly. These accounts provide detailed information regarding the Fund and in particular its performance, investment allocation, level of income and distributions during the year.

14. Declaration of Dividend	15.4.15	15.10.15
Number of shares qualifying	5,422,323	5,461,770
Income from investment for distribution and Tax recoverable less administrative Charge and Investment Advisers' Fees	£623,573	£828,571
Dividend per share	11.00p	15.00p

15. During 2015, £9,305 was transferred to the Dividend Equalisation Reserve, in accordance with the Scheme Rules, and the balance on the Reserve at 31st December, 2015 is £533,459.

16. The combined annual Dividend of 26.00p per share for 2015 is to be compared with 26.00p for 2014, 26.00p for 2013, 26.00p for 2012, 25.00p for 2011, 26.00p for 2010; 28.00p for 2009; 33.00p for 2008; 31.00p for 2007; 30.00p for 2006;.

17. Valuation	15.04.15	15.10.15
	£	£
Valuation of Investments	49,987,066	46,481,694
Cash on Deposit	895,626	944,590
Dividend Equalisation Reserve	551,278	533,459
	<u>£51,433,970</u>	<u>£47,959,743</u>
No of Shares Issued	5,457,168	5,468,829
Share Value	£9.4250	£8.7697

In addition to the official valuations at 15th April and 15th October the Trustees also carry out a valuation of the shares as at 31st December. This is an "internal" valuation used by Boards and Agencies and the Trustees to value investments held by various funds in the General Investment Fund for year-end accounting purposes. At 31st December the valuation was £8.8940 per share (2014, £8.8936).

18. The Trustees meet with Investment Managers, Newton Investment Management Limited, three times a year to review investment performance. During 2015, there was a return of 3.48% compared to a benchmark return of 2.66%. Newton Investment Management Limited was appointed Investment Adviser to the Trustees Funds in June 2006 and from then to 31st December 2015, the General Investment Fund returned 6.23% per annum compared to the benchmark of 5.93%.

Valuation Dates

19. The Trustees considered the operation of the General Investment Fund and in particular the rules pertaining to valuation dates, dividend dates and notice periods required when disinvesting.

20. With regard to valuations the current rules state "The Trustees shall value the Fund twice in each year at approximately six monthly intervals on such dates as they may determine and on any other dates they think fit to do so. Any such dates are referred to in this scheme as "valuation dates". The current valuation dates are 15th April and 15th October.

21. When investors wish to realise part or all of their investment, the proceeds they receive are determined by the share price at the next, and not the last, valuation date which could be some months away. Consequently the proceeds received might vary considerably, up or down, in line with movements in the value of the underlying investments. In effect investors are ‘selling blind’.

22. The rules permit the trustees to value shares in the Fund on such dates as they may determine and so it is proposed that valuations be carried out monthly, on the last working day of each month. It is the Trustees view that this does not require a rule change.

23. This will, potentially, shorten considerably the time lag between decisions to sell and the determination of the actual proceeds.

24. More frequent valuation dates e.g. weekly or daily, were considered to be inappropriate because of the administrative burden that this would place on the Finance Office and because figures supplied by our investment managers, although being available, are only audited monthly.

Distribution (or dividend) dates

25. The current rules state that “The Trustees shall on each valuation date determine the income of the Fund for the distribution period ending on that date.” In Rule 21(2) “...as soon as practicable after each valuation date, declare a dividend...”. The current distribution dates are 15th April and 15th October.

26. The Trustees agreed that there is no merit in moving to more frequent distributions of dividend and propose to continue to declare dividends half yearly, but to change to 31st March and 30th September, to tie in with monthly valuation dates.

27. This will require a rule change to ‘decouple’ the frequency of valuations and dividend declarations. A resolution to this effect is appended to the Report of the Trustees, and, if this is approved, further approval has to be sought as required by the scheme rules from the “Department of Finance” or its current equivalent, The Department of Finance and Personnel.

Notice periods

28. With regard to notice periods required when disinvesting, the rules state “The Trustees shall on receiving two months’ notice in writing from the trustees of a participating charity or such shorter notice as the Trustees may in any particular case determine...”

29. The Trustees considered a shorter notice period than two months, but whilst being desirable, concluded this could have adverse consequences should investments have to be sold to make the payment of proceeds. Accordingly they consider that the rule, as it is, should remain in place but that the discretion already allowed, i.e. to accept a shorter notice period to be exercised, particularly if payments can be met from existing cash balances and no investments have to be realised.

30. To this end the Trustees will seek to hold a cash balance that will allow modest withdrawals from the Fund to be made without having to release investments, recognising that over the longer terms funds held as investments are likely to provide a greater return than amounts held in cash.

31. It is envisaged that, normally, a two week notice period for modest withdrawals would be sufficient. In event of significant disinvestments being requested it is unlikely the shorter notice period will be available and therefore not all investors will not be able to avail of the shorter period on all occasions.

32. One further point which the Trustees considered is whether notice to sell shares in the Fund is capable of being withdrawn before the valuation date upon which the value of the sale is calculated.

33. Current practice is not to permit such withdrawal of notice. This means that, should there be a dramatic fall in the value of investments, between notice and realisation, the investor may receive considerably less than had been anticipated.

34. The Trustees agreed that discretion, in this regard, could be exercised, and withdrawal of notice permitted, providing that the Funds investment managers have not been instructed to realise underlying investments. It is noted that the rules provide that “The Trustees may require the trustees of a charity requesting withdrawal to bear any costs of transferring to them any property other than cash...” and the “The Trustees shall not be bound upon any withdrawal to sell any investments forming part of the fund if in their opinion it is inexpedient to do so...”

Trustees Discretionary Fund

35. On occasions the Trustees are notified of bequests where the terms may state they are for the “benefit of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland” or the “Trustees of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland”. The present policy of the Trustees is to invest these in the Trustees Discretionary Fund in the General Investment Fund, unless a specific project requiring funding is identified, and then to distribute the income annually. In allocating capital or income, and while recognising no restrictions have been expressed by the donor, the Trustees will have regard to expressions of wish or known interests of the donor. During 2015, the Trustees did not receive any bequests which they have included in their Discretionary Fund. At 31st December 2015 the Fund held 57,857 shares in the General Investment Fund which valued the holding at £514,580. In response to a resolution of the 2013 General Assembly the Trustees provided a grant of £450,000 to Union Theological College during 2014 to assist with the cost of major repairs to the building. The Trustees have received a further request for assistance from the College to assist with the next phase of works and have agreed to provide an additional grant of £130,000 in 2016.

Crescent Church Loan Fund

36. The Crescent Church Loan Fund was established following the sale of the Crescent Church premises in 1975 and provides low interest loans to Congregations having short term financial problems.

Interest is currently charged on loans at half the total of bank base rate plus 2% (currently 1.25%) on the average balance outstanding over the term of the loan.

The maximum loan normally provided by the Fund is £25,000 and this has to be repaid normally within 3 years, although loans over 5 years can be provided in certain circumstances. Further information about loans from the Fund is available from the Financial Secretary’s Department.

During 2015 the Trustees provided loans of £50,237 and the loans outstanding at 31st December 2015 were £63,820 and at that time, the fund had £301,611 available to meet loan requests.

Getty Bequest

37. The allocation of grants out of the income of the Trust Estate of John Getty for the year ending 31st December, 2015 was as follows:

Overseas – Foreign	£2,330
Overseas – Jewish	£1,270
Home Mission	£3,070
Belfast City Mission	£2,330
TOTAL	£9,000

Bequests

38. The Trustees received a report of all bequests notified to the Church during 2015 and wish to record their deep gratitude for those who have decided to support the Church in this way.

Resignation of Trustee

39. At the 2016 Annual General Meeting Mr RA Alcorn indicated to the Trustees that he wished to resign. Mr Alcorn has served as a Trustee since his appointment to the former Board of Trustees in 1980. He also served on the former Executive Committee of Trustees from 1981 to 1988. The Trustees wish to record their deep appreciation for his committed service and for his valued contribution to their work. A name to replace Mr Alcorn will be brought to the General Assembly through Supplementary Reports.

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the recommendations on valuations dates, dividend dates and notice periods for the General Investment Fund be accepted and the Trustees authorised to make the necessary changes to the Scheme Rules.

2. 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 David Clarke, Dr Samuel Hutchinson; Revs Dr DJ Watts, TD Gribben; Sir Bruce Robinson, Norman Bennett, Douglas Crowe, Leslie McKeague.

3(a). That the Report of the Trustees be received.

3(b). That the recommendation regarding the Mrs AM Davidson Trust be adopted.

3(c). That the recommendation regarding the Sir Wm V McCleery Trust be adopted.

3(d). That the recommendation regarding the Miss Irene Scott Trust be adopted.

3(e). That the recommendation regarding the Miss Ida Mary McGeown Trust be adopted.

3(f). That the recommendation regarding the Victor Morrow Trust be adopted.

APPOINTMENT OF A TRUSTEE

That _____ be, and is hereby nominated and appointed by the General Assembly as a Trustee of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in room of Mr RA Alcorn, resigned, and of the appointment of _____ as a said Trustee attestation is made by the signature of the Moderator of the General Assembly and of the Clerk of the General Assembly in accordance with the provisions of the Irish Presbyterian Church Act , 1871.

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