

Item 1 – BUSINESS BOARD – Supplementary Report

1. The Business Board has been concerned about the growing number of “ex-officio” places on some Boards and Committees. To reduce the number but still ensure that each Board knows something of the work of the other Boards, a resolution is appended to allow full-time Board Secretaries to sit and deliberate on Boards, other than their own.

2. The Communications Secretary has informed the Business Board that it is now possible to stream the proceedings of the Assembly on the web. The Business Board recommend that this be used as an additional means of publicising the work of the Assembly.

The General Synod of the Church of Ireland (2009)

The Very Rev Dr John Finlay reports:

The General Synod of the Church of Ireland took place from Friday, 8 May to Sunday, 10 May, 2009 in the City Hotel, Armagh. The Presbyterian Church was represented by the Very Rev Dr JM Finlay and Mr William Scott. The Moderator, the Right Rev Dr Donald Patton, was invited to give a short address to Synod as part of their worship on the opening day.

The Archbishop of Armagh, in his presidential address, emphasized the need for ‘inclusivity’ and partnership as an antidote to division. He also took the opportunity to comment on the credit crunch and the part played by the bankers in the present financial crisis.

One of the first items on the agenda was a Bill relating to the preamble of the Thirty - Nine articles. There had been concern lest some of the more negative statements in the Articles should create misunderstanding or give offence to other Churches. There was an awareness that the language used when the document was drawn up several centuries ago is neither the language nor the spirit of the Church today. There was, however, equal concern among some that the particular theological emphases enshrined in the Articles should be preserved and that any proposed change should not give the appearance of their being watered down.

It was reported to the Synod that the Church of Ireland’s assets had suffered seriously in the present financial crisis and that Churches, particularly in the Republic, were facing very challenging times. The circumstances and conditions under which auxiliary and non- stipendiary ministry might receive remuneration was a topic of interesting debate.

Education was high on the agenda. Grave concern was expressed at the consequences of cutbacks in education in the Republic. Anxiety was expressed that a large percentage of Protestant children would not have access to free secondary education. There was also concern that in the North the spiritual and historical role played by Protestant Churches was diminishing and we seemed to be heading towards the secularisation of our schools.

In Mission and Ministry the vision to be a ‘mission – shaped’ Church has proved challenging and there was an acceptance that the message, while endorsed by Synod, had not really got down to the pew. Members’ mindset is still that the outsider should come in rather than acknowledging their own obligation to go out.

The sharpest exchanges arose out of debate following the report of the Hard Gospel project and the very differing attitudes towards sexuality groups.

As always the representatives of the other Churches were very warmly welcomed and generously entertained.

The Church of Scotland General Assembly (2009)

The Very Rev Dr Donald Patton reports:

The Church of Scotland Assembly was held in Edinburgh from 21st to 27th May. I was accompanied by my Chaplain, the Rev Dr Jack Richardson MBE, and Dr William Rowney, a senior elder in Lowe Memorial Congregation, Finaghy, along with our respective wives. We enjoyed warm hospitality and were made most welcome at all the events to which we were invited.

The opening of the Assembly was held on Thursday morning, when the Moderator, the Rt Rev William Hewitt, was formally elected. Mr Hewitt brought evident pastoral and pulpit gifts to the office and moderated the sessions of the Assembly with humour and with firmness. Her Majesty’s representative, the Lord High Commissioner, the Rt Honourable George Reid, was welcomed and invited to address the Assembly. He gave a masterly address on the economic storms of our times commenting, ‘I recently met a man made bankrupt. He said: “I’ve lost all hope. I might as well be in my grave”. This Assembly knows, to the contrary, that hope was born in a grave.’

The business of the Assembly then got under way, with the Moderator conducting worship each morning, bringing thoughtful and apposite biblical reflections. This reminded us in whose presence we worshipped and conducted

our business, and it was noted that each debate was conducted with grace even when it was obvious that convictions were passionately held and expressed.

On the Thursday evening, over tea-time, we were the guests of the Irish Fraternal and I shared something of the saga of the Presbyterian Mutual Society. As a result, the Rev Richard Baxter, minister of St Kenneth's, Kennoway, tabled a resolution to the Assembly, to which I was invited to speak. It reads 'Note with concern the impact of the collapse of **the Presbyterian Mutual Society** and urge the UK Government and devolved executive in Northern Ireland to take urgent action to resolve the situation.'

On Friday evening we, along with other delegates and visitors, were formerly welcomed and presented to the Assembly and I was given opportunity to bring greetings from PCI and on behalf of the other Ecumenical delegates.

Dominating the Assembly and the media coverage was the well-publicised debate on the call by Queen's Cross Parish Church, Aberdeen, to the Rev Scott Rennie, presently minister of Brechin Cathedral, who lives in the Manse sharing "a committed relationship with his Christian partner David". The call had been sustained by the Presbytery of Aberdeen. A number of members of that Presbytery appealed against the decision of the Presbytery on the grounds that 'The scriptures of the Old and New Testament, when they take up the subject of same-sex activity, present it as a wrong choice.' and arguing that 'The ordination and induction of active homosexuals has never been the accepted practice of the Church of Scotland or the Church catholic, except where there has first been a clear debate and decision to ordain active homosexuals.' The issue was referred to the General Assembly to be heard. A debate took place on Thursday on procedure as to whether the case should be taken before any debate on principle. It was decided that the case should be heard first so as not to prejudice the outcome by a prior debate on principle. On Saturday evening the Assembly met as a court for four hours to hear the case and came to the decision that the Presbytery of Aberdeen has followed the correct procedures. 121 members signed their dissent from the decision. The Assembly returned to the issue on Monday afternoon and after much debate agreed to appoint a Special Commission to consult with Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions and to prepare a study on Ordination and Induction to the Ministry of the Church of Scotland, and for all members to observe a moratorium on issuing public comment in relation to contentious matters of human sexuality until the Commission reported to the Assembly of 2011. The Assembly then turned to an Overture from the Presbytery of Lochcarron-Skye "That this Church shall not accept for training, ordain, admit, re-admit, induct or introduce to any ministry of the Church anyone involved in a sexual relationship outside of faithful marriage between a man and a woman". The Moderator ruled that

homosexuality was not to be mentioned, and, in the light of this, after conferring briefly, the movers withdrew the Overture.

On Tuesday morning, the 26th, many Church of Scotland Chaplains to the armed services were present and at least an hour was given to acknowledge their work, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan. A live audio link with two chaplains in Afghanistan allowed the Assembly to listen to a conversation with the Moderator. An invitation to coffee in the Signet Library near St Giles Cathedral gave me an opportunity to catch up with four of our Chaplains from PCI who were present.

All Churches share challenges in common in this increasingly secular age. The Church of Scotland has 200 vacant parishes, and is thinking through challenges to ministry in the twenty-first century. The Church without Walls report gives a taste of creative initiatives to meet the new situation. Several reports bear careful study - Growing up in Scotland today, a reflection on childhood; End of Life issues; Holy Communion and the Renewal of the Church; Being Single: In Church and Society. There is an excellent report on the theology of forgiveness in relation to the involvement of sex offenders in the life of Congregations.

We had the pleasure of attending two functions hosted by the Lord High Commissioner and his wife at Holyrood Palace and were thankful that these occasions were blessed, for the most part, with pleasant weather! One other highlight was the visit of Archbishop (Emeritus) Desmond Tutu to the Assembly on Wednesday morning. He gave a stirring address on the theme of freedom and injustice and their relation to the Christian Gospel.

We returned home on Wednesday evening 27th May with many happy memories and much food for thought. The relationship with PCI and the Church of Scotland has endured over many centuries but it has to be said that some of the decisions of this Assembly may place a strain on that relationship and will no doubt engender a theological and ecumenical dialogue in the months to come.

Additional Resolution – Business Board

2a. That full-time Board Secretaries be invited to sit and deliberate as appropriate on all Assembly Boards.

2b. That the General Assembly give permission for the streaming of their proceedings on the web.

DJ WATTS

Item 4 – REPORT OF CORRESPONDING MEMBERS AND DELEGATES - Supplementary Report

Add

Church of Ireland – The Most Rev RL Clarke, the Very Rev RSJH McKelvey

Item 5 – UNION COMMISSION – Supplementary Report

Ministry, Finance and Mission

1. This supplementary paper is presented following a special meeting of the Union Commission set aside to consider the seriousness of the situation created by (1) the large number of vacancies, (2) the pressure that augmentation continues to place on the Central Ministry Fund and (3) the implications that failing to address these issues will have for the mission strategy given to the Commission by the Assembly. It was decided to ask the Assembly to initiate a debate throughout the Church about an appropriate response to the following realities which are impacting on the work and ministry of the PCI.

2. **a. Shortage of ministers:** The appendix which follows outlines clearly the most recent projections concerning the likely number of vacant charges. It is accepted that this is not an exact science; there are some variables which cannot be calculated exactly, however careful work has been done to factor into the estimates (a) the encouraging number of students who are in training but also (b) the anticipated large number of retirements. Faced with this projected shortage it would be possible for the Commission simply to give leave to call to every Congregation with a reasonable level of viability and to allow Congregations to compete against one another for scarce ministerial resources. However, as the 2006 resolution quoted below makes clear, the Assembly has decided that this strategy will not meet the needs of the Church. It results in lengthy vacancies for several Congregations with all the implications that has for their life and work, and effectively it creates medium term ‘unions’ because ministry has to be provided by Conveners who already have Congregations to pastor. It means that some Congregations - and possibly in the most challenging situations – have little or no prospect of calling a Minister, and in other Congregations ministers do not have their time and talents fully utilised.

b. Finance : It is not always appreciated that where a Congregation is unable to pay the appropriate level of minimum stipend to their minister , the additional amount is paid from the Central Ministry Fund either as

“augmentation” or “incremental grant”(the grant which recognizes years of service). This has direct implications for the amount of assessment paid by each Congregation. Both when Congregations come seeking Leave to Call and also through the review process, the Commission is trying to reduce the amount paid from the Central Ministry Fund. One of the reasons for considering the union or amalgamation of Congregations is that one or both of the Congregations has reached a point where considerable support is required from CMF. Thankfully the Church remains financially strong; however the Commission anticipates that this pressure to reduce the claims it makes on CMF will intensify in the present economic climate.

c. Mission: The fact that new projects are being proposed which further the mission of the Church, for example through Church planting, is encouraging. However there simply will not be enough ministers to undertake these developments unless some ministerial resources are released through the amalgamation or union of existing charges.

3. The Commission in previous years has tried to alert the Assembly to this gathering crisis. It is worth quoting again some words from Principal Laurence Kirkpatrick's History of Congregations: *“though there are more Irish Presbyterian Congregations today than in 1840 when the General Assembly was formed, Church membership has fallen by about 50% in the same period.”* In response to these concerns in 2006 the Assembly passed the following resolution : *“That the General Assembly recognise that for historical reasons there are more Church buildings, Congregations and Charges than are required in the present circumstances and that the worship and mission of the Church are hindered by this. The Union Commission is therefore encouraged, in consultation with the Presbyteries and the Board of Mission in Ireland, actively to address this issue”.* (Minutes, page 53 resolution 3.)

4. As indicated in the main report, the Commission is grateful to those in Congregations and Presbyteries who have displayed an understanding of the new realities and who have co-operated in devising linkages which enable ministry to be shared. However it is clear that the depth of the problem is not generally understood throughout the Church. Sometimes when the Commission makes use of the powers given to it by the Assembly and suggests a union or an amalgamation, members and the local leadership do not see this as a way for their community of faith to continue within a different structure, rather they see it as a betrayal of all the faithful service given within that existing structure in the past. All sorts of general solutions are suggested : for example *“we need more biblical giving on the part of members.”* These points may be valid, but they do not address in a realistic way the immediate situation PCI faces. Again people may complain about procedures; the Commission does not claim to be perfect and is always willing to learn lessons about how it does its work;

however discussion of procedures must not deflect attention from the central challenge which remains. All of those are very human reactions and the Commission understands the pain involved in coming to terms with the need for change. For generations the Church has harnessed support for a particular pattern of ministry in the service of the kingdom and now it is asking Christian people to see that God is leading to new arrangements for the provision of ministry. There is a need to go back to very basic theology in which together it is remembered that the Church is the people, and that its primary allegiance is to the risen Christ and not to any particular pattern of ministry. Living through fundamental change, and doing that in a creative way with hope and faith, has always been part of the journey of the people of God.

5. Traditionally Presbyterians do not warm to solutions which they feel are imposed from the centre. The Commission is therefore suggesting in an additional resolution that Presbyteries should initiate discussion about these issues. The Church is to be a spiritual home for all of us. If this resolution is passed the Commission would appeal to the Presbyteries to find time in a crowded schedule to fully debate this matter and to come forward with some suggestions about how the Church should proceed. The Commission will listen carefully to whatever comments and proposals are made; however, to focus discussion, the Commission would request that the Presbyteries address the following questions:

1. Apart from unions and amalgamations what alternative strategies would address, in an effective way, the issues outlined in this report?
2. Where the Commission exercises its role under the Code and decides that a union or amalgamation should be made, how can the Commission, the Presbytery and the local leadership co-operate more effectively in achieving this end?
3. During a vacancy it is important that the vision of a Congregation about its mission is clarified and that any contentious practical matters, like the future of a manse, are clearly resolved before Leave to Call is given, (so that these issues do not hinder the new ministry). However, within those parameters, how could the length of vacancies be reduced?
4. How often in the last three years has the Presbytery used the procedure whereby, when the departure date of the minister is known well in advance – as in the case of retirement, the Vacancy Commission can begin its work some months before the minister demits his charge?
5. Given the length of vacancies, how can Conveners of vacancies be supported in their work?

6. What other comments, observations, and suggestions would the Presbytery want to make?

SA MATTHEWS

APPENDIX

Update on projected number of Vacant Charges to be filled

YEAR	Assistants becoming eligible for call	Retirements of Ministers from Congregations (if retire at 65)	Nett changes eligible / retirements	Estimated Nett changes for other reasons	Likely change in Ministers available	Estimated Vacant Charges to be filled
As at 1-4-09						39
Rest of 2009	20	-11	+9	-2	+7	32
2010	10	-16	-6	-3	-9	41
2011	7	-13	-6	-3	-9	50
2012	14	-10	+4	-3	+1	49
2013	19	-15	+4	-3	+1	48
2014	19	-9	+10	-3	+7	41
2015	12	-11	+1	-3	-2	43
2016		-11				
2017		-10				
2018		-15				

Additional Resolution – Union Commission

1(a) That the General Assembly ask Presbyteries to consider the additional Union Commission paper “Ministry, Finance and Mission” and to send comments and responses to the Convener of the Union Commission by Friday, 6 November, 2009.

SA MATTHEWS

Item 9 – BOARD OF MISSION OVERSEAS – Supplementary Report

World Development Committee

Christian Aid Ireland is one of five Irish Aid and Development Agencies that receives money from the Irish government through its Multi Annual Programme Scheme (MAPS). Christian Aid Ireland had been allocated €17 million over 5 years to deliver significant long-term development in 7 post conflict countries. As part of its budgetary retrenchment the Irish government has cut funding for aid and development by 22%. For Christian Aid Ireland this represents a cut of €716,000 or 20% of its budget for 2009, the third year of the scheme. This has serious implications for the livelihoods and well-being of

poor people. Therefore the World Development Committee brings the following resolution:

Additional Resolution – Board of Mission Overseas

8a. That the General Assembly note with the greatest concern the disproportionately large cut (22%) made in Irish Aid funding in the recent budgetary adjustment in the Republic of Ireland and urge the Government of the Republic of Ireland to review this cut; to resist further cuts in the interests of the poorest and most marginalised peoples of the world; to remain resolutely on course for the target of 0.7% GNP towards aid and development by 2012.

MCA GRAY

Item 10 – GENERAL BOARD – Supplementary Report

1. Communications Panel

At the request of the Board of Communications the General Board appointed a panel to consider the working of the Communications Board in the light of the present needs of the Church. The work is on-going, but the panel have agreed the following basic remit for the Board of Communications:

Remit for the Board of Communications

The Board of Communications exists to enable the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to glorify God and bear Christian witness through the very best and most effective means of communication.

(i) The Board will work to enable the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to achieve professional excellence and effectiveness in all areas where the Church communicates with itself or the world.

(ii) The Board will be responsible for initiating, overseeing and reviewing the public relations and press services of the General Assembly and their Boards and Committees in re-active, pro-active, routine and crisis modes.

(iii) The Board will be the official channel through which the Church maintains good relationships with the Press, Broadcasting and other mass media and responds to consultation exercises by them or by Government in relation to the media.

(iv) The Board is the agency through which the General Assembly will establish and maintain the corporate identity of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. It will have responsibility for coordinating all communications and maintaining quality control and compliance in all the materials made public by Boards and Committees.

(v) The Board will provide Information Services for the General Assembly and will be their first line publisher, responsible for the denominational magazine and core web presence.

(vi) The Board will make available to the General Assembly and their Boards and Committees advice and services in all areas of communication whether sourced internally or externally.

(vii) The Board will be a source of training for the Church promoting excellence in communication at Congregational, Presbytery and Assembly levels.

(viii) The Board shall make available to Congregations and Presbyteries appropriate advice on crisis management and public relations.

(ix) The Board will constantly monitor new communications technology and advise how this can be implemented for the benefit of the Church's work.

(x) The Board shall provide appropriate guidelines to Congregations, Presbyteries and Boards on the content and overview of whatever interactive and on-line services they may provide.

(xi) The Board will implement its functions through a professional staff led by an appropriately qualified Communications and Press Secretary.

(xii) The Board shall include any other function which the General Assembly shall assign to it.

2. Issue of Visas – Employing non-EU nationals in Northern Ireland

1. During the last year there have been significant changes in immigration law within the United Kingdom. These changes will affect the Church both centrally and at Congregational level within Northern Ireland. Since the end of 2008, all non-European Union potential Ministers, employees or 'volunteers-in-mission', seeking to work within Northern Ireland either at central or Congregational level, will have to receive a 'certificate of sponsorship' for immigration purposes. This applies for non-EU nationals,

known for immigration purposes as ‘migrants’, in all of the following categories within PCI in Northern Ireland:

- (a) All posts for which the PCI Personnel Department has direct responsibility
- (b) All other Board employees and volunteers
- (c) All Ministers in Congregations
- (d) All local Congregational ministry employees and volunteers in mission
- (e) All other local Congregational employees and volunteers.

2. PCI has been registered as a Sponsoring Body by the UK Borders Agency, and the system is being overseen by the Deputy Clerk, the Rev Trevor Gribben, PCI’s designated Authorising Officer.

3. PCI will be operating on behalf of the UK Borders Agency in issuing ‘Certificates of Sponsorship’ for non-EU nationals who are potential ministers, employees, and volunteers. Certificates of Sponsorship can be issued by the Deputy Clerk, from whom application forms and explanatory notes are available on request, but only if all the legal requirements are fully satisfied.

4. One important new legal requirement, for most categories of employee, is the need to apply a ‘resident labour market test’, prior to the issuing of a certificate of sponsorship. This basically means that for many jobs a non-EU national can only be appointed if there is no **suitable** applicant from within the EU i.e. even if a non-EU applicant is clearly the best candidate, he or she will only be eligible for a certificate of sponsorship if none of the EU candidates are suitable for the post. This clearly has major implications for Congregations wishing to call a non-EU national as their Minister or appoint a non-EU national as, for example, their youth worker. Any Congregation considering such a call or appointment, even in the case of a ‘volunteer-in-mission’, should contact the Deputy Clerk at the earliest possible opportunity in the process.

5. To keep the legal requirements before all Congregations in Northern Ireland, it is recommend that the Union Commission, when issuing a leave to call or giving permission for an Additional Pastoral Personnel post to be created, should include a note that if Congregations wish to consider a non-EU national they should contact the Deputy Clerk for guidance.

3. Priorities Committee:

1. The Priorities Committee has developed its work, particularly in two areas:

(A) (i) A panel has been looking at how best to continue the work of peacemaking and conciliation in the Church, recognizing that the present Peacemaking project comes to an end on 30 June. The panel is conscious that while a particular phase of peacemaking is drawing to a close, the work begun in 1989 must continue in some form.

(ii) However, the panel also believe that this is a time for reflection. As the political accommodation in Northern Ireland begins to stabilize, so the presenting issues in society are changing. While sectarianism is as invasive as ever, people do feel that they are living in relative peace. The language of peacemaking may need to be revised. There are additional challenges, for example the growing tendency towards racism and exclusivism. The panel is convinced that the gospel must be seen to challenge such attitudes, but perhaps the Church's response may have a different emphasis than in the past. In particular the panel would want to see such concerns mainstreamed in the overall work of the Boards.

(iii) The panel also recognises the important task of encouraging the Church to look at constructive ways in which to work through problems together. At times the conciliation service has proved helpful in overcoming difficulties. While the work of conciliation should be consolidated and expanded, the panel believes it is distinct from the "good relationships" emphasis of peacemaking and the two should be kept separate. It is therefore recommended that the "conciliation" remit should stay with the Moderator's Advisory Committee.

(B) (i) The General Board has also appointed a panel to consider the Church's position on pensions and the Congregations' ability to contribute. In the report it was suggested that the remit should be extended to include an examination of all assessments. The panel has met once and identified three main areas of work: funding; structures; and consultation.

(ii) Since the report was written the Priorities Committee has considered wider issues and now recommends that the remit of the panel be extended to include an examination of all the financial resources which are drawn from Congregations, including the United Appeal and other Appeals. If necessary, the panel should co-opt those with necessary experience in these areas. An amended resolution is appended.

2. The Priorities Committee was also made aware of the Memorial of the Dromore Presbytery, as it clearly impinges on the priorities of the Church. The Committee fully recognises the importance of the peacemaking project and rejoices in the progress of the work. However, it believes that the time for reflection referred to above is important and that if the prayer of the memorial be granted other important work may have to be delayed. It therefore would urge that the prayer be not granted at this time but that the arguments contained in the memorial be referred to the panel considering the future of peacemaking for careful consideration. An appropriate amendment will be brought to the resolution of the memorial.

4. Presbyterian Mutual Society

1. The panel appointed by the General Board continues to meet and to give advice and support. It is now clear that the Administrator will not give his second report until after the General Assembly. When it is issued there may be some more clarity of time-scale. The frustration of waiting is felt by everyone, but most acutely by those who do not know how much of their money will be returned. The delay is exacerbated by the uncertain response from government to the requests from many sources for action similar to that offered to other UK savers. The Moderator, and others from the Church, have been tireless in their efforts to engage with politicians and opinion-formers both here and at Westminster. While there are hopes of some progress, the situation at the time of writing is still unclear.

2. The panel recognises that while it must be prepared for all outcomes, the vital decisions at the moment will be made by others. The government, both at Westminster and Stormont, must give a definitive view as to its role and responsibility under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act (Northern Ireland). The Administrator must decide if the creditors are to be given an opportunity to restore mutuality. These seem to be the crucial preliminary decisions in seeking a way forward. The panel will, however, continue to explore all options.

3. No-one should underestimate the hurt and frustration felt by many who see much of their life-savings at risk. At the very beginning of this crisis ministers were asked to ensure that people who are suffering know the interest and pastoral concern of the Church. That is still the unique contribution the Church can make in a devastating and tragic situation for so many.

Amended Resolution – General Board

Priorities Committee

5. That an examination of all assessments and appeals be included in the remit of the General Assembly to the Panel appointed by the General Board to review the Church's position on pensions.

DJ WATTS

Additional Resolutions – General Board

Moderator's Advisory Committee

8a. That the General Assembly, concerned for the well-being of many of its members who are savers in the Presbyterian Mutual Society, call on the Government of the United Kingdom to take urgent action in their support.

8b. That the General Assembly call on the Northern Ireland Executive to do all in its power to resolve the difficult situation for savers in the Presbyterian Mutual Society.

8c. That the General Assembly authorise the General Board to take all the appropriate decisions which need to be made before the next Assembly in support of savers in the Presbyterian Mutual Society.

DJ WATTS

Item 11 – GENERAL BOARD – Supplementary Report

Church and Society Committee

Committee structure (ref par 5)

1. To enable the better working of the Committee it is believed that the Church would be better served by a more focussed North/South structure. To that end the Committee will divide with the Northern and Southern groups meeting separately throughout the year. The Southern panel will add to its numbers for the purposes of its focussed meetings by using representatives from the Presbyteries. This should allow the group to more effectively respond to issues of concern for the Church in the Republic. The Northern panel may also add to its numbers for the purposes of focussing on matters related to Northern Ireland.

2. The main Committee membership will remain unchanged, the additional members being consulted as experts or interested parties. The whole Committee will meet at least twice each year and will report as normal through the General Board.

3. The Southern Convener will be responsible for convening the Southern Panel and the Northern Convener for the Northern Panel. The Conveners will together continue to be responsible for the whole Committee, for its reporting, affirmation of common issues, and for ensuring that theological reflection and input is shared between the two sections of the Committee.

The Committee believes that this way forward will enable more effective working both North and South of the border.

Response to the Report of the Consultative Group on the Past (ref par 6)

1. On 28 January, 2009, the Report of the Consultative Group on the Past was published. The report, which runs to 190 pages was presented by Lord Eames and Denis Bradley, and contains 31 recommendations covering a wide range of very difficult issues, ranging from how best to remember the past through to the establishment of a Legacy Commission.

2. The report suggested that there would be four strands to the mandate of that Commission:

- (a) helping society towards a shared and reconciled future, through a process of engagement with community issues arising from the conflict.
- (b) reviewing and investigating historical cases.
- (c) conducting a process of information recovery.
- (d) examining linked or thematic cases emerging from the conflict.

3. It is important to note that the report was presented to the Secretary of State and has not been put out for further public consultation. Its recommendations are currently under consideration by the British Government (though see par 9(b) below). This response is therefore by way of comment and reflection rather than being part of a more formal public process.

4. The Committee believes it is crucially important that everyone understands and accepts that 'dealing with the past' is a huge task for the whole community that will take many years. Even raw statistics make this clear. The report points out that in addition to the 3,500 people who lost their lives, 47,000 people sustained injuries; there were 37,000 shooting incidents, 22,500 armed robberies and almost 20,000 people imprisoned for scheduled offences. So we are living in a relatively small community where tens of thousands of people

have been directly or indirectly affected, in virtually every town, village community and parish, as well as in the cities. Dealing with the past is not something that can be hived off to someone else, for we were, and are, all involved and all affected. And it is equally important to acknowledge that for many people the past cannot be 'dealt' with at all, for their lives have been changed irrevocably by what happened.

5. There is a huge amount of first rate work being done at present by and with victims and survivors. This can be seen, for example, in the work of the Commission for Victims and Survivors, and the very many groups seeking to provide support to a wide range of people. The report of the Consultative Group on the Past has sought to chart a way through the myriad of issues that remain, but their report and recommendations as to how this might be done have been mired in controversy, focused largely on the issue of a £12,000 'recognition payment'. It is a matter of great regret there has been so little public substantive debate and/or discussion on so many of their other proposals.

6. The debate is seriously hampered by the fact that there is not yet even general agreement across our society on who is a victim. The current legal definition as set out in The Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 Para 3(1)) defines a victim as:

- (a) someone who is or has been physically or psychologically injured as a result of or in consequence of a conflict-related incident;
- (b) someone who provides a substantial amount of care on a regular basis for an individual mentioned in paragraph (a); or
- (c) someone who has been bereaved as a result of or in consequence of a conflict-related incident.

7. However both the DUP and the UUP have indicated that they wish the definition of a victim to be changed, and a Bill to that effect is likely to be brought to the Assembly in the near future. Such a change is likely to be strongly opposed by Nationalists. Consensus, even on this matter, seems a long way off.

8. The Church and Society Committee does not believe that it is helpful to revisit in detail all the issues raised in and by the report, since there is little prospect of that leading to general agreement. Nonetheless, as a Christian Church deeply committed to the pastoral needs of those affected, the PCI has a deep interest in stimulating productive and sensitive discussion and debate. The Committee also believe that the Church should help to shape the care and support that needs to be made available over the long term to victims and survivors. It fully supports the work of the Commission for Victims and Survivors, and invites the Northern Ireland Assembly to urge the Commission

to play its part in addressing needs with as much clarity and urgency as possible.

9. The Committee wishes to make some general comments and recommendations arising from the report itself:

(a) It is both surprised and disappointed that so little attention is given in the report to the care of the 47,000 people injured over the years. This is a long term legacy of the conflict, and appears to remain largely overlooked. The Committee asks that a great deal more information is put into the public arena on the impact of injuries, and on the levels of support and care both needed and available.

(b) It supports the decision by the Secretary of State to reject the suggestion of a £12,000 'recognition payment' to the nearest relative of someone who died as a result of the conflict. This recommendation was doomed from the outset, given that there is no consensus across the community on the definition of a victim. Its inclusion inevitably drew the public debate away from the remainder of the report, and has seriously diminished the debate about the key challenge of 'dealing with the past'.

(c) It is in broad agreement with the recommendation that a Legacy Commission be established along the lines in the report. The Committee is, however, greatly concerned that the detailed shaping of its work will be settled in distant corridors of power, and could be moulded more by political and financial expediency than by a clear commitment to do the very best that can be done for the welfare of all our citizens.

Accordingly, the Committee asks that the NI Assembly be asked for its views on the setting up of and work of the Commission, and that the members engage on these issues with a sense of urgency and commitment for the good of the whole of society – not just of their own constituencies.

(d) This last comment points to a deep concern about the carrying through of all the work to 'deal with the past'. The report makes few if any substantial demands on or requirements of either the NI Assembly or the NI Executive. In effect, the locally elected political representatives are distanced from this long term work of reconciliation since the Legacy Commission is being asked and expected to deliver so much. The Committee believes that the Commission must be set up in such a way as to **require** active and long term support and engagement with both the Assembly and the Executive. The building of a shared, reconciled and better future cannot be done without the institutions of government unambiguously playing a leading part in dealing with the very issues from the past that have led to the need to build such a future.

(e) The report properly draws attention to the question of collusion. This is an issue steeped in mire, for as the report says, there is no

agreement across the community on *'the definition of collusion; what actions can be described as collusive in the malevolent sense of the word, whether it was a policy of the acts of a few; and who should be held to account for the mishandling of agents'* (Page 70. See also the Report, Appendix 4).

(f) Whatever the scope of collusion, already in the public domain or potentially still to be disclosed, the Committee wishes to stand shoulder to shoulder with those families and individuals who sought to fulfill their duties with integrity and courage, and who paid a very high price for so doing.

(g) It fully supports the recommendation that this issue should be included within the remit of the Legacy Commission, for it must not be swept under the carpet. The state needs to be held accountable to moral and ethical boundaries every bit as much as all other parts of society and individuals.

10. The Church and Society Committee believes that the best contribution the Church can make at present is to seek ways of bringing grace both to those most affected and involved, and to the debates and decision making processes.

11. Over the years the Church has been privileged to be invited into countless lives and situations where horrendous events have taken place. Central to its contribution in the future is to continue to minister to those affected. The Committee believes that there is no substitute for being a channel of the grace of God, especially since there are many victims and survivors who do not wish to be part of the public debate, nor join a community support group. Ministry in the home is what the Church does best, and nothing should diminish the continuing importance of that.

12. Alongside this the Committee also recognises that the Church of Jesus Christ is an important part of wider civic society, not least because it is locally placed in every parish in the land, and is neither an arm of government nor dependent on public funding. At the heart of our calling to honour Christ there ought to be a deep commitment to the welfare of everyone, no matter who they are. The Church has Biblical insights to bring to many of the recommendations in the report ranging from the need to ensure that the benefits of peace are experienced in deprived areas, to 'preserving the requirements of truth and justice' in handling legal processes (p35). The evaluation and carrying through of all these recommendations is a vastly complex and uncertain project. No Committee or Board of any Church can ensure that any of these are implemented. However, the Church and Society Committee believes that there is scope for some effective work to be done on many of them – sometimes by Presbyteries, sometimes in partnership with others inside or

outside our denomination, sometimes by central Church action. The Church and Society Committee is committed to trying to ensure that what can be done is done.

13. However, the report seeks an explicit response from the Churches on several issues, and this is our first attempt to do so. The Committee has had some very helpful input from a few sources, especially from two Presbyteries, and wishes to thank all those who have helped shape its thinking.

14. The Consultative Group specifically challenges the Churches *'to review and rethink their contribution to a non sectarian future in the light of their past, particularly in the area of education'*. (pp 75-78). They also specifically suggest that the Chair of the Legacy Commission *'would work with the Churches to ensure that they call upon their Congregations to reflect on the level of reconciliation that has already been achieved and how we can all build on this together'*. (p142)

15. The Committee fully accepts that the reality and extent of sectarianism can be very deeply embedded in both minds and hearts, and wishes to be at the forefront of bringing some new thinking to the building of a shared and better future. It has requested a research paper on the building of community cohesion. The work of the Board of Education is central to the Church's response on this issue. The Committee will liaise closely with the Board.

16. Given the nature of sectarianism, there is a limit to what can be done centrally by the Church. It is often localised in nature, and often grievous in its outworking. The Church's "Gospel in Conflict" programme is an excellent resource, and the Committee commends its use in every Congregation. Presbyteries should be at the forefront of addressing what can be done locally, and a resolution to encourage local action is appended.

17. In Ch 5 of the report, the Group recommends that *'full support is given by government, the private and voluntary sector, including the Churches, to the continuation of the Annual day of Reflection... on 21 June each year'*. (p101).

Proper remembering is a very important part of recalling the past as well as shaping the future. Yet how we remember is every bit as important as what we remember, and in this there is a significant challenge to remember in a way that heals rather than divides.

The Committee supports this recommendation, whilst making it clear that in no way should this Day be seen to, or be allowed to, replace or dilute

other occasions for remembering such as the Remembrance Day ceremonies and services in November.

18. Although it is hard to find many places where the report has been welcomed, never mind embraced, it does represent a serious attempt to grapple with issues that have been, and remain, deeply divisive and deeply distressing. The Committee would urge the government to pay great attention to the details of how any recommendations might be worked out, for in doing so, they will be seen to be taking the content of the report and the issues involved very seriously. The report may be less than perfect, yet given the reality of sin, it is both unrealistic and unbiblical to have expected a perfect solution to have been produced. Great grace is needed, and the nation needs to be reminded that man does not live by politics alone.

Additional Resolutions – General Board

Church and Society Committee

25a. That the General Assembly accepts the Church and Society Committee response to the Report of the Consultative Group on the Past and asks the conveners to forward it to the Secretary of State on behalf of the General Assembly.

25b. That in light of the immensity of the task of dealing with the past and in light of the ongoing suffering of victims and survivors, the General Assembly continue to pray for the Commission for Victims and Survivors and support it in its work.

25c. That the General Assembly urge the Victims Commission to address the needs of the injured and regret that these were not addressed in the Report of the Consultative Group on the Past.

25d. That the General Assembly support the decision of the Secretary of State to reject the suggestion of a £12,000 recognition payment to the nearest relative of someone who died as a result of the conflict.

25e. That the General Assembly support the formation of a Legacy Commission but is concerned that such a Commission should work with local politicians. The Assembly therefore urge members of the Northern Ireland Assembly to engage on the issues as a matter of urgency.

25f. That accepting the reality of sectarianism and its widespread effects, the General Assembly support further work in this area, direct Presbyteries to examine the nature and extent of sectarianism within their bounds and to develop ways to address that sectarianism, and report back to the Church and Society Committee by the end of February 2010.

LE CARROLL, AJ BOAL

Item 12 – GENERAL BOARD – Supplementary Report

Church House Panel

1. As noted in paragraph 3.5 of the Church House Panel Report, in the Annual Reports, the Church House Panel were awaiting detailed costs for Phase 1 of the proposed interior renovation of Church House.

2. The Panel has now received the preliminary budget costs of £3,975,000 for Phase 1 as outlined in paragraph 3.4 of the Church House Panel Report. This figure is exclusive of VAT, Professional Fees and VAT on Professional Fees.

3. The Panel met at the beginning of May and agreed that it would not be prudent to recommend Phase 1 as noted in paragraph 2 to the General Assembly. However as the list of necessary repairs lengthens, as outlined in Appendices 2 and 3 of this Supplementary Report, the Panel agree that an amended Phase 1 scheme is necessary which will incorporate essential repair work. The remainder of the necessary repairs and renovation programme should be phased as part of a complete internal refurbishment scheme under the guidance of the Property Management Committee.

4. Given that the 2007 General Assembly agreed to carry out the external stonework/windows/roof repairs (£4,100,000) and minimal internal refurbishment (estimated at £1,800,000) the Panel considered how we could amend Phase 1 and include essential maintenance, keeping within a budget of £1,800,000.

5. In consultation with the Design Team we are proposing an Amended Phase 1 Scheme of £1,811,949 inclusive of VAT, Professional Fees and VAT on Professional Fees as outlined in Appendix 3 of the Supplementary Report. Such work to commence, subject to approval by the General Assembly, on completion of the external stonework at the beginning of 2011. This would be part of a phased complete internal refurbishment scheme which has been

costed, at current levels, at £5,845,000.00 inclusive of building works, fittings + furniture, VAT, Professional Fees and VAT on Professional Fees. The complete internal refurbishment scheme would include Amended Phase 1, Assembly Hall, Minor Hall, Concourse & associated first floor works for Church/Conference use and second floor office refurbishment.

6. The Amended Phase 1 scheme will provide a high quality Entrance/reception area, significantly upgrade the lift, stairwells and associated landings and provide quality open-plan office accommodation on the third floor. Plans of the overall scheme will be on display in the Concourse during General Assembly week.

7. Assuming the General Assembly agree to the Amended Phase 1 scheme it is envisaged that the costs will be met through Assessment. By way of guidance this will require an additional assessment of 1p levied on Congregations from 2011 to 2016. This figure is based on the following assumptions –

- Funding of external repairs and Amended Phase 1 internal repairs are funded over a 10 year period
- Interest rates in the region of 2-5%
- Property Management Committee generate a surplus of £150,000 pa
- Start to pay Amended Phase 1 in 2011

However it is the recommendation of the Church House Panel that the Property Management Committee bring proposals to the 2010 General Assembly for the phased implementation and financing of the further work.

APPENDIX 1

INTERNAL REFURBISHMENT OF CHURCH HOUSE, BELFAST

NECESSARY INTERNAL REPAIR WORK

1. Building Works

(a) Redecoration of walls, ceilings, doors, skirtings, etc. throughout	£ 120,000.00
(b) Replacement of internal doors to provide vision panels, etc.	72,000.00
(c) Provision of Catwalk to roofspace	8,000.00
(d) Refix/isolated repairs to Gallery flooring	11,000.00

(e)	Provision of railings at base of Gallery steps	4,000.00
(f)	Provision of new ballustrade to concourse void	16,000.00
(g)	Sundry plaster repairs (say)	5,000.00
(h)	Repairs to emergency staircase (say)	<u>10,000.00</u>
		£246,000.00

2. M&E Works

(a)	As detailed on M & E Consultants breakdown (Appendix 2)	572,000.00
(b)	Builders work in connection with M & E works Main Contractors alterations 15%	<u>85,800.00</u>
		£903,800.00

3. Contingencies

(a)	Contingency Sum	40,000.00
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4. Preliminaries

(a)	Main Contractors Preliminary Costs (20%)	<u>188,760.00</u>
		£ <u>1,132,560.00</u>

Note:

1. The Estimated Costings are at current levels and no allowance has been made for increased costs for future schemes/phases

2. The above are exclusive of VAT, Professional Fees and VAT on Professional Fees

3. No allowance has been made for decanting or segregation of the works into a number of individual contracts

APPENDIX 2**INTERNAL REFURBISHMENT OF CHURCH HOUSE, BELFAST****LIST OF NECESSARY MECHANICAL & ELECTRICAL REPAIRS**

1.	Upgrade Fire Alarm System	£ 45,000.00
2.	Upgrade Passenger Lifts to Current Standards	£ 80,000.00
3.	Upgrade Assembly Hall Electrical Services	£185,000.00
4.	Provide Thermostatic Mixing Valves in Toilets	£ 12,000.00
5.	Upgrade Main Toilet Soils and Wastes System	£ 5,000.00
6.	Provide Disabled Refuge Alarm System in Staircase	£ 20,000.00
7.	Replace R22 Refrigerant AC System to First Floor	£ 52,000.00
8.	Replace/Upgrade Distribution Boards	£ 20,000.00
9.	Upgrade Emergency Lighting Throughout the Building	£ 45,000.00
10.	Upgrade Lighting to Minor Hall	£ 18,000.00
11.	Replace Existing Oil Tank	£ 20,000.00
12.	Replacement Heating Controls	£ 50,000.00
13.	Upgrade Intruder Alarm System	£ 20,000.00
	TOTAL	£572,000.00

Costs Exclude:
 Builders Work & Profit
 VAT
 Professional Fees
 Out of Hours Working

APPENDIX 3

INTERNAL REFURBISHMENT OF CHURCH HOUSE, BELFAST
PROPOSED AMENDED PHASE 1 WORKS

Building Works

Area 1 – New Reception + Meeting/Exhibition Space	£ 352,000.00
Area 2 – New Lift Shafts/Lifts + Associated Stairs and Landings	410,000.00
Area 3 – Third Floor Office Refurbishments	634,000.00

Essential Repairs – Required to be Completed Prior to 2014 (Not Already Included Above)

Upgrade Fire Alarm System (incl. BWIC)	<u>45,000.00</u>
	£ 1,441,000.00

Professional Fees	<u>113,695.00</u>
	£ 1,554,695.00

VAT on Building Works (£ 1,268,000.00) + VAT on Professional Fees (£ 113,695.00) (15%)	<u>207,254.00</u>
	£ 1,761,949.00

Provision of Fixtures + Fittings (Desks, Chairs, Etc.)	<u>50,000.00</u>
	<u>£ 1,811,949.00</u>

Notes:

- Should none of the above works be carried out, the total estimated value of works required as “essential” prior to 2014 would be £ 242,000.00
 - Whilst Replacement of R22 Refrigerant AC System to 1st Floor is not essential prior to 2014 (this work can wait until 2015 when it must be replaced), any repair requirements to the existing system in the meantime could result in expensive “interim” replacement of R22 refrigerant and potential nugatory expenditure. No costs for this work are included in the above
- 1) An assumption has been made regarding the VAT assessment that works of structural alterations nature in respect of the new lift installations may qualify to be zero rated (Disability access upgrades are generally zero rated)

- 2) The Estimated Costings are at current levels and no allowance has been made for increased costs for future schemes/phases
- 3) No allowance has been made for decanting

The complete internal refurbishment scheme has been costed, at current levels, at £5,845,000.00 inclusive of building works, fittings + furniture, VAT, Professional Fees and VAT on Professional Fees. (Note the Phase 1 Works detailed above are included within this costing).

Amended Resolution – General Board

Church House Panel

34. That in the light of the Supplementary Report, the General Assembly authorise the Property Management Committee to proceed with the Amended Phase 1 of the interior renovation of Church House as outlined in Appendix 3 of the Supplementary Report.

Additional Resolutions

34a. That the Property Management Committee be asked to bring proposals to the 2010 General Assembly for the phased implementation and financing of the further work.

34b. That the Church House Panel be thanked for its work.

RA McLERNON

MEMORIAL RECORD

The Rev John Moore Myers, MA died on 28 March, 2009 in the 97th year of his age and the 60th of his ministry. A Belfast man, he was brought up within the fellowship of Cooke Centenary Congregation and educated at the Rea Memorial Primary School, the Royal Belfast Academical Institution, Shaftsbury House, Magee and Trinity Colleges from which he gained his MA, and what was then Assembly's College. Before entering the ministry he was for several years in business and experiences here stood him good stead throughout his ministry, for as he was often to reflect, he learnt valuable lessons in business which he would never have learnt from textbooks. He served Assistantships in West Church, Ballymena and Mountpottinger Congregations. He was licensed by the Presbytery of Belfast in 1944 and ordained to his first charge of Badoney

and Corrick in 1949. There he remained until 1970 when he was called to the Congregation of Saltersland. He retired in 1982 and spent the remainder of his life in Donaghadee. Throughout much of his time in Badoney and Corrick he was Clerk of the Omagh Presbytery and in the year 1973/4, while he was Minister of Saltersland, he was Moderator of the Synod of Derry and Omagh. John Myers was very much a “people’s man”, with a keen sense of humour and a strong judge of character. In debate he had the capacity to see not just to the root of the matter but also to the heart of the person. Whereas his sermons, in comparison with many, were short they were very much to the point. He excelled as a pastor and particularly in situations of distress and need; he was always available to his people and community. Much of his relaxation was spent either on the golf course or in the garden. He loved the wide open spaces and took great satisfaction in co-operating with God in the creation of a garden of which he was rightly proud. While he was minister of Badoney and Corrick he met the girl who was to become his wife – the former Rebecca Mowbray from Newtownstewart. What a fine example they proved to be of what a minister and wife couple ought to be! Their joy in life was to serve their God among the people He had called them to serve. Rebecca and their daughters Audrey and Kathleen can be assured of the sympathy and prayers of the General Assembly at this time of sorrow and loss.

The Rev Norman Hunter, BA, BD, MA, DipTheol, died on the 12th May, 2009 in the 80th year of his age and the 44th of his ministry. One of a family of nine children, he was brought up in North Belfast within the fellowship of Alexandra Congregation and educated at Mountcollyer Primary School, the Bible Training Institute Glasgow, Magee and Trinity University Colleges and, what was then, Assembly’s College. Before training for the ministry he worked for several years as a shipwright in Harland and Wolff where he won the much coveted “best apprentice of the year” prize and was sent to London to receive his award. When he qualified as a shipwright he emigrated to work in a shipyard in Vancouver. Shortly afterwards, and having committed his life to Christ, he felt the call to be a missionary and enrolled as a student at the Bible Training Institute, Glasgow. On achieving his qualification there he was asked to remain for some time as Warden. During this time he sought to prepare himself for matriculation to Glasgow University but eventually was persuaded to change his mind and apply for matriculation at Magee University College as a student for the Presbyterian Ministry. During his theological training he served a student assistantship in Dundonald Church and, on being licensed for the ministry by the Belfast Presbytery in June 1965, he became Assistant to the Convener of the vacant Congregations of Lisbellaw, Maguiresbridge, Newtownbutler and Lisnaskea. During all this time the call to be a missionary overseas remained strong. This call was sustained and confirmed when, in September 1965 he was ordained and appointed to

missionary service in Malawi. His impact for God there was such that, to this day, he is remembered by the students he taught with great appreciation and affection. In the year 1978 he responded affirmatively to the call of Banagher Congregation where he remained as their much respected minister until retirement in 1998. His twenty years in Banagher were marked by great zeal and dedication and saw the establishment of thriving Girls and Boys Brigade Companies. Norman would have been the first to acknowledge how much his life and ministry were enriched by the contribution of his late wife Dorothy, whose death in the year 2002 he mourned deeply. Working hand in hand with each other and their Congregation they achieved much which will stand many in good stead for time and in eternity. For much of his time in Banagher he was Presbyterian Chaplain to HM Prison at Magilligan. His daughters, Rhoda and Deborah, son Christopher and wider family circle can take comfort that in their sorrow they are borne up by their late father's many friends, both within and beyond the fellowship of the General Assembly.

Item 14 – BOARD OF YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S MINISTRY – Supplementary Report

Since the report was written the Rev Craig Mawhinney has decided to step down as Convener of the Training Committee which he has enthusiastically guided for the past five years. His commitment and skill have been of tremendous importance to the Board, who recognise and appreciate the value of his work.

Additional Resolution – Board of Youth and Children's Ministry

3a. That the resignation of the Rev Craig Mawhinney as Convener of the Training Committee be accepted, that he be thanked for his services and the Rev Christoph Ebbinghaus be appointed in his place.

JP MOXEN

Item 14(a) – MEMORIAL OF THE DROMORE PRESBYTERY

To the Venerable the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to meet in Belfast on 1st June, 2009.

The Memorial of the Presbytery of Dromore Respectfully Showeth:

That much valuable work has been done, many useful resources provided and contacts created since the two Peace and Peacemaking Development Officers were appointed.

That much effort still needs to be made in helping members of our Church, young and old, appreciate their own identity and work towards a better understanding of those whose identity is different from theirs.

That funding for the two permanent posts finishes at the end of June.

Memorialists, therefore, pray your Venerable Assembly to recognise the significant contribution these posts have made to the mission of our Church in recent years and to continue the service they have provided by meeting the expenses involved over the next three years as a call on the Incidental Fund.

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

Adopted by the Presbytery of Dromore at its meeting on 5th May, 2009.

DH GILPIN, Moderator
JI DAVEY, Clerk

Resolution

1. That the Memorial be received and its prayer granted.

DH GILPIN, JI DAVEY

Licensed Amendment

That the Memorial be received and its prayer be not granted at this time but that the arguments contained in the Memorial be referred to the panel considering the future of peacemaking for careful consideration.

DJ WATTS

Item 15 – 2010 Committee – Supplementary Report

And just when it seemed the final pieces were falling into place...

Thanks to a careful reading of the agreement with Dublin City University just before it was signed it became clear that the proposed insurance

cover was not nearly adequate. This was confirmed by our own insurers and when further communication with the University did not result in the cover being sufficiently increased a decision had to be made.

That unanimous decision was to relocate the Conference in Coleraine – a venue that has served us well in the past and was available in 2010.

It also provided us with the opportunity to move the Conference to a slightly earlier date, namely 16-19 August.

So: Confident in Christ. University of Ulster in Coleraine. 16-19 August, 2010.

Comprehensive information on cost, accommodation and seminars will follow as soon as it is available.

The purpose of the Assembly:

In an atmosphere of praise and fellowship, through keynote addresses and seminar programme the Special Assembly aims to:-

- strike a note of confidence in God and his gospel
- encourage and inspire delegates in their Christian life
- focus on being not doing
- proclaim the wonder of grace and its implications
- be a joyous experience and celebrate the good news

The Committee really hope that you will join us.

Additional Resolutions

1a. That the Special Assembly be relocated to the New University of Ulster at Coleraine on 16-19 August, 2010.

DH THOMPSON, TC MORRISON

Item 16 – BOARD OF MISSION IN IRELAND – Supplementary Report

Research and Resources Committee – An Understanding of Mission for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland

Preamble

At the request of the Board of Mission in Ireland, the Research and Resources Committee has been working towards a contextualised understanding of mission for our Irish Presbyterian setting, as with God's help, we seek to build vibrant communities of Christ serving and transforming Ireland. Other Boards and Agencies of the Church have expressed interest in this work, and the paper that follows is offered as a resource to help the Church reflect upon our collective call to mission. The Board envisages that ministers and congregational leaders may find the contents helpful as they prayerfully consider their local situations, and especially as they draft their missional plans.

The Board acknowledges the context determined nature of this work, and trusts that others will add to our collective understanding of mission as projects are initiated and further reflection takes place drawing out additional scriptural insights.

An understanding of Mission for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

God, the prime mover in mission

God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is the prime mover in mission. The story of the Bible is of God's mission, through his covenant of grace, to rescue a fallen world ultimately through the life, death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ. Mission, therefore, is not primarily something we do but God does. God is a missionary God, and we as his people, continuously participate in his activity. Whichever context the Church has found itself in over history, this great commission call to "Go and preach the good news" remains our primary impetus in mission.

The Bible's big story of mission

The Bible records how God's rule through his people is extended throughout the earth, overcoming sin and climaxing in the consummation of all things under Christ. This relentless extension of God's reign is mission.

Holistic, integral mission

Holistic mission is a way of calling the Church to keep together, in her theology as well as in her practice, what God Himself never separates: ‘being’ and ‘doing’, the ‘spiritual’ and the ‘physical’, the ‘individual’ and the ‘social’, ‘justice’ and ‘mercy’, ‘preaching the truth’ and ‘practising the truth’. What is the relationship between word and action in mission? The Lausanne Covenant of 1974 insisted that evangelism and social concern are two facets of mission, and they belong together. While correcting a significant imbalance, the Board suggests this creates an unhelpful distinction, since words and actions are part of the same holistic demonstration of the kingdom. (1Peter 2:12. 3:15)

Globally, the Church is moving south, becoming younger, and increasingly engaging with the poor, a stark contrast with our relatively static, ageing and rich context. We need to allow the world Church to tutor us towards a fuller, more holistic understanding of mission, while recognising the costs associated with this kind of radical discipleship.

So, what might be the starting points for holistic missional activity in Ireland? It is possible to begin with any live issue or at any point of need. In contemporary Ireland these entry points for mission may include, among others:

- A divided society / Dealing with past hurts
- Sectarianism
- Pluralism
- Post-modernism
- Racism
- The environmental crisis
- Social justice / Social policy
- Marginalisation
- Loneliness
- Illness
- Guilt
- Bereavement
- Addiction
- Urbanisation
- Rural life
- Media
- Ireland’s part in the new Europe
- Identity
- Individualism and Significance
- Work
- Consumerism and debt

- Poverty and wealth
- Governance and statehood
- Globalisation / new world order
- Sexuality
- Relationships, including Family & Divorce
- Ageing

To be effective in mission, beginning at these places the Church must intentionally move towards a direct explanation of the gospel.

Mission may not always begin with evangelism. But mission that does not ultimately include declaring the word and the name of Christ, the call to repentance, and faith and obedience has not completed its task. It is defective mission, not holistic mission. (Chris Wright, *The Mission of God* p 319)

Presbyterian vision for mission in Ireland

There have been significant moves of God's Spirit through the denomination's history, and a desire to reach out has long been part of our heritage. However, it could be argued that we have never fully shaken off an initial chaplaincy mindset, which may have limited the parameters of our mission to our own people. In the General Assembly Reports of 1973, the late Dr Alan Flavelle wrote:

Theodore Wedel likens the Church to a coastguard station on a dangerous coast. Tales of its rescue-service are often told; memorial windows reflect its achievement; no effort is spared to give the coastguards a centre worthy of the cause they serve. But "this station-building became in time such an absorbing activity that the rescue service was increasingly neglected, though traditional drills and rituals were carefully preserved. The actual launching out into the ocean storm became a hireling vocation, or one left to a few volunteers." Is there here a realistic picture of the Church of Christ in Ireland to-day? (Annual Reports 1973 p,184-185.)

This challenge, issued 36 years ago is as important for us today as it was then. It calls us as a Church to ruthlessly re-examine our attitude to mission. As individuals, Congregations, Presbyteries and a General Assembly, we need to see ourselves as part of God's unfolding plan for mission. We are not passive in this, but partners, fully participating with God in his mission. In an attitude of prayer, we need to re-engage with God's big story in the Bible, and find places of connection with our 21st century world. Chris Wright comments:

Fundamentally, our mission (if it is biblically informed and validated) means our committed participation as God's people, at God's invitation and

command, in God's own mission within the history of God's world for the redemption of God's creation. (The Mission of God pp 22-23).

To be healthy, the Church needs to be conformed in each generation to God's heart for mission to the outsider. Our reformed heritage gives us confidence to engage in this continually urgent task of mission to a lost world. History demonstrates that when the Church fails to re-interpret this essential mindset for itself, it declines and ultimately dies.

Strategy for Mission Committee – Mission Planning. Summary of Presbytery Plans

Introduction

Since last year's General Assembly the Board of Mission in Ireland has been working with each Presbytery to enable them to prepare a mission plan. The Board want to pay tribute to the Presbytery mission plan co-ordinators and their teams who gave their time, energy and effort to this important task.

It would be unrealistic to expect that any short report could do justice to the wealth of work that has gone into a process that covers such a variety of contexts for mission. What follows is a broad view of where we assess ourselves to be in relation to the missional challenge we face in Ireland today.

We find ourselves a Church whose mission is still largely determined by patterns from the past, while facing new pictures of the present, and trying to move in the direction of plans for the future.

The Presbytery mission planning process raised many questions - maybe as many questions as answers - however, there is an encouraging sense that we are increasingly prepared, not only to ask, but to begin to grapple with, the salient challenges those questions raise.

PATTERNS FROM THE PAST

In the mission of the Church we are never starting from scratch. We are inheritors of the heritage of the past handed on to us for both good and ill.

Presence

Every Presbytery is working from a starting point of an inherited distribution of Congregations, many founded at the peak of the Irish Christendom experience in which expansion in local population almost

automatically translated into the need for an associated local Congregation. Some of these Congregations now find themselves cut adrift from their traditional Presbyterian hinterland by population shifts. Others have equally benefited from such movements, as Presbyterians relocating from elsewhere have swollen the ranks of Congregations in what have become satellite towns and commuter areas. One Presbytery observed how, *'it would appear that we have been successful in following the general Protestant demographic'*. (Armagh Presbytery Mission Plan).

As our inherited situation becomes increasingly less consistent with the emerging opportunities for witness across Ireland, we will have to grapple with persistent questions about the disparity between where we are, and where we need to be located for mission. A number of Presbyteries highlighted significant areas of need where we could and, in their opinion, should be establishing new presence in mission.

Practice

In terms of missional practice, responses to questionnaires show that, more often than not, Congregations are employing time-honoured methods based on an attractional model *'designed on the basis that people will come to us'* (Tyrone Presbytery Mission Plan). In some settings this retains a measure of effectiveness, however, as the gap between Church and society widens, and fewer and fewer people have experience of Church or familiarity with the gospel message, the need for a more carefully contextually nuanced and incarnational approach will become paramount.

The evidence seems to suggest that we find it difficult to think beyond minor variation of the themes of mission followed in the past. This impasse in our thinking is doubtless negatively reinforced by the effort involved in just maintaining what we view as sacrosanct features of Congregational life. As one Presbytery put it, *'many of the Congregations are engaged in maintaining activity, rather than considering missional opportunities'* (Ards Presbytery Mission Plan). Only an intentional effort to stop and take stock will enable us to begin to find freshly contextualised means of effective mission.

PICTURES OF THE PRESENT

Both across and within Presbyteries there are enormous variations of both context and Congregational responses in mission. We no longer live in a homogenous Ireland so an imaginative and varied response to mission will be increasingly required.

Profile

The general decline in the annual statistics of our denomination is already well documented. Among recurring features across the Presbyteries are decreasing numbers (often felt first in families claiming connection but eating into contributing families and numbers attending worship), an increasing age profile and a below average participation by the 15-40's. Some Congregations are growing, although much of this appears to be by transfer rather than conversion growth.

The following comment reflects a growing recognition of our need to face up to the missional implications of these issues seriously. *'We have a window of 10-15 years when significant finance and active leadership will be available to us to develop the ministries of our Congregations. Failure to do so will, humanly speaking, leave many of our Congregations in slow, terminal decline'* (Down Presbytery Mission Plan).

Numbers are not everything. Perhaps one aspect of the change of mindset from maintenance to mission will be a concentration less on the 'how many, how much and how often' of membership, finance and internal meetings to a new appreciation of the measures of 'how deep, how well and how far' reflecting missional discipleship, stewardship and influence in the community.

Place

The Presbytery mission plan process sought to call attention to the specific challenges of mission in the varied contexts that comprise Ireland, as we know it today. Without recognising and seeking to faithfully respond to the changing context, there is the following growing recognition that we cannot be effective in mission. *'We are aware that the world, has changed and is changing, but too often we are complacent and content in our comfort zones'* (Templepatrick Presbytery Mission Plan).

Changes in society are first, and most sharply, being felt in our urban centres but continue to exercise a wider impact. Increasing secularisation and the individualisation of lifestyle perhaps most keenly presses the Church in our cities. As neighbourhood gives way to network as the primary setting around which people arrange their lives, the insularity of suburbanisation expands into commuter areas around the major population centres. While many of us have enjoyed an increasing prosperity in recent years, a significant minority remain marginalised, not only by society but often in terms of the focus of the Church's mission as well. Rural areas are changing too as dependence on agriculture continues to give way to other ways of life and earning a living. Post-Troubles Northern Ireland offers new opportunities to reach across historic divides in

mission perhaps for the first time in living memory. Our shores now encompass significant migrant populations, both North and South. Materialism, consumerism, the breathtaking pace of technological advance and the selfish apathy spawned by this cocktail of the idols of our age represent potent rivals to the way of Christ.

Across our island, Presbyteries express the need for fresh thinking and new models of mission to the marginalised, the busy commuter, our rural and Roman Catholic neighbours. The Board of Mission in Ireland takes seriously its responsibility to help Presbyteries and Congregations to both better understand and respond to the issues raised by these identified areas of deficit in our approach to mission.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

It was in the area of planning for the future that most Presbytery Mission Plans fell short of the sort of clarity that will enable a movement from mere analysis of the situation to co-ordinated action in response.

Priorities

Presbyteries find it difficult to prioritise between existing Congregations in assessing competing requests for resources for mission, whether financial or personnel. In terms of identifying specific new opportunities for mission they were more forthcoming. This reality raises the question of a criterion by which some measure of objectivity in prioritising might be applied. One Presbytery offered the following criteria drawn up in the context of their urban setting.

Questions to consider when determining priority regarding use of resources:

- a. How does the leadership of the Congregation demonstrate a genuine willingness to engage in mission?*
- b. What evidence is there of an equal willingness to change radically and co-operate with others if necessary?*
- c. What resources for mission are available compared to the number of people in the parish area?*
- d. What (if any) particular socio-economic context creates specific opportunities for mission?*
- e. What evidence is there of a willingness in the leadership to put Kingdom before Congregation?*

(North Belfast Presbytery Mission Plan)

Objectivity is not everything. We need to be open to the leading of the Spirit in mission. Nevertheless, the Spirit does not guide in isolation from

concrete realities, and it is this sort of application of criteria that moves towards the prioritisation of missional resources that will take most Presbytery mission plans to the next level of engagement.

Presbytery

Even before the process started it was evident that asking Presbyteries to produce an overall plan for mission was taking them into new territory. The issue of Presbytery's role in strategising for mission, and how that relates to Congregations, remains a matter that is receiving ongoing attention. Some Presbyteries were willing to offer helpful observations to specific Congregations within their bounds as to the context and possible content of mission. Others restricted such comment to general principles for every Congregation. Still others were reluctant to do so at all.

If future Presbytery mission planning is to be effective the issue of Presbytery's calling, capacity and confidence to act as a missional body will need to be addressed. Nevertheless, Presbytery offers an important structure to enable missional effectiveness and co-operation between Congregations. One Presbytery recognised this as a strength in our system that needs to be harnessed. *'We believe that being a Presbytery is a gift God has given us to fulfil [our missional challenge] and that this is a great time to be a Presbyterian'* (South Belfast Presbytery Mission Plan).

The Dublin and Munster Presbytery acknowledge in the conclusion to their mission plan, *'we are very aware that this is simply the start of the next phase of an exciting journey'* (Dublin and Munster Presbytery Mission Plan). The Board of Mission in Ireland is determined to continue to work with both Presbyteries, and in the future, Congregations, to find the most appropriate means to enable them to refine and redesign the mission of the Church to ensure continuing effectiveness.

Many Presbyteries have outlined an intentional strategy to continue to develop and monitor the outworking of their plan in conjunction with Congregations. In this regard we draw attention to resolutions 3 and 4 of the Board report. Resolution 3 tasks each Presbytery with prioritising one element of their mission plan to support and stimulate Congregations in their mission planning process over the next twelve months. In resolution 4, the Board commits to bring a detailed strategy to next year's Assembly to support the ongoing development of mission planning across the denomination.

Strategy for Mission Committee Future of the Shankill Road Mission

At the meeting of the Board on 10 March, 2009 the following resolution was passed:

The Board notes the effects of the current financial crisis upon the work of the Shankill Road Mission and that an assessment group be appointed to meet with the Convener, Superintendent, other Office Bearers of the mission and others deemed appropriate by the Board to consider the future of the work and bring recommendations to the Strategy for Mission Committee

An assessment group was appointed as follows:

Rev Roy Patton (BMI Convener)

Rev William Henry (BMI Strategy for Mission Convener)

Mr Douglas Cowan (BMI Finance Committee Convener)

Rev David Bruce (BMI Executive Secretary)

Mr Derek Cummings (BMI Finance Committee member)

The Assessment Group invited the Revs Colin Morrison and Ivan Neish to sit and deliberate as representatives of the North Belfast Presbytery.

A meeting with representatives of the Shankill Road Mission and Congregation was held on 28th April 2009 in the Shankill Road Mission. The meeting explored the financial and missional challenges facing the Shankill Road Mission in light of the large investment holdings in the Presbyterian Mutual Society and the changing patterns of life on the Shankill Road. A financial statement of Income and Expenditure since 2004 was tabled at the meeting.

At a subsequent meeting of the BMI Finance Committee on 6th May 2009, the matter was fully discussed, and the following resolution was passed:

That the BMI Finance Committee recommends to the Board of Mission in Ireland that the Shankill Road Mission be closed as soon as can be arranged.

At a meeting of the BMI Strategy for Mission Committee held on 13th May 2009, the resolution (above) from the Finance Committee was tabled and agreed, and the matter referred to a full meeting of the Board for debate before going to the General Assembly.

At a meeting of the full Board of Mission In Ireland on 20th May 2009, the matter was debated and the resolutions of the Finance and Strategy for

Mission Committees regarding the Shankill Road Mission were affirmed. A resolution from the Board to the General Assembly is appended.

Additional Resolutions – Board of Mission in Ireland

5a. That the Report, “An understanding of Mission for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland” be received and made available on request to the BMI office to Ministers, Congregations, Presbyteries, Boards and Agencies of the Church to aid their reflection on our call to mission, and that its production for this purpose be made a charge on the Incidental Fund.

8a. That the General Assembly, while giving thanks to God for the faithful work of those involved with the Shankill Road Mission since its foundation, affirm the decision of the Board of Mission in Ireland regarding the closure of the Shankill Road Mission as soon as is practicable, and that plans concerning the future of Presbyterian witness on the Shankill Road, including the Shankill Road Mission Congregation be made an urgent priority for the North Belfast Presbytery and the BMI.

RA PATTON

Item 21 – BOARD OF FINANCE AND PERSONNEL – Supplementary Report

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND PENSION SCHEME 2009

At the time of writing the published Report, discussions were ongoing regarding a funding rate for the new merged scheme.

The Scheme Actuary advised that a valuation at 31st December, 2008, was required and this shows a deficit of £20 million. This is a massive deterioration from last year when it was calculated that there would be a small surplus following the agreed changes in benefits. However, the dramatic fall in investment returns and long-term interest rates have, inter alia, led to the very large deficit.

The Trustees have discussed the actuarial assumption used in the valuation with the Scheme Actuary and have agreed to adopt less prudent assumptions than those used in the previous valuation. The Scheme Actuary has indicated that he is comfortable in the present financial circumstances with the revised assumption but would not recommend weakening these further.

The deficit is required to be recouped over a period of time and the published Report spells out the matters to be considered in arriving at a funding rate. The Trustees took the view that the deficit should be repaid over 14 years, the average remaining working life of the members, (in the previous valuation the deficit was to be repaid over 10 years, the trigger point when the Pension Regulator investigates recovery plans). The Board, realising the impact of the likely increase in assessment, argued that a 20 year repayment period should be applied.

The Trustees and the Board met but could not agree on a repayment period. It was decided to report the impasse to the Pensions' Regulator for guidance.

As anticipated, the Regulator was reluctant to make a definitive ruling but did offer to set up a review process to see what agreement, if any, could be reached and did offer the view that this could be expensive. In light of this, the Board, reluctantly and with concern at the burdens the additional assessment would place on Congregations, decided to accept the Trustees' proposals.

In view of the increase in the funding rate, the Board considered whether or not the members' contribution rate to the scheme should be increased. The Report to the General Assembly in 2008 expressed the view that future increases in rates should be borne two thirds by the Church and one-third by members. Whilst the Board could see justification for higher members' contributions, it felt constrained by the awaited outcome of the General Board's deliberations on pensions and decided not to propose a change to members' contributions but to urge the General Board to deal urgently with its remit.

The Board agreed to accept the Actuary's recommendation of an employer's funding rate of 27.4% and a resolution is appended in respect of the assessment required to meet that funding rate.

RETIREMENTS

Since the date of writing of the Pensions and Assessments Committee Report, unanimous approval was given to the Very Rev Dr IA McKay (Dundonald) and Rev TV Patterson (Immanuel) to seek the permission of the 2009 General Assembly to retire on or after their respective 64th birthdays. An appropriate resolution is appended.

In addition, the following were granted leave to retire, at or over age 65, by their Presbyteries: Rev JA Braithwaite (Dunmurry), Rev WI Hull (Ulsterville) and Rev I McClean (Ballygawley and Ballyreagh).

CHURCH HOUSE

The Church House Panel is recommending the retention of Fisherwick Buildings. This will require an extension to the existing contract for stonework and external repairs at an estimated cost of £900,000, including Professional Fees and VAT.

The current proposed assessment of 3.5 p in the £ of stipend was based on the assumption that Fisherwick Buildings would be included and the assessment at that level would meet the total expenditure in 10 years. This is still considered to be a reasonable assumption but, clearly, this can alter if rental income and/or interest rates vary. A resolution to extend the contract to Fisherwick Buildings is appended.

Additional Resolutions – Board of Finance and Personnel

5a. That the Assessment for 2009 for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Pension Scheme 2009 be 33.00 p in the £ of stipend and that the General Assembly directs the General Board to expedite the matters relating to Pensions that were referred to the General Board in 2008 with a view to reporting in 2009.

8a. That, under the provisions of The Code Par222 (3), the Rev IA McKay (Dundonald) and the Rev TV Patterson (Immanuel) be given permission to retire on or after their respective 64th Birthdays and that their pensions be in accordance with the Code and the Rules of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Pension Scheme 2009.

11a. That the stonework and external repairs to Fisherwick Buildings are included in the existing contract for Church House at an estimated additional cost of approximately £900,000.

JOHN MILLAR

Item 25 – BOARD OF CHRISTIAN TRAINING - Supplementary Report

Amended wording:

Reports page 234, UTC Review Panel Appendix VI(b), note 2:

Add

- Moderator and Clerk of the General Assembly;

- Convener and Executive Secretary of the BCT;
- Convener of the UTC Management Committee and Convener of Sub-Committee;

Amended Resolution – Board of Christian Training

5. As printed with the addition of:

Mark Dodds Bannside (Congregation) Iveagh (Presbytery)

GEORGE MOORE

Additional Resolution – Board of Christian Training

9a. That the General Assembly agree that the current Principal take on those aspects of the role envisaged for the new Principal, as decided by the Union Theological College Management Committee, pending a new appointment at the General Assembly of 2010.

GEORGE MOORE

Item 31 – JUDICIAL COMMISSION – Supplementary Report

Since the report was written, the Judicial Commission has met once. It considered a letter from the Tyrone Presbytery and agreed a reply. It also gave advice to a Commission of the Down Presbytery on a matter of difficulty in a Congregation. Finally, at the request of a correspondent it considered whether the ten-day period during which notice of appeal could be given should be waived in particular circumstances and decided that it should stand.

DJ WATTS

Additional Resolution – Judicial Commission

1a. That the Judicial Commission prepares a statement on its standing orders, practices, and procedures and presents it to the 2010 General Assembly for approval.

MERVYN LINDSAY

Item 31a – MEMORIAL OF THE REVS EDDIE KIRK, RICHARD MURRAY AND KENNETH PATTERSON

To the Venerable the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to meet in Belfast on 1st June, 2009.

The Memorial of Rev Eddie Kirk, Rev Richard Murray and Rev Kenneth Patterson Respectfully Showeth:

That the Scriptures clearly teach that homosexuality is a serious sin, and an abomination before a Holy God (Leviticus 18:22);

That a minister of this Church clearly stated, on public radio in June 2007, that ‘homosexuality is not sin’;

That the conduct of this minister was referred to the Presbytery of Belfast South, and then to the Judicial Commission, with a view to disciplinary action against the minister;

That the Judicial Commission “instructed that the Presbytery should not consider Church discipline as a consequence of the reported comment”;

That, at present, there is no procedure to even question such a decision by the Commission, even though a decision of the whole Assembly could be debated again through a notice of motion.

Memorialists, therefore, pray your Venerable Assembly to instruct the Judicial Commission to prepare a statement on its standing orders, practices and procedures and present it to the 2010 General Assembly for approval, because we believe that the Commission has made a decision in this instance which is quite contrary to Scripture, and we therefore cannot submit to it, believing that we must judge “whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God” (Acts 4:19).

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

AL KIRK
RM MURRAY
KO PATTERSON

Item 31b – MEMORIAL OF THE TYRONE PRESBYTERY

To the Venerable the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to meet in Belfast on 1st June, 2009.

The Memorial of the Presbytery of Tyrone Respectfully Showeth:

That the Judicial Commission's finding issued on 12th January, 2009 has been accepted and implemented by the Presbytery of Tyrone and the Kirk Session of Molesworth Congregation;

That the finding highlighted several significant pastoral and theological issues which require further consideration and detailed comment including:

That the Westminster Confession Chapter 24 paragraph 3 states, 'It is lawful for all sorts of people to marry who are able with judgement to give their consent: yet it is the duty of Christians only to marry in the Lord.' Within the Church there are a variety of interpretations held concerning what is meant by 'only to marry in the Lord'. Such confusion arising from the variety of interpretations is unhelpful and is giving rise to pastoral difficulties, and clarification is therefore required;

That a superior court in its review of the decision of an inferior court can cause significant pastoral difficulties for that inferior court and consideration therefore needs to be given as to how the rights and positions of an inferior court can be affirmed and respected;

That there is confusion within the Church as to how a Church court is to come to a decision on a matter before it whenever there are differing authoritative interpretations of Scripture and the Subordinate Standards held on that matter within the wider Church;

Memorialists, therefore, pray your Venerable Assembly to refer the first matter to the Doctrine Committee and to also appoint a panel through the Business Board in its final report, and to refer the other matters to that panel which, along with the Doctrine Committee, shall then report to the General Assembly of 2010.

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

Adopted by the Presbytery of Tyrone at its meeting on 5th May, 2009.

SJM LINDSAY, Moderator
TJ CONWAY, Clerk

Item 31c – MEMORIAL OF THE TYRONE PRESBYTERY

To the Venerable the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to meet in Belfast on 1st June, 2009.

The Memorial of the Presbytery of Tyrone Respectfully Showeth:

That the law of the Church grants to the Judicial Commission Assembly powers to dispose finally of any cases of appeal or reference or any other matters which may be referred to it under or by virtue of the Code;

That, accepting that there must be a court of final decision, and without seeking to undo such final decisions, the law of the Church does not provide any mechanism for inquiry into or review of Judicial Commission practices and procedures even when they may not be in accordance with Scripture, the Subordinate Standards, the Code, or the standard practice of the Church.

Memorialists, therefore, pray your Venerable Assembly to appoint a panel, through the Business Board in its final report, and refer this matter to that panel which shall report to the General Assembly of 2010.

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

Adopted by the Presbytery of Tyrone at its meeting on 5th May, 2009.

SJM LINDSAY, Moderator
TJ CONWAY, Clerk

LATE BUSINESS

Shankill Road Mission Congregation

The Union Commission, at its meeting on Tuesday, 26 May. 2009, were made aware of the additional report and resolution being brought to the General Assembly by the Board of Mission in Ireland concerning the Shankill Road Mission. To facilitate the desire of the Kirk Session of the Shankill Road Mission Congregation, which is supported by representatives of the Presbytery of North Belfast, and recognising that the General Assembly alone can agree an amalgamation, the Commission agreed to bring the following additional resolution as an item of late business:

That the Shankill Road Mission Congregation be amalgamated with a suitable Congregation or Congregations, with the terms, date and Congregation or Congregations to be set by the Union Commission after consultation with the Shankill Road Mission Congregation and the Presbytery of North Belfast.

This resolution, if agreed by the General Assembly, will facilitate an amalgamation, with an appropriate Congregation or Congregations, during the incoming year, rather than having to wait to the 2010 General Assembly.

SA MATTHEWS

Additional Resolution – Union Commission

1. That the Shankill Road Mission Congregation be amalgamated with a suitable Congregation or Congregations, with the terms, date and Congregation or Congregations to be set by the Union Commission after consultation with the Shankill Road Mission Congregation and the Presbytery of North Belfast.

SA MATTHEWS