



GENERAL ASSEMBLY



ANNUAL REPORTS

ORDER OF BUSINESS

- Notes:**
- (i) Business commences at 10 a.m. on Tuesday and at 9.30 a.m. on Wednesday and Thursday.**
 - (ii) An “Introduction to Assembly Business” will be given in the Assembly Hall on Tuesday at 9.15 a.m.**
 - (iii) Communion will be held on Tuesday at 12 noon and Worship on Wednesday and Thursday at 12.15 p.m. The break for lunch will be at 1 p.m. each day.**
 - (iv) Figures in brackets refer to page numbers in the Annual Reports.**

Tuesday

Business

Youth and Children's

PWA

Mission in Ireland

2010 Committee

Education

Union Commission

Wednesday

Mission Overseas

Social Witness

General

Thursday

Trustees

Trusts

Finance and Personnel

Communications

Christian Training

United Appeal

Judicial Commission

NOTES

MONDAY, JUNE 2

Within Church House

7.00 p.m.—

Service of Worship
Constitution of Assembly
Memorial Roll
Election of Moderator

TUESDAY, JUNE 3

10.00 a.m.—

1. BUSINESS BOARD: Report and Resolutions (1-11).
Arrangements Committee.
2. Reports of Presbyteries (12-20).
- (10.30) 3. Reception of Corresponding Members and Delegates.
Church of Scotland: Rt Rev David Lunan, Rev Iain A Laing, Mrs Sheilah Steven.
United Reformed Church: Rev Dr Stephen Orchard, Rev Simon Walking.
Presbyterian Church of Wales: Rev John Owen.
Church of Ireland: Very Rev Patrick Rooke, Rev Dr Maurice Elliott.
The Methodist Church in Ireland: Rev R Ivan McElhinney, Mrs Hazel Loney.
Irish Council of Churches: Mr Derek Woods.
Presbyterian Church USA: Rev Doug Baker.
Presbyterian Church of Australia: Rt Rev RPF Benn.
Hungarian Reformed Church in Transcarpathia: Rev Gyorgy Szanyi.

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

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CCAP Synod of Blantyre, Malawi: Rev McDonald
Kadawati.

Presbyterian Church of Pakistan: Rev Maqsood Kamil.

- (11.00) 4. **BOARD OF YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S MINISTRY:** Report and Resolutions (190-203).
Training; Research and Education; Resources;
Ministry Opportunities; Ministry Events.

(11.40) Intermission

12.00 noon Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

2.00 p.m.—

5. **PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION:**
Report and Resolution (157-162).
6. Overtures anent Pars 114(2), 114(2)(a), 114(3), 115(2), 279(1), 279(3)(b), 279(3)(c), 280(1), 280(2)(a), 280(3)(b), 280(3)(c), 281(1), 304(1), 304(3), 305(1), 305(2), 305(8), 305(11), 306(2), 307(1), 307(5), 308 of the Code (162-166).
- (2.30) 7. **BOARD OF MISSION IN IRELAND:** Report and Resolutions (139-155).
Education and Promotion; Home and Irish Mission;
Congregational Life; Shankill Road Mission.
8. Overtures anent Pars 300(1), 300(2), 300(3), 300(5), 302(1)(b), 302(1)(c), 302(3)(a) of the Code (155-156).
9. 2010 Committee: Report and Resolutions (291-292).

Lapsed Business.

(3.30) Intermission.

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

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- 3.45 10. BOARD OF EDUCATION: Report and Resolutions (220-232).
State Education.
- (4.45) 11. UNION COMMISSION: Report and Resolutions (98-114).
12. Overture anent Par 190(2)(b) of the Code (115).
Lapsed Business.
- (5.45) Close of Business.
- 7.45 PRESBYTERIANS TALK: LIFESTYLE.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4

9.30 a.m.—

13. BOARD OF MISSION OVERSEAS: Report and Resolutions (116-138).
Leadership Development; Mission Involvement;
Outreach Ministries; World Development.

(10.45) Intermission

- (11.00) 14. BOARD OF SOCIAL WITNESS: Report and Resolutions (167-189).
Adult Services; Family Services; Older People Services; Specialist Ministries.

12.15 p.m.—

Worship.

2.00 p.m.—

15. GENERAL BOARD: Report and Resolutions (21-93).

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

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Church & Society; Global Concerns; Church Relations;
Doctrine; Priorities; Moderator's Advisory; Recognised
Ministries; Reception of Ministers and Licentiatees.

16. Memorial of the Kirk Session of Saintfield Road (93-94).
17. Overtures on the Books anent Pars 29(1)(b), 97(h)(iii), 137, 63, 126(5), 127, 129, 225 of the Code (94-96).
18. Overtures anent 81(3), 200(1), 200(5) of the Code (96).

Lapsed Business.

(6.00) Close of Business.

7.45 p.m.— Evening Rally.

THURSDAY, JUNE 5

9.30 a.m.—

19. TRUSTEES: Report and Resolutions (286-290).
20. Overture anent Appendix 15 of the Code (290).
21. COMMISSION ON TRUSTS: Report and Resolutions (285).
22. BOARD OF FINANCE AND PERSONNEL: Report and Resolutions (233-275).
Finance, Legal and IT; Personnel; Property Management; Pensions and Assessments.

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

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23. Memorial of Miss Molly Deatherage (275-276).

(11.00) Intermission

(11.15) 24. COMMUNICATIONS BOARD: Report and Resolutions (215-219).

Communications Administration; Communications Development; Church Architecture.

Lapsed Business.

12.15 p.m.—

Worship

2.00 p.m.—

25. BOARD OF CHRISTIAN TRAINING: Report and Resolutions (204-213).

College and Magee Management; Ministerial Development; Ministerial Studies; Training of Church Members.

26. Overtures anent Pars 193(1)(b), 198(1), 214(4), 214(5), 215(1), 215(4), 215(6), 215(7)(a), 215(7)(b), 216, 216(5), 217(1)(a)(i)(x2), 217(1)(a)(ii)(x2), 217(1)(b)(i), 217(1)(b)(ii), 217(1)(b)(iv), 217(2)(b), 217(4), 217(6)(a), 217(7)(a), 217(b)(ii), 217(8)(c), 217(8)(d)(i)(x2), 218(1)(b), 218(2)(a), 268(4)(c), 280(1), 303(4)(d), 309(1), 78(b)(x2), 193(1)(a)(ii), 198(2), 207(2), 285, 285(1), 285(4), 272 of the Code (213-214).

(3.30) Intermission

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

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27. UNITED APPEAL BOARD: Report and Resolutions (277-284).
- (5.00) 28. JUDICIAL COMMISSION (97).
- Late Business, if any.
- Lapsed Business.
- BUSINESS BOARD: Final Report.
- CLOSE OF ASSEMBLY.

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

NOTES

BUSINESS BOARD

A Guide to Assembly Procedure

1. **Members** of Assembly consist of all ministers in active duty or retired and some elders, ex officio, together with a representative elder from each established congregation plus other elders commissioned by Presbyteries to correspond with the number of ministers serving in special appointments. Deaconesses, representatives of the Women's and Youth Movements and some others have now been invited to "sit and deliberate" as associates — i.e., to take part with members freely in debate but without voting. The Assembly quorum is fifty members.

2. While members should bear in mind any opinions or concerns of their Congregations, Kirk Sessions or Presbyteries, neither ministers nor elders attend as "delegates", obliged to vote as instructed by any of these. The Assembly should be a gathering of fully responsible, free Christian men and women, always open to spiritual guidance and information on a Church-wide basis, not a device for counting up decisions already made elsewhere.

3. **The Moderator** is chairman of the Assembly, in charge of proceedings, but he should not take sides in debates. **Former Moderators** may deputise from time to time at his request, should he wish to take part in debate or to withdraw from the House. When the Moderator rises to speak at any point all other members must yield to the Chair. Members should stand when the Moderator enters or leaves at the beginning or end of proceedings. Members may enter or leave at any time during proceedings, but should do so with as little disturbance as possible. It is a courtesy in so doing to give a slight bow to the Chair.

4. With the changing composition of the Assembly the recommended form of address to the House is simply "Moderator" (not "Mr." Moderator, etc.). Speakers should face towards the House and the microphones, not towards the Moderator.

5. **Work for which the Assembly** is responsible is generally entrusted to various permanent or temporary (“ad hoc”) committees. These must each present a report to the Assembly. Working Committees concerned with related matters are grouped under a supervising Board. A Commission of Assembly is a committee entrusted with the executive powers of the Assembly, within the terms of its appointment. Members of committees, etc., are appointed by the Assembly on the nomination of various bodies and have a Convener (i.e., executive secretary, in Irish usage) in charge.

6. **Reports.** While the Assembly is obliged to “receive” the report of each committee, etc., it does not “adopt” or accept responsibility for the contents of any report. Reports carry only the authority of the committee concerned and not of the Assembly. If found too unsatisfactory, the report may be received and referred back. Any matter to which the Assembly is to be committed must be stated in a specific resolution. Resolutions should be kept to conclusions, rather than include arguments in support such as are appropriate to speeches. Similarly, speeches in the Assembly carry the authority only of the speaker.

7. Reports, together with any appended resolutions, are first of all “presented”, usually by a Board or Committee Convener. There is then an opportunity for **questions** to be asked. These should quite strictly be asked only for further information or explanation, whether of something in the report or not in the report but for which the Board, etc., carries responsibility; they should not be rhetorical or debating “questions”, to score a point.

8. **Questions**, which should be written out and placed in the box provided in good time, will normally be limited to two per person and ten minutes in all, unless the Moderator judge that a particular subject merits an extension of these limits.

9. After Questions, the presenter of the report formally proposes the appended resolutions in block and another person seconds, with a speech taking up any other aspects requiring treatment.

10. **The Resolutions** are then taken in succession. The first of these is always “that the report be received”. This is the point where members may discuss (not ask questions about) any matters in the report or for which the Board, etc., should bear responsibility, but which do not arise under any subsequent resolution.

11. Unless otherwise arranged, speeches are limited as follows:—

Presenting a group of reports and resolutions 10 minutes

Seconding a group of reports and resolutions 7 minutes

All other speeches 5 minutes

If lapsed business accumulates, the normal abbreviated timings are as follows:—

Proposing a group of Reports – 10 minutes reduced to 7

Seconding a group of Reports – 7 minutes reduced to 5

Other speeches – 5 minutes reduced to 3.

A flickering light is given 1 minute before the end, a steady light at 30 seconds and a buzz when the time is up. Before commencing, speakers should announce their name and congregation, or for Women’s and Youth representatives, their name and Presbytery. Apart from the proposer (or alternatively the seconder) having the right to speak again in closing the debate, no one may speak twice in debating any one resolution or amendment, except to clarify some misunderstanding.

12. Resolutions are called by number. Those wishing to speak should at once come forward, or otherwise indicate their desire to speak.

13. **Amendments** may be moved without prior notice by any member so as to change the terms of a resolution within its general scope but not so as to introduce another subject. Before debating proceeds the amendment should be given in writing to the Clerk’s desk. Any amendments previously received and licensed by the Business Board, however, have precedence. At least one day’s notice must be given of an amendment which would substantially affect the scope of a motion or overture. A plea for the outright rejection of a resolution is not an amendment.

14. An amendment, if seconded, must be dealt with before further debate on the original resolution or consideration of any further amendment. If passed, the

amendment is then put as a substantive motion, when one more amendment may be considered. If the first two amendments are rejected, one more amendment may be considered before reverting to the original resolution.

15. **Additional resolutions**, concerning some matters not covered by an existing resolution, may be submitted by any member or associate as notice of motion for license. Unless there are exceptional circumstances these should be received by the Clerk at least one week before the Assembly. Resolutions rescinding or reversing a previous decision of the Assembly require notice of motion to be first given and accepted at the preceding annual meeting. Those invited to sit and deliberate may “present” resolutions or amendments in the usual way, but these must be formally proposed and seconded by a member of Assembly before being debated.

16. In the “**Alternative**” format each Board is given 35 minutes for a “Presentation”, including not only the proposing and seconding of the Report but the introduction of guests, the showing of videos, etc as may be desired. Outside speakers require the permission of the Business Board. Assembly questions for clarification then follow, and finally the resolutions. The speeches of the proposer and seconder, and any comments from committee conveners, should all be included in the allotted period of time, and these officebearers should not speak again (except on a point of clarification or to close the debate on a resolution) otherwise the report is liable to overrun and cause business to lapse.

17. **Voting** may be by voice, when the Moderator calls for those in favour to say “Aye” and those against to say “No”, or by a standing vote to be counted by tellers; or by ballot, asked for by not fewer than twenty-five members or, at the discretion of the Moderator, by the showing of voting tickets, to be counted by tellers. Proxy voting for an absent member is not allowed. A member may intimate his personal dissent or protest against any decision immediately after it has been pronounced, but does not thereby free himself from obligation loyally to implement the decision taken.

18. An “**Overture**” is a proposal for a change in the “Code”, or law of the Church’s Constitution and Government. Changes in rules, of which notice has been given in the

printed Reports, may be adopted forthwith if approved by a two-thirds majority, or without such notice if approved nem. con. If approved by a lesser majority, it is "placed on the books", to be decided at the following Assembly. This applies also to rules governing the Central Ministry Fund and other Ministry Funds. In the Basic Code, where immediate operation is desirable, the change may be adopted temporarily during the intervening year as an "interim act". If an overture contemplates a constitutional change it must also be sent down to Presbyteries to be voted on during the intervening year.

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

NOTES

BUSINESS BOARD

Convener: THE CLERK

1. The Business Board reviewed the changes made to the format of the General Assembly in 2007. While reducing the length of the Assembly made for an intense period of debate – Tuesday to Thursday – it was generally felt that this change had been welcomed by members of the Assembly. So too was the more informal discussion of Tuesday evening and it was agreed that these changes should be continued.

2. It was suggested that, especially new members of Assembly, would appreciate a form of induction into the practices and procedures of the General Assembly. It is hoped this may encourage greater participation in debates. The Arrangements Convener agreed to lead an introductory session on Tuesday from 9.15 – 9.45 a.m.

3. The Board is aware of two significant anniversaries in 2009 – the 500th of John Calvin’s birth and the 150th of the 1859 Revival. A small sub-Committee is to consider how best these may be recognised by the Assembly.

4. The Panel who are considering the involvement of young people and especially a Youth Assembly, gave an encouraging report. An ad-hoc group of youth leaders and young people had met and submitted the following report:

Background

The Panel on Assembly Business requested in spring 2007 that Glenda McCormick and Graeme Thompson report on young people’s input to the General Assembly. At that stage, there was acknowledgement of the need to recognise the validity and giftedness of children and young people to play a full part in the life and decision-making of the Church at all levels from congregations to Boards and the General Assembly. It was also noted that if this participation is to become real and meaningful, young people must be equipped, empowered and given prayer and practical support. It was further acknowledged that this process must be engaged in wholeheartedly by everyone if it is not to become counter-productive.

Following Glenda’s verbal report to the Assembly in 2007, the following resolutions were passed:

1. “That the General Assembly recognize the importance of seeking ways to encourage greater participation in the discussions of the Assembly, especially by younger and less experienced participants.”
2. “That the General Assembly encourage the creation of a Youth Assembly, with meaningful ways of reporting into Assembly business.”

An Ad Hoc group of youth leaders and young people were asked to further discuss the concept of a Youth Assembly and report back to the Panel in consultation with the Board of Youth & Children’s Ministry and this report was given to their Board Meeting on 11 March, 2008.

History and Precedent

A Youth Assembly is not a new concept. The first Presbyterian Youth Assembly was held in 1955, there were a number of youth conferences in the 1970s and there were two “Youth Voice” Assemblies held in 1985/86. Though each of these showed promise, none was allowed to thrive; the same issues remain today, but have become much more urgent. There are many examples of successful Youth Assemblies in the ecclesiastical world, including the Presbyterian Church of Wales, the Church of Scotland and the United Reformed Church, and in political life, including Dail na Nog (Irish Parliament) and the Funky Dragon (Welsh Assembly).

Motivations and Aims

“Young people want to be heard – to feel they are being listened to.”

(Glenda McCormick at 2007 Assembly)

“Young people are asking us to be open to their participation – how will we, the adult church, respond?”

(“Taking a Part”, Church of England, 2000)

“To speak frankly, I am increasingly of the mind that the Church will only listen to young people when it is forced to realize that its own survival demands it. It is really only self-interest that will persuade those with ‘say so’ to advocate listening to young people”.

Pete Ward “A Youthful Spirit” (1998)

Progress

A group was formed consisting of eight young people (Mia Skelly, Nathan Murtagh and Alex Power from Lucan; William Ashenhurst and Laura Hutcherson from Stormont; Paul Armstrong and David Horner from Saintfield Road and Neal Wilkinson from 1st Coleraine) and four youth workers (Glenda McCormick, Johnny Bell, Gareth Maclean and Graeme Thompson).

The group met in November 2007 when the programme included team building, Biblical reflection and a presentation about the structures of PCI. In a discussion about their experiences of church, the young people expressed concern about the perceived generational split in the church and, despite their eagerness to serve, a lack of opportunity to serve alongside older people. They also felt they had little opportunity to have input into decisions in their churches. Further discussion focussed on a possible Youth Assembly and the group raised important issues including the need for effective communication to young people, their need to understand the church structures and the need to address the intimidating nature of those structures and build relationships with Elders and Ministers. They felt that young people’s issues should be on the General Assembly agenda as well as them having the opportunity to comment on the existing agenda.

The group continued to discuss these issues via an online forum on the peiyouth.org web site and then met for a residential in January 2008. This gave opportunity for the young people to examine group dynamics and personal differences as it might relate to debate and discussion. The group then worked

hard at creating a proposal for a Youth Assembly which, with further work in groups after the event, produced a proposal which is summarised below.

Proposal

- (i) Youth Assembly Aim: “To enable young people to have a meaningful opportunity to be involved in decision-making at a denominational and a local level.”
- (ii) A pilot process, running for one year in 2009 to test the desire for the Assembly and the feasibility of the model.
- (iii) Publicity at Presbytery and congregational level through the autumn of 2008.
- (iv) Regional events in 2 locations in January 2009 (hopefully in at least 4 locations if it is repeated). Congregations would nominate delegates for these events.
- (v) The Regional Events would include worship, an opportunity to share the vision and discussion of the same topics via focus groups, following expert input.
- (vi) Regional delegates would then be facilitated to bring ideas and action to their local level.
- (vii) Each Regional Event would send representatives to a residential National Event in spring 2009.
- (viii) The National Event would bring forward proposals to the General Assembly in 2009.
- (ix) The Youth Assembly would be reviewed and, if successful and approved at the 2009 General Assembly, developed into an annual process.

The Future

The group is aware that there is a need to continue to work on the detail of the Pilot project so that, if it is approved at the General Assembly, the organisation can commence as soon as possible afterwards. There is considerable work still to be done, but much has been achieved and there is an opportunity for something very significant to emerge. It is very important that this project is supported at every level, including Boards and Congregations, so that this does not become a token exercise, but is an opportunity to give our young people an effective role in church life.

5. In the Board discussion the Report was warmly welcomed and the following points noted:

- Perhaps the title ‘Forum’ might be better than ‘Assembly’, and likewise the phrase ‘National’ might be better avoided.
- It was important that the voice of the Youth Assembly was heard – either by report, or by input throughout the week, or by both
- The age-range was identified as being 16-25, with approx 40 participants in the central event.
- The Group agreed to look at the level of local involvement that would be expected of someone who was a delegate at regional or central level

– specifically do young people need to be full members of their Congregation ?

- It was recognised that the process needs to be piloted in a more limited way, prior to any possible expansion in the future.

The Board agreed to recommend to the General Assembly that a pilot Youth Assembly be held in 2009 with financial support from the Incidental Fund.

Other Churches

6. Delegates were appointed to attend other Church Assemblies and Meetings:

Church of Scotland 2008: Rt Rev Dr John M Finlay; Rev Dr RB Savage; Mr J Suitter.

United Reformed Church 2008: Rt Rev Dr WD Patton

Presbyterian Church of Wales 2008: Rt Rev Dr WD Patton

Church of Ireland General Synod 2008: Very Rev Dr David Clarke; Mr M McKean.

Methodist Conference 2008: Very Rev Dr John Finlay; Mrs R Millar.

Presbyterian Church (USA): Rev Dr DJ Watts.

Convenership

7. The Rev Colin Morrison has come to the end of his term as Convener of the Arrangements Committee. This is a demanding job, especially around Assembly-time and in preparation for meetings. It requires the ability to deal with detailed planning and a degree of tact. The Board has been greatly helped by the commitment and good humour of Mr Morrison. In turn he was assisted by Mrs Claire Dixon as Hospitality Secretary. She too is handing over this responsibility and is to be thanked for her thoroughness and the friendship she invariably offered our guests.

Board Membership

8. The Business Board is appointed in accordance with the provisions of Par 275 of the Code to take office on the 15 March preceding the Assembly. The Board for the year 2008-2009, together with the associated Arrangements Committee is as follows:-

The Clerk, Convener

- (a) The Moderator, Clerk and Deputy Clerk of Assembly, Moderator-Designate, former Clerks, preceding three Moderators, Conveners, and Secretaries of Commissions and Boards.
- (b) Rev WT Cordner; W Graham – Rev CUR Bradley; L McIlwaine – Rev D Knowles; AP Brown – Rev TV Patterson; Miss M Torrens – Rev JR Burnett; V Garland – Rev PP Campbell; DC Cowan – Rev AE Tolland; N Carmichael – Rev TJ Laverty; – Rev JT Williamson; Mrs R Millar – Rev A Best; N Watt – Rev BCG Black; J Hanna – Rev DB Knox; A Maxwell – Rev GA Mitchell; W McIlreavy – Rev Dr SR Jones; T Allen – Rev GE Best; E McCleary – Rev D Nesbitt; A McAdoo – Rev DB Murpy; Wm Grills – Rev R Herron; J

Cochrane – Rev RW Gaston; – Rev WJ Murdock; CBG Swann
– Rev Dr AR Rodgers; E Carroll.

A. ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE (6)

Rev GE Best, Convener

- (a) The Moderator and Clerk of Assembly, Moderator-Designate, Deputy Clerk, Communications Secretary, Hospitality Secretary, Buildings Manager; Committee Convener, Rev TC Morrison.
- (x) Rev Alan S Thompson; D Crowe, M Fisher, Mrs J Anderson.
- (y) Revs WT Cordner, AE Tolland, R Herron, WJ Murdock, TV Patterson; Miss M Torrens, DC Cowan.

The URC Assembly 2007

The Rev John Brackenridge reports:

1. The United Reformed Church General Assembly, met at the University of Manchester on 7-10 July. The Right Rev Dr John Finlay and Mrs Finlay and the Rev John Brackenridge were in attendance. The URC Moderator is the Rev Prof Stephen Orchard. From 2008 the URC will elect two Moderators, one a Minister of Word and Sacraments or a Church Related Community Worker, the other an Elder. They will serve together for the next two years.

2. Delegates from the Christian denominations were warmly received as were representatives from the Muslim and Islam faiths. We were welcomed by Councilor Afzal Khan, a former Lord Mayor of Manchester and representative of the Muslim faith. Cllr Khan began with a traditional Islamic greeting, *'May God's peace be on you all.'*

3. Four pieces of art were commissioned for the Assembly. Each artwork contained a phrase from the Bible and the studies and prayers were related to the art. Young people (FURY) and those in their 20's and 30's played a significant role. A parallel Youth Assembly took place and reported to Assembly by DVD and input into debates. With only 78,000 members in 1600 congregations it is striking that the URC Assembly succeeds in being a noticeably less 'grey' event than PCI's but also in having significant children and young peoples' participation. We could learn from this.

4. Of the debate on Human Sexuality, the Rev Malcolm Hanson, in sensitively presenting the work of the Post-Moratorium Task Group said, *"Many of us have felt the pain of earlier discussions, and know very well that we are not just walking on eggshells; we are stepping into a minefield"*. Assembly welcomed the guidance concerning the ending of the moratorium on decision making on human sexuality, adopted a Commitment on Human Sexuality and established a task group to oversee the process of addressing the issues of human sexuality.

5. Vision4Life is an initiative to reinvigorate each local URC over the next four years with the Bible, prayer & evangelism. Materials and support will be offered to enable local churches to design and develop Vision4Life in their own parish.

6. The URC declared its opposition to the renewal of Britain's Trident nuclear weapons program. The Assembly was shaped by previous statements on

the subject: “*An independent nuclear deterrent for Britain made even less sense now than it did twenty years ago, when Britain originally opted for Trident,*” said the Rev Peter Brain, Moderator of the North Western Synod, speaking at the URC’s National Council. He added that the economics of the program are, ‘*absurd*’. This year, the URC produced, jointly with the Methodist Church, the report *Peacemaking: a Christian Vocation*. This asks Church members to oppose the renewal of Trident and to urge the government to ‘*make bold and immediate steps*’ to meet its disarmament obligations in full.

7. Lord Joffe’s defeated Parliamentary Bill had suggested that those of sound mind but in great pain from terminal illness could be given medical assistance to end their lives at their own request, subject to certain safeguards. Assembly affirmed that human life is precious and God given, and that death is not the end. It recognized there is a time to die and circumstances in which it would be wrong to continue treatment to prolong life. It acknowledged that some palliative treatment can hasten death, and accepted this, so long as the intention of the treatment is pain relief and comfort. Assembly opposed any change in the law to allow voluntary euthanasia or assisted suicide, and commended Living Wills or Advance Directives, while cautioning against their use to facilitate a person’s death.

8. The URC accepts, reluctantly, that some local Churches will need to apply for Lottery funding for the upkeep of church buildings listed as of historic interest. Whilst re-affirming its concern about the impact of the Lottery, Assembly revised advice given in 1995, which urged churches and church members to disassociate themselves from the Lottery. Assembly was made aware that whilst it was possible to obtain some other funding for Grade 1 listed buildings (Category A in Scotland), Lottery funding represented almost the only source of public money for those listed as Grade 2 – and most listed United Reformed churches were in this category. The resolution accepting that some churches will need to make application for lottery funding for the upkeep, repair and alteration of listed church buildings and, in that respect, revising the 1995 advice to have nothing to do with the Lottery, was carried.

9. The Finance Committee asked the Church to renew its commitment to the Pension Fund and undertook to make arrangements to meet any deficits in the funding that may arise from time to time. The URC remains soundly committed to meet all its pension fund obligations.

10. Inter-Church issues were highlighted when the Rev Peter Colwell said some of his Committee’s work was about reversing misconceptions and stereotyping of other faiths, as well as their perceptions of the Church. “*We need to be aware of the diversity within each world faith, respecting their vast traditions and not just listening to the loudest voices within them. This is all the more important when thinking about Islam at the current time. People of other faiths look to Christians to be a confident voice in times of need.*”

11. A Resolution from the Church and Society and Racial Justice Committees came in response to the bombing attempts in Glasgow and London. It reaffirmed opposition to the use of violence when senses of grievance and injustice are held and expressed dismay at the recent terrorist attacks. It recognised that these are an affront to Muslim communities when they are

claimed to have been committed in their name, and prayed that negative responses should not happen.

12. I record my thanks for the privilege of attending the URC Assembly, which I thoroughly enjoyed. The hospitality and significant youth involvement, together with a residential July setting and the atmosphere which flows from this, brings good daily attendance and a host of 'fringe' activities such as the Liverpool Philharmonic Gospel Choir performance for Assembly as part of a celebration to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Act of Parliament to abolish the British slave trade. The URC Assembly is the better for its residential dimension, which PCI General Assembly only achieves when we meet in Dublin.

13. The Moderator of the General Assembly for 2008-2010 will be the Rev John Marsh. The URC General Assembly will meet again at the Herriot Watt University in Edinburgh on July 11-14 2008

The Welsh Assembly 2007

The Right Rev Dr John M Finlay reports:

1. The Presbyterian Church of Wales held their General Assembly in the University town of Lampeter in mid-Wales from the 16 –19 July, 2007. One could not but be impressed by the warmth of the welcome given to all the delegates from other Churches. I had opportunity of speaking on their behalf and conveying fraternal greetings and good wishes to the Assembly. I valued the opportunity of expressing to those I met our indebtedness to them for those of their number who have so immeasurably enriched our Church through their ministries and teaching. It was also gratifying to hear of their appreciation of the generous hospitality and kind reception given to them when visitors at our Assembly in Belfast. They very much enjoy coming.

2. Their theme for the Assembly was, coincidentally, the same as my own theme for the year, Jesus Christ is Lord. It was also interesting, though not surprising, that they face the same social and spiritual challenges in Wales as we do in Ireland. Hence the topics for discussion and debate were not dissimilar to our own. As a Church they have the same issues in rural communities and in urban areas as we have. One area of spirited debate which we don't have was that of nuclear energy. One unique feature of the Assembly is a lecture which one of their members is invited to give. This year the subject was the history of communication and its impact on the Church. It was a masterful presentation and proved most interesting and instructive.

3. It was heartening to detect the influence that past spiritual awakening still has in the awareness of many present and equally encouraging to see evidence of spiritual fervour in what seems to be a very vibrant youth work. They have benefitted from and continue to value close links with our own Youth and Children's Board.

4. It was a pleasure to be present among a people who still have a great sense of national pride and cultural identity. I also came away aware of the advantages of having a venue such as our own Assembly Hall in which to hold

our meetings rather than other secular accommodation which tends to be much less suitable.

The Methodist Conference 2007

The Very Rev Dr David Clarke reports:

1. Along with Mr John McCully, an elder in Trinity Congregation, Cork, I had the privilege of representing the Presbyterian Church in Ireland at the 238th Annual Methodist Conference, based at the Ardfallen Centre, in Cork.

2. The event was a thoroughly ecumenical occasion, with the opening service being held in a large, modern Roman Catholic Church at Frankfield on Friday 8 June, with Bishop Buckley in attendance; while an ordination service was held in our own splendid Trinity Church on Sunday, 10 June. With Bishop Harold Miller (Church of Ireland), Father Christopher Fitzgerald, and Mr. John Prendergast (Society of Friends), I had the opportunity to convey fraternal greetings to the Conference.

3. At the opening service, the Rev Roy Cooper was installed as President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, although throughout the meetings he was known as Vice-President. Ever since the days of John Wesley, the British Methodist President has chaired the Irish Methodist Conference. In the last twenty years, two attempts to assert greater Irish independence failed to obtain the required 75% vote, but a 'Notice of Motion' introduced this year will bring the matter to the forefront in 2008 and 2009.

4. Under the watchful eye of the Secretary of Conference, the Rev Winston Graham, business was kept to a strict time-table; and those with distracting mobile phones were made to pay a 5 euro fine to the church's World Development Fund! Mr Graham is affectionately regarded within British Methodism, and was due to retire at the end of June, 2007. He reduced Conference to uncontrollable laughter when he unfolded, and donned, a sandwich-board which read, 'The end is nigh!'

5. Several features of the Conference reveal the warm nature of the Methodist family. For instance, a period is set aside when individuals may rise to share their individual memories of ministers who died during the preceding year; while a separate agenda item, 'Conversation on the work of God' allowed delegates to report on significant spiritual developments in their own area.

6. The nature of ministry, and provisions for ministerial training, featured prominently in Conference discussion. In Methodism, ordinations (only one this year) take place at Conference; as does the reception of probationers (two in 2007). The Commission on Ministry grappled with the reasons why fewer people are offering for ordained ministry, and acknowledged that the Methodist practice of itinerancy was a disincentive to many. In addition, church growth analysts suggest that longer ministries are one contributory factor in growing churches. Nevertheless, the report concluded that itinerancy should 'remain as a valuable part of Methodist practice.'

7. The health of Ministers was considered at length in the Conference of 2006, with a major report on stress in the ministry. It was recognised that if a working week can be portioned into 21 units, (7 days of 3 sessions), a minister

should not be working more than 15 of those sessions. The Church also has a well developed Sabbatical scheme, which enables ministers to pursue interests which are not exclusively theological, eg rock formations in the Dingle peninsula, landscape gardening, and furniture restoration.

8. The Methodist Church is in a covenant relationship with the Church of Ireland, and a report on Edgehill Theological College indicated the intention to conduct discussions with the Church of Ireland with a view to greater co-operation in ministerial training. This would be particularly helpful and convenient, it is felt, for ministerial students from the Republic of Ireland. In response to a question, Principal Clutterbuck (Edgehill) indicated that there were 'no plans to abandon Belfast.'

9. Like all major denominations, Irish Methodism is experiencing numerical decline, and seeking to address such matters as same-sex relationships and inter-faith worship events. Interim reports on both issues meant that serious debate was not joined, but it is clear that Irish Methodism, like Irish Presbyterianism, is more conservative than their counterparts on the British mainland. The report on same-sex relationship stated that 'it is not the practice of the Methodist Church in Ireland to hold services of blessing for people in same-sex relationships'—which is taken as a prohibition!

10. The final evening took the form of a 'Charles Wesley Celebration', marking the Tercentenary on 18 December, 2007, of the birth of the great hymn-writer.

11. The four days in Cork were made memorable by the warm hospitality and good humour of our Methodist friends. In addition, the Rev John and Mrs Heather Faris made me graciously welcome in their home. I was privileged to preach in both Aghada and Cork, as well as having the honour of dedicating a new kitchen and other facilities in the Trinity, Cork complex.

ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE

Introduction to Procedures

1. Following a request it has been agreed to give an opportunity for Elders and Ministers who are attending the General Assembly for the first time to be given an introduction to Assembly procedures. This will take place between 9.15 am and 9.45 am on Tuesday, 3 June, immediately prior to the first Business Session of the Assembly.

Communion Service

2. The Communion Service this year will as usual commence at 12 noon on Tuesday. There will be a coffee break immediately prior to this service, but members of Assembly are asked to be in their seats not later than 12 noon since late arrivals tend to disrupt the worship and distract other worshippers.

Exhibition

3. Once again this year there is an exhibition in the Minor Hall of the work of Boards and other agencies within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Be sure to visit it during the week.

Voting Cards

4. These should be obtained as soon as possible from the desk at the Carrickfergus Window where they are available on Monday evening/Tuesday morning, after which Members should contact the Financial Secretary's Office. Ministers please note once again this year that when obtaining voting cards, they will be asked to produce the Registration Card which is enclosed with the Annual Reports.

Admission

5. Admission to the Private Session is only for those who have and show their own voting card. In any vote the Moderator may call for voting cards to be shown and only those displaying their own voting card are eligible to vote.

Expenses

6. All Members may claim a daily allowance but travel expenses cover the cost of only one return journey in the week. Claims should be made on the appropriate form obtainable from the Reception at the Wellington Street entrance. Full details of rates are printed on the form.

Hospitality Secretary

7. Mrs Maureen Patterson has been appointed Hospitality Secretary in succession to Mrs Claire Dixon.

And finally...

8. This is my final report as Convener of the Arrangements Committee. It has been a privilege to serve the Church in this capacity over the past seven years. At times it has even been fun!! However that would not have been possible without the dedication and commitment of a whole host of people. Sincere thanks to all who have provided help in any way and thereby ensured that for most of the time Assembly arrangements have worked reasonably well.

Thanks are due to Arrangements Committee Members who have been most supportive in their attendance at meetings and in their work during the week of the Assembly each year.

At the risk of offending all the others who have been so helpful, it is appropriate to name Mrs Claire Dixon – whose hard work as Hospitality Secretary has been crucial in properly caring for the guests of this General Assembly over the last seven years and without whom the task of Convener would have been impossible. Claire, your retirement is well earned!

Thank you for the opportunity to serve, I trust my successor will have the same fulfilment in the task as has been my experience.

TC MORRISON, Convener

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the Report be received.
2. That the recommended Order of Business be adopted.
3. That the General Assembly encourage the Youth and Children's Ministry Board to pilot a Youth Assembly/Forum 2009, with expenses which are approved by the Business Board to be met from the Incidental Fund.
4. That the professional amplification controller and the visual display operator be admitted to any private session.
5. That a grant of £16,000 be made from the Incidental Fund to the Arrangements Committee.
6. That the Business Board, with its associated working committee, be appointed in accordance with Par 275 of the Code for the ensuing year beginning 15 March, 2009.
7. That the resignation of the Rev TC Morrison as Convener of the Arrangements Committee be accepted, that he be thanked for his services and the Rev GE Best appointed in his place.

REPORTS OF PRESBYTERIES

The **ARDS PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev RA Patton is their Moderator; that the Rev Professor TS Reid, Professor Emeritus, died on 29 December, 2007; that the Rev RJ Montgomery resigned as Associate Minister at West Church, Bangor, and was installed to the charge of Trinity, Bangor on 1 June, 2007; that the Rev AW Carson presented credentials from the Presbytery of East Belfast and was installed to the charge of Streatan, Newtownards, on 28 September, 2007; that Mr DW Leach, Mr BJ Walker, Mrs KM Mbayo, Miss M Deatherage, Mr M McClenahan presented credentials from the Presbyteries of East Belfast, East Belfast, South Belfast, Monaghan and South Belfast respectively and were received as Licentiates; that Mr ND Craig, a Licentiate, was given credentials to the Presbytery of Donegal, Mr WJI Thompson, a Licentiate, was given credentials to the Presbytery of Armagh, Mr MD McNeely, a Licentiate, was given credentials to the Presbytery of Ballymena; that under their care are: as Ministers without charge the Revs DM Spratt, CD Mawhinney, D McKee, WJ Todd, Dr SI Dennis, W Brown; as Ministers transferring: Rev GWD Stewart and Rev Dr AF Nel; as Licentiates Mr DW Leach, Mr BJ Walker, Mrs KM Mbayo, Miss M Deatherage, Mr M McClenaghan; as Students Messrs J Boyd, G McConville, C Anderson, W Harkness; that they held consultations at Portavogie, Greenwell Street, Ballywalter; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed separately; and that voting on the Overture anent Code Par 225 was 56 for and 0 against.

The **ARMAGH PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev RIA Allely is their Moderator; that the Rev DS Henry presented credentials from the Presbytery of Newry and was installed to the charge of 1st Lurgan on 15 June, 2007; that Mr WJI Thompson presented credentials from the Presbytery of Ards and was ordained and installed to the charge of 1st Keady and Armaghbrague on 5 October, 2007; that Mr A McConnell was licensed on 3 June, 2007 and given credentials to the Presbytery of East Belfast; that they have under their care as Students Messrs RS Agnew, D McCullagh, R McIlnea, R Orr and M Wilson; that during the year they held consultations with Waringstown and The Mall, Armagh; that the Financial Reports of the Congregations are being printed separately; and that voting on the Overture anent Code Par 225 was 27 for and 0 against.

The **BALLYMENA PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev JC Simms is their Moderator; that the Very Rev Dr EP Gardner, Minister Emeritus of First Ballymena, died on 6 April, 2007; that the Rev J Lyle, Minister Emeritus of First Ahoghill, died on 11 October, 2007; that the Rev Dr AM Adams, Minister Emeritus of Third Portglenone, died on 8 December, 2007; that the Rev JD McGaughey resigned his charge as

Minister of Brookside, Ahoghill on 26 October, 2007 and was received as a Minister without charge under the care of Presbytery; that Mr AJ Dunlop, a Licentiate, presented credentials from the Presbytery of Templepatrick and was ordained and inducted as Assistant Minister in Harryville, on 13 May, 2007; that Mr G McFadden, a Licentiate, presented credentials from the Presbytery of Carrickfergus and was ordained and inducted as Associate Minister in High Kirk, Ballymena, on 7 September, 2007; that, Mr MD McNeely, a Licentiate, presented credentials from the Presbytery of Ards and was ordained and installed to the charge of Ballykeel on 23 November, 2007; that Mr TP McCullough was licensed as a Probationer for the Christian Ministry on 3 June, 2007 and given credentials to the Presbytery of Templepatrick; that Mr JNE Reid, a Licentiate, was given credentials to the Presbytery of Newry, Mr ME Donald, a Licentiate, was given credentials to the Presbytery of Coleraine; that they have under their care: as a Minister without charge the Rev JD McGaughey; as Students: Messrs T Bruce, WE Chestnutt, CWA Jones, RM Moody, NL Smyth, Mrs LM Keys; that they held consultations at Ballee, Grange with Craigmore, Kells and Eskylane; that the Financial Reports of the Congregations are being printed separately; that voting on the Overture anent Code Par 225 was 31 for and 5 against.

Ordained

Licensed

Credentials

Under Care

Consulted

The **NORTH BELFAST PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev EJ Hyndman is their Moderator; that the Rev JA Fullerton, Minister Emeritus of Carnmoney, died on the 18 February, 2008; that the Rev AW Boyd, Minister of Ballyhenry, retired on 16 September, 2007; that the Rev B McMillen presented credentials from the Presbytery of Carrickfergus and was installed in the Congregation of Ballygomartin on 26 June, 2007, the Rev PG McCrea presented credentials from the Presbytery of Tyrone and was installed in the Congregation of Rosemary on 27 June, 2007, Mr DJ McIlwaine was ordained and installed in the Congregation of Newington on 5 October, 2007, the Rev CA Meban presented credentials from the Presbytery of East Belfast and was installed as Presbyterian Chaplain to the University of Ulster, Belfast and Jordanstown Campuses on 17 September, 2007; that they received as Licentiates, Mr David McCarthy, having presented credentials from the Presbytery of Belfast South and Mr P Turton, having presented credentials from the Presbytery of Templepatrick; that they have under their care: as Ministers without charge the Revs LH Eagleson, CI McKnight, WA Shaw, WM Smyth (retired), FW Vincent; as Licentiates Mr JD Montgomery, Mr DJ McCarthy, Mr P Turton; as Students for the ministry Mr R Houston, Miss J Nelson, Mr J Spence; that a consultation was held with the Congregation of Whitehouse; that congregational Financial Reports are being printed separately; that voting on the Overture anent Code Par 225 was 33 for and 0 against.

Died

Retired

Installed

Ordained

Installed

Credentials

Under Care

Consulted

The **SOUTH BELFAST PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev DJ McKelvey is their Moderator; that the Rev Prof WG Campbell was

Installed

installed as Professor of New Testament Studies on 26 September, 2007, the Rev Dr RJ Greer was installed as Minister of Richview on 12 October, 2007 upon receipt of credentials from the Presbytery of Iveagh; that the Rev WH Higgins, a Minister transferring, was given credentials to the Presbytery of Foyle; that Mrs KM Mbayo was licensed on 20 May, 2007 and issued with credentials to the Ards Presbytery; Mr DJ McCarthy was licensed on 1 June, 2007 and issued with credentials to the North Belfast Presbytery, Mr Michael McClenahan was licensed on 1 June, 2007 and issued with credentials to the Ards Presbytery, Mr DF Leal was licensed on 27 June, 2007 and issued with credentials to the East Belfast Presbytery; that Mr WJR Buchanan presented credentials from the Presbytery of Carrickfergus and was received as a Licentiate; that they have under their care: as a Minister without charge the Rev S Henning; as a Licentiate Mr WJR Buchanan; as Students Miss J Browne, Mr G Fowles, Mr I Steen, Miss Lesley-Ann Wilson; that consultations were held in Ulsterville and Malone Congregations; that Financial Reports are being published separately; that voting on the Overture anent Code Par 225 was 29 for and 0 against.

The **EAST BELFAST PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev JR Lambe is their Moderator; that the Rev J McAdam, Minister Emeritus of Saintfield Road, died on 28 March, 2007; that the Rev Dr JR Savage, Minister of Stormont, retired on 31 October, 2007; that the Rev AW Carson resigned as Associate Minister at Orangefield on 29 September, 2007 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of Ards, the Rev DJ Montgomery resigned as Director for Congregational Life on 30 September, 2007 and was placed as a Minister without charge under the care of the Presbytery, the Rev M Gibson resigned as Associate Minister of Westbourne Congregation on 28 October, 2007, was received as a Minister without charge and was installed as Minister of Westbourne under the Urban Mission Scheme of the Board of Mission in Ireland on 10 January, 2008; that the Rev R Hill resigned as Minister of Garnerville on 16 February, 2008 and was placed as a Minister without charge under the care of the Presbytery; the Rev P Jamieson resigned as Minister of Christ Church, Dundonald, on 28 February, 2008 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of Dromore; that the Rev FP Sellar presented credentials from the Presbytery of Dublin and Munster and was installed as Minister of Bloomfield Congregation on 23 June, 2007; that Mr BJ Walker was licensed on 27 May, 2007 and given credentials to the Presbytery of Ards, Mr D Clawson was licensed on 3 June, 2007 and given credentials to the Presbytery of Carrickfergus, Mr DW Leach was licensed on 24 June, 2007 and given credentials to the Presbytery of Ards; that Mr DF Leal having presented credentials from the Presbytery of South Belfast, Mr A McConnell having presented credentials from the Presbytery of Armagh were received as Licentiates; that the Rev IT McKee, Deputy Director of Youth and Children's Ministry was given credentials to the Presbytery

of Templepatrick, Mr MRJ Anderson, a Licentiate, was given credentials to the Presbytery of Dublin and Munster; Mr LA Patterson, a Licentiate, was given credentials to the Presbytery of Dromore, the Rev CA Meban, Minister without charge, was given credentials to the Presbytery of North Belfast, the Rev RK Graham, Minister without charge, was given credentials to the Presbytery of Newry; that under their care are: as Ministers without charge Revs DR Baker, RA Crooks (retired), WJ Harshaw (retired), R Hill, Dr E Jamison (retired), DJ Montgomery and LR Pedlow (retired); as Ministers transferring the Revs T Morgan, WS Smart; as Licentiates DF Leal and A McConnell; as Students L Rutherford, J Browne, M McKeown and P Bovill; that they held a consultation with McQuiston Memorial Congregation; that the Financial Reports of the Congregations are being printed; and that voting on the Overture anent Code Par 225 was 31 for and 0 against.

Under Care

Consulted

The **CARRICKFERGUS PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev TJ Stothers is their Moderator; that the Rev B McMillen, Minister of Raloo, resigned his charge on 25 June, 2007 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of North Belfast, the Rev SA McCracken resigned from missionary service on 28 November, 2007 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of Foyle; that Mrs K Campbell, a Licentiate, was ordained and installed to the charge of 1st Islandmagee on 19 April, 2007, having presented credentials from the Presbytery of Dromore, the Rev RI Carton was installed to the charge of Whitehead on 19 October, 2007, having presented credentials from the Presbytery of Monaghan, the Rev Dr CA Grant was installed to the charge of 1st Carrickfergus on 29 February, 2008, having presented credentials from the Presbytery of Route; that Mr WJR Buchanan was licensed on 10 June, 2007 and given credentials to the Presbytery of South Belfast, Mr JM Gracey was licensed on 17 June, 2007; that Mr D Clawson, having presented credentials from the Presbytery of East Belfast, Mr A Carroll, having presented credentials from the Presbytery of Dublin and Munster, were received as Licentiates; that the Rev AT Maze, Minister without charge, was furnished with credentials to the Grace Presbytery, PC (USA), Mr G McFadden, a Licentiate, was given credentials to the Presbytery of Ballymena; that under their care are: as Licentiates Miss HM Rendell, Mr SA Woodburn, Mr JM Gracey, Mr D Clawson, Mr A Carroll; as Students Mr GR Connor, Mr JA McKay, Mr MF Russell, Mr NRA Cooper; that during the year they held a consultation at Greenisland; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed; and that voting on the Overture anent Code Par 225 was 26 for and 0 against.

Resigned

Ordained

Installed

Licensed
Credentials

Under Care

Consulted

The **COLERAINE PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev CJ Aitcheson is their Moderator; that Mr ME Donald, a Licentiate, presented credentials from the Presbytery of Ballymena and was ordained and installed to the charge of First Garvagh on 14 September, 2007; that Mr DS Brownlow was licensed on 3 June, 2007 and given

Ordained

Licensed

Under Care credentials to the Presbytery of Route; that the Presbytery has under its care: as a Minister without charge the Rev JD Mark; as Students Mr PM Baxter, Mr PH Baxter, Mr PJ Stanbridge; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed separately; and that voting on the Overture anent Code Par 225 was 33 for and 1 against.

Died **The DERRY AND STRABANE PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev TD Hagan is their Moderator; that the Rev J Kilgore, Minister Emeritus of Claremont, died on 11 April, 2007, the Rev Dr WJH McKee, Minister Emeritus of Newtownstewart and Gortin, died on 19 December, 2007, the Rev MA Crooks, Minister Emeritus of Newtownstewart and Gortin, died on 15 February, 2008; that the Rev HJ Honeyford presented credentials from the Presbytery of Dromore and was installed to the charge of 2nd Castledearg and Alt on 13 April, 2007; that they have under their care: as a Ministers without charge the Rev JC Teeney, the Rev Dr. LWH Hilditch; as Licentiates Mr RSJ McIlhatton, Mr W Montgomery; that they are holding consultations with the Congregations of Second Derry (Strand and Bunrana) and Burt, Carlisle Road and Crossroads, Urney and Sion; that the Financial Reports of the Congregations are being published separately; and that voting on the Overture anent Code Par 225 was 25 for and 5 against.

Installed

Under Care

Consulted

Ordained The **DONEGAL PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev A Best is their Moderator; that the Rev ND Craig presented credentials from the Presbytery of Ards and was ordained and installed to the charge of Ray and Newtowncunningham on 22 September, 2007; that under their care as a Student is Mr J Cowan; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed in a Year Book; and that voting on the Overture anent Code Par 225 was 23 for and 0 against.

Under Care

Died The **DOWN PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev RI Abraham is their Moderator; that the Rev CD Adams, Minister Emeritus of Spa and Magherahamlet, died on 12 August, 2007; that the Rev DS McIlwrath, Minister of 1st Killyleagh, retired on 31 October, 2007; that the Rev GR Stockdale, Minister of Edengrove, resigned his charge on 31 August, 2007 and was received as a Minister without charge; that the Rev DJ Hyndman, a Minister transferring, was installed to the charge of Spa and Magherahamlet on 20 April, 2007; that Mr JL Cochrane was licensed on 3 June, 2007; that under their care are: as Ministers without charge the Rev RN Stewart, the Rev GR Stockdale, the Rev S Armstrong; as a Minister transferring the Rev D Reyes Martin; as Students Mr M Catney, Mrs K Viner; that during the year they held no consultations; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed separately; and that voting on the Overture anent Code Par 225 was 28 for and 0 against.

Retired

Resigned

Installed

Licensed

Under Care

Consulted

The **DROMORE PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev DC Porter is their Moderator; that the Rev HJ Honeyford, Minister of St Columba's resigned his charge on 12 April, 2007 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of Derry and Strabane, the Rev DJ Temple resigned as BMI Director for Personnel on 30 June, 2007 and was received as a Minister without charge; that the Rev DJ Bruce was installed as Secretary to the Board of Mission in Ireland on 25 October, 2007, the Rev P Jamieson presented credentials from the Presbytery of East Belfast and was installed to the charge of Hillhall on 29 February, 2008; that Mr LA Patterson presented credentials from the Presbytery of East Belfast and was ordained and installed to the charge of Loughaghery and Cargycreevy on 19 October, 2007; that Mr C Deering presented credentials from the Presbytery of Monaghan and was received as a Licentiate; Mrs K Campbell, a Licentiate, was given credentials to the Presbytery of Carrickfergus; Mr K Nelson, a Licentiate, was given credentials to the Presbytery of Omagh; that under their care are: as a Minister without charge the Rev DJ Temple; as Ministers transferring the Revs CM Wilson, Mrs KI Wimberly; as a Licentiate Mr C Deering, as Students Mr R McKibbin, Mr C McKibbin; that they held a consultation at Moira; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed separately; and that voting on the Overture anent Code Par 225 was 28 for and 0 against.

Resigned

Installed

Ordained

Credentials

Under Care

Consulted

The **DUBLIN AND MUNSTER PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev AJMcL Smith is their Moderator; that the Rev FP Sellar, Minister of Adelaide Road, Dublin, resigned his charge on 22 June, 2007 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of East Belfast, the Rev J Rushton, Minister of Carlow, resigned his charge on 28 August, 2007 and was received as a Minister without charge; the Rev KP Meyer, Chaplain to Trinity College, Dublin, resigned her charge on 27 September, 2007 and was inducted to the charge of Sandymount on 28 September, 2007, the Rev W McLaren, Chaplain to the Royal College of Surgeons, Dublin, resigned his charge on 9 October, 2007 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of Dundee, the Rev Dr DK McCrory, Associate Minister of Lucan, resigned his charge on 24 November, 2007 and was installed to the charge of Maynooth on 25 November, 2007, Mr MRJ Anderson, a Licentiate, presented credentials from the Presbytery of East Belfast and was ordained and inducted to the charge of Arklow on 1 September, 2007; that Mr A Carroll was licensed on 8 June, 2007 and given credentials to the Presbytery of Carrickfergus; that under their care as a Minister without charge is the Rev J Rushton; that they held consultations at Lucan and Maynooth; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed; and that voting on the Overture anent Code Par 225 was 28 for and 0 against.

Resigned

Inducted

Resigned

Installed

Inducted

Licensed

Under Care

Consulted

The **FOYLE PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev AC Wilson is their Moderator; that the Rev DJH Browne, Minister Emeritus of Ballykelly, died on 8 December, 2007; that the Rev SA McCracken

Died

Installed

presented credentials from the Presbytery of Carrickfergus and was installed to the charge of Drumachose and Derramore on 29 November, 2007, the Rev WH Higgins presented credentials from the Presbytery of South Belfast and was installed to the charge of Cumber and Upper Cumber on 18 January, 2008; that Mr RA Mulholland, a Licentiate, presented credentials from the Presbytery of Templepatrick and was ordained and installed to the charge of Donagheady on 1 June, 2007; that they have the Rev Kenneth G Patterson under their care as a Minister without charge; that they held consultations at 2nd Limavady and Glendermott; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed separately; and that voting on the Overture anent Code Par 225 was 23 for and 0 against.

Ordained

Under Care
Consulted

Resigned

Credentials

Under Care

Consulted

The **IVEAGH PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev WA Watson is their Moderator; that the Rev JRI Harbinson resigned the charge of Ballyronee and Drumlee on 31 December, 2007 and was received as a Minister without charge; that the Rev RJ Greer, Minister under the care of Presbytery was given credentials to the Presbytery of South Belfast; that under their care are: as Ministers without charge Revs EG McAuley (Retired), the Rev JRI Harbinson; as Students Mr TN Bingham, Mr A Faulkner; that they held consultations at Castlewellan, Leitrim and Scarva Street; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed separately; and that voting on the Overture anent Code Par 225 was 30 for and 0 against.

Retired

Resigned

Licensed

Consulted

The **MONAGHAN PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev GJ Mackarel is their Moderator; that the Rev D Nesbitt, Minister of First Ballybay, Second Ballybay, Rockcubby and Drumkeen retired on 9 January, 2008; that the Rev N Cubitt resigned the charge of First Castleblayney, Frankford and stated supply of Corvalley on 16 June, 2007, having received a call to the Presbyterian Church, USA, the Rev RI Carton resigned the charge of First Monaghan and Smithborough on 18 October, 2007 and was furnished with credentials to the Presbytery of Carrickfergus, the Rev JH Hanson, resigned from the Board of Mission Overseas on 1 November, 2007 and was furnished with credentials to the Presbytery of Omagh; that Mr C Deering was licensed on 1 June, 2007 and furnished with credentials to the Presbytery of Dromore, Miss M Deatherage was licensed on 24 June, 2007 and furnished with credentials to the Presbytery of Ards; that they did not hold any consultations last year; that the Financial Reports are being printed separately; and that voting on the Overture anent Code Par 225 was 25 for and 0 against.

Resigned

Ordained

The **NEWRY PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev WT Bingham is their Moderator; that the Rev DS Henry, Minister of Warrenpoint and Rostrevor, resigned his charge on 14 June, 2007 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of Armagh; that Mr NJE Reid, a Licentiate, presented credentials from the Presbytery of Ballymena and was

ordained and installed to the charge of Tullyallen and Mountnorris on 7 September, 2007; that during the year they completed no consultations; that the Financial Reports of the Congregations are being printed separately; and that voting on the Overture anent Code Par 225 was 15 for and 1 against.

Consulted

The **OMAGH PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev CFD Clements is their Moderator; that the Rev ES McDowell resigned his charge on 24 May, 2007 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of Templepatrick; that the Rev JH Hanson presented credentials from the Presbytery of Monaghan and was installed to the charge of Dromore and Drumquin on 2 November, 2007; that Mr Kenneth Nelson, a Licentiate, presented credentials from the Presbytery of Dromore and was ordained and installed to the charge of Mountjoy and Drumlegagh on 28 September, 2007; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being published separately; and that voting on the Overture anent Code Par 225 was 34 for and 0 against.

Resigned

Installed

Ordained

The **ROUTE PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev D Bannerman is their Moderator; that the Rev M Barr, Minister of Ballyweaney, retired on 30 September, 2007; that the Rev Dr CA Grant, Minister of Mosside and Toberdoney, resigned his charge on 28 February, 2008 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of Carrickfergus; that Mr DS Brownlow presented credentials from the Presbytery of Coleraine and was received as a Licentiate under the care of the Presbytery; that they have under their care: as a Minister without charge the Rev Dr V Dobbin CB, MBE; as Students for the ministry Mr AD Mullan, Mr JB Mullan, Mr J McConaghie; that they visited the Congregations of Ballycastle and First Ballymoney; that the Financial Reports of the Congregations are being printed separately; and that voting on the Overture anent Code Par 225 was 20 for and 2 against.

Retired

Resigned

Credentials

Under Care

Visited

The **TEMPLEPATRICK PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev B Kennaway is their Moderator; that the Rev IT McKee presented credentials from the Presbytery of East Belfast and was installed to the charge of High Street, Antrim on 18 May, 2007, the Rev ES McDowell presented credentials from the Presbytery of Omagh and was installed to the charge of First Ballyeaston on 25 May, 2007; that Mr P Turton was licensed on 10 June, 2007 and given credentials to the Presbytery of North Belfast; that Mr AJ Dunlop, a Licentiate, was given credentials to the Presbytery of Ballymena, Mr RA Mulholland, a Licentiate, was given credentials to the Presbytery of Foyle; that Mr TP McCullough presented credentials from the Presbytery of Ballymena and was received as a Licentiate under the care of Presbytery; that they held a consultation at Loanends; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed separately; and that voting on the Overture anent Code Par 225 was 23 for and 0 against.

Installed

Licensed

Credentials

Consulted

Resigned
Installed
Resigned
Under Care
Consulted

The **TYRONE PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev J Currie is their Moderator; that the Rev PG McCrea, Minister of Maghera, resigned his charge on 25 June, 2007 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of North Belfast, the Rev AS Thompson, Minister of 1st and 2nd Moneymore, resigned his charge on 22 November, 2007 and was installed in Dungannon on 23 November, 2007; the Rev H Ross, Minister of Newmills and Carland, resigned his charge on 31 December, 2007 and was received as a Minister without charge; that under their care as Students are Mr S Glendinning, Mr B Kee, Mr N Mulholland; that they have consulted with the Congregations of 1st Stewartstown, Brigh, and Albany; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed separately; and that voting on the Overture anent Code Par 225 was 39 for and 0 against.

RESOLUTION

1. That the Report be received.

GENERAL BOARD

Convener: THE CLERK

1. The General Board continues to cover many aspects of Church life and at times the work may seem so disparate as to be unconnected. However, one of the strengths of the General Board is that it has an overview of the Church and the necessary relationships which need to be encouraged both within and beyond the present structures. The Board has a co-ordinating role and increasingly wishes to fulfil that function. While the reports of Committees and Panels, and indeed other Boards, are vital in themselves they also indicate common themes which it is important to recognise and consider. The Board will increasingly rely on the Priorities Committee to identify these common issues and indicate ways in which they may be properly considered.

2. Among the common themes which are emerging and will be detected in more than one report are:

- developing a vision for mission to the whole world, both home and overseas;
- learning new ways to communicate with society and the emerging political administration;
- identifying and making more effective the vital role of Presbytery as an intermediate Court between Congregation and Assembly;
- renewing our pastoral vision and not least caring for one another within the leadership of the Church;
- providing, encouraging and training gifted people for ministry in its widest sense.

This is not an exhaustive list but an indication of some of the areas on which the mind of the General Board has been focussed.

Deputy Clerk

3. The General Assembly last year agreed the basic parameters of a job description for Deputy Clerk and gave responsibility to the General Board to make the appointment. A Panel was appointed consisting of: Moderator, Clerk, Very Rev Dr JW Lockington, Revs DS Graham, G Moore, JJ Andrews, B Brown, TJ Conway, A Boal, ES Hughes; Mrs R Dunlop, Miss A Taylor. Following advertisement and shortlisting three people were interviewed and the unanimous recommendation of the Panel was to recommend the Rev TD Gribben for appointment. This was agreed by the General Board at its October meeting and Mr Gribben took up the post on 3 March, 2008.

Principal of Union Theological College

4. The appointment of the Principal of Union Theological College has been on-going since the last General Assembly. The Board was grateful to the Rev Prof JP Taylor for agreeing to continue as Principal for a further academic year. In consultation with the Faculty, the Board now recommends the appointment of the Rev Prof LS Kirkpatrick as Principal for the normal term of

five years. The General Board is aware that the Board of Christian Training is initiating a review of the management structures of the College, including the role and appointment of the Principal, and encourages fresh thinking in this regard.

Marriage Regulations

5. It was reported to the General Assembly in 2004 that a new Civil Registration Act (2004) had been enacted in the Republic of Ireland. The provisions of this Act, however, only came into force on 5 November, 2007. In these regulations it is now essential that in a marriage two declarations are made – firstly, a declaration of no impediment to be made during or immediately prior to the marriage; secondly, the normal vows. As this is clearly different from the normal marriage practice in Northern Ireland the Board agreed only to register as permanent solemnisers in the Republic those Ministers or Licentiates who normally work in that jurisdiction. Others may be temporarily registered for individual weddings and should be reminded at the time of the important distinctions in the law. The Board also approved a revised Order of Service *for a wedding in the Republic*, based on the form found in Public Worship – An Experimental Revision (Section 2; pp 8-9). This is appended as Appendix 1.

Presbyterian Women

6. As part of its review by which the Presbyterian Women's Association is changing to *Presbyterian Women*, a question was raised as to where the organisation may best fit within the structures of the Church. At present, the PWA is an independent organisation, though closely related to the General Assembly and invited to report to each Assembly. The alternative would be for the new PW to come under a Board structure. Following consultation it was agreed to recommend no change.

Inter-Religious Council

7. While the Very Rev Dr David Clarke was Moderator, the Church was approached by an organisation called "Religions for Peace" with a view to setting up an Inter-Religious Council in Ireland. There have been some exploratory meetings, attended by Dr Clarke and the Clerk of Assembly, with representatives from other Churches and faith groups. "Religions for Peace" is a world-wide organisation which is dedicated to helping religious understanding and tolerance. It is not suggesting dialogue on any aspect of inter-faith worship, but wishes to encourage an understanding of different faith groups who share in common community life and to offer faith perspectives in an increasingly secular society. The General Board has agreed to a small group continuing this discussion. It has not yet met but the membership will be reported to the General Assembly.

Ministers' Pension Scheme (1978)

8. An actuarial valuation of the Ministers' Pension Scheme (1978) was carried out as at 31 December, 2006, and shows an actuarial deficit. The General Assembly last year authorised the General Board to act on its behalf in this

matter so that a “schedule of contributions” could be agreed by 31 March, 2008. On the recommendation of the Board of Finance and Personnel the Board agreed that the rate of assessment for the Ministers’ Pension Scheme (1978) be increased in 2008 from 22.5 pence in the £ of stipend to 26 pence.

Training Issues

9. The work of the Panel on Training Issues has been transferred to the Board of Christian Training. The Panel is thanked for its work and the impetus it has given to Christian Training.

Conveners

10. This year there are two Conveners of the Board retiring at the end of their terms of office. **The Rev Principal Patton Taylor** not only lays down the heavy responsibility of the principalship of the College but also the important convenership of the Doctrine Committee. This is one of the vital Committees of the General Assembly and the Board would express its appreciation for the time that Dr Taylor has devoted to this demanding work.

The Rev Dr Brian Savage has only been with the General Board for one year, but his convenership of the Reception of Ministers and Licentiate Committee goes back over eight years. His steady hand and clear thinking has helped many Ministers to think through the possibility of moving to ministry in Ireland and the Church is indebted to him. He has also clarified in a very helpful way the process of assessment by the Committee. The Board invites the General Assembly to thank Dr Savage and acknowledge the helpful contribution he has made to a sensitive area of Church life.

11. In thanking all those involved in the varied work of the General Board, the continued commitment of those who work in the General Secretary’s Office is acknowledged and appreciated. There have been some changes in duties but the same personnel give their usual helpful advice. Often they are the first contact point for a wide range of enquiries – both casual and formal. The Board offers its appreciation to Joyce, Jenny, Michelle and Ellery for their cheerful commitment.

APPENDIX (1)

Order of Service for a Wedding in the Republic of Ireland to meet the Marriage Provisions of the Civil Registration Act (2004)

Irish Presbyterian ministers tend to source their Wedding services from one of several Service Books, the most popular still being John Barkley’s *Book of Public Worship* 1965, pp 188-187. Others used include: *Public Worship – An Experimental Revision*, Section Two, pp 6-11; *Common Order* (Church of Scotland) 1994, pp 195-216; and *Reformed Book of Common Order*, pp 48-55.

Few ministers follow any of these printed orders word for word. They tend to use their own “variations on a theme”. However, there are limits to this flexibility. Some elements are essential in order to meet the requirements of civil law or Presbyterian practice. One thinks of the vows, for example, or of the Declaration of Marriage, among others.

To meet the Marriage Provisions of the Civil Registration Act of 2004 in the Republic of Ireland, the following in bold MUST be included in the Declaration of Purpose. It replaces the paragraph which begins: "Today in the presence of God and before this congregation ." and ends: "and a licence has been duly issued."

This form is found in *Public Worship – An Experimental Revision*, Section Two, pp 8-9:

Declaration of Purpose

We have come together in the presence of God, to celebrate the marriage of this man and this woman, in the assurance that our Lord Jesus Christ, whose power was revealed at the wedding of Cana of Galilee, is present with us now in all his power and love.

Marriage is provided by God as part of his gracious purpose for men and women since the beginning of Creation.

Marriage is enriched by God for all who have faith in the gospel, for by the grace of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, husband and wife may love one another as Christ loves them.

Marriage is a gift of God, and is not to be undertaken lightly or selfishly, but with reverence and commitment, aware of the purpose for which it is appointed by God.

It is appointed that there may be lifelong comfort and companionship between husband and wife.

It is appointed as the right and proper setting for the fullest expression of love between man and woman.

It is appointed for the ordering of family life, where children may enjoy the security of love and the heritage of faith.

It is appointed for the well being of human society, which can be stable and happy only where the marriage bond is honoured and upheld.

Today in the presence of God and before this congregation N..... and M..... seek such Christian Marriage. Due notice has been given and a Marriage Registration Form has been duly issued. As required by the State I ask you both the following questions:

Have you read and do you understand the list of civil impediments to marriage?

I HAVE

Do you solemnly declare that you believe there is no impediment of kindred or affinity or other lawful hindrance to your proposed marriage to N.....?

I DO.

Let us ask the blessing of God on the union now to be formed.

PRIORITIES COMMITTEE

1. The General Assembly in 2007 encouraged Presbyteries to review their work and priorities in the light of the Priorities Committee Report, 2006,

and report back. Responses were received from eighteen Presbyteries and these are being considered. A preliminary report will be brought to the General Assembly.

2. Last year the General Assembly also gave the Priorities Committee responsibility for prioritising the work of the mission and ministry Boards, so as to inform the work of the United Appeal Board. The Boards were already submitting five-year plans to the United Appeal Board and all but one of these plans have now been received. While the Committee intends to study the thinking of the Boards in some depth, the United Appeal Board, in preparing budgets for 2009, asked for guidance on some specific issues. The Priorities Committee has already identified two issues on which it would like to see progress and others will follow. The two are:

- **The co-ordination of training posts.** The Board of Christian Training is in the process of setting up a Panel to consider this matter with the mission/ministry Boards. The importance of training has been recognised (see Training Issues Panel Report, 2007) and should be resourced. Until the Panel reports, however, it would not be appropriate to allocate additional funds to any one Board.
- **The effective management and support of “field staff”.** The responsibility for deaconesses has shifted from the PWA to the Board of Mission in Ireland, with the PWA giving a block grant each year. While recognising and acknowledging the value of the deaconesses’ work, the BMI will need time to consider an effective management strategy and adequate resourcing. The Board of Mission Overseas is also considering an increased number of missionaries overseas. The Priorities Committee recommend that the BMI undertake a review of all its “field staff” and how they relate together, in consultation with the Board of Mission Overseas, to see if there are ways in which the two Boards may support one another to benefit all staff working “in the field”.

3. The Priorities Committee has also recognised that within the work of the General Board there are several strands which seem to point in one direction.

- (a) The current Peacemaking Project began in January 2006, building on the previous work of the Peace and Peacemaking Panel. This has particularly resulted in the “Gospel in Conflict” course and the re-launched “Preparing Youth to be Peacemakers” programme. Both these have made a significant impact on many areas of Church life. The two Programme Officers – Laura Coulter and Debs Erwin – are increasingly used for advice and training on conflict/reconciliation issues. Laura Coulter is also involved in co-ordinating the Conciliation Service. At present the programme is funded to Spring 2009. The Priorities Committee recommend that to bring the present phase of work to an ordered conclusion both contracts should be extended to the end of June 2009.
- (b) The Moderator’s Advisory Committee has been given responsibility for the Conciliation Service. It has recognised the need for education

and training to promote an ethos of conciliation in the Church, especially in Congregations. It is increasingly evident, and has been widely accepted, that this work is vital to the well-being of the Church. There is, however, no clear, on-going means of support.

- (c) Recently, a Panel has been looking at the pastoral care of Manse Families. It has identified as a contributing factor to stress in the ministry an uncertainty in dealing creatively with tension in the Congregation. Linked to this is a lack of confidence in guiding difficult meetings and not knowing where to turn for help in a conciliation process.

These three strands, with others, have convinced the Priorities Committee that new ways must be found to promote an ethos of conciliation and to support mediation initiatives in order to move situations away from conflict. The Committee intends to report next year on how this priority might more adequately be fulfilled.

4. In considering the membership of the Committee it was agreed to recommend that full-time Board Secretaries should be ex-officio members of the Committee. The make-up would then be:

- (a) Moderator, Clerk, Secretaries of Boards (8)
- (b) Conveners of Boards and General Board Committees (14)
- (c) Presbytery representatives from General Board (14)

DONALD J. WATTS, Convener

DOCTRINE COMMITTEE

1. The Doctrine Committee met on 4 occasions since June 2007 and is postponing the report on the presence and participation of children at the Lord's Supper until 2009.

J PATTON TAYLOR, Convener

MODERATOR'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE

1. The Moderator's Advisory Committee met to appoint assessors to assist Presbyteries in matters of difficulty. It also augmented the Monaghan Presbytery to ensure that three ministerial members could be present at any Presbytery meeting.

2. In response to a letter from the Armagh Presbytery the Committee confirmed that, when drawn up, the list of possible names to be nominated as Moderator of the General Assembly should be released to the press and media at an appropriate time.

3. It was agreed to recommend that in future a "Moderator's Assistant" be offered to the incoming Moderator for fifteen months. While the subject was considered, it was agreed that no other changes be made to the financial arrangements for Moderator.

4. The Committee met early in the new year to respond to a letter expressing strong concern at the public perception of women's ministry, following the controversy reported in the media about a Christmas service in Portadown. Various initiatives to move the situation forward were discussed and agreed.

5. As reported last year, the Moderator's Advisory Committee has accepted responsibility for the Conciliation Service and wants to promote a greater awareness of the possibilities for conciliation throughout the Church. The Incidental Fund is being asked for an appropriate budget.

DONALD J WATTS, Convener

RECEPTION OF MINISTERS AND LICENTIATES COMMITTEE

1. This year no applicants were interviewed but the Committee has considered several items of business.

2. Following the decision of the Union Commission that it would refer the name of any Minister from another Church being considered for appointment as stated supply to the Committee, the Committee has resolved to deal with such references under the special arrangements permitted by the Code 285(4)(f).

3. The Committee also considered the employment of Ministers from other Churches as temporary assistants under the provision of Code 81(3). The Committee has no desire to restrict the work of Congregations who see the need temporarily to increase the size of their ministry teams, but this unrestricted right is an anomaly in the present situation. It is not the Committee's intention to require such Ministers to pass the full reception process required for those who seek to become permanent ministers of PCI, however it does believe that the wider Church should be aware of the presence of Ministers of other Churches working within PCI and that such Ministers should be examined by the Committee as it deems appropriate. An Overture will be presented to the General Assembly to alter the Code to this effect.

4. Consideration was also given to the possibility of making the acceptance of Ministers into the Church conditional upon the satisfactory completion of the period of assistantship which most are required to serve. The Committee has not yet come to a decision on this matter but the matter is being actively considered.

5. At the request of the Presbytery of Ards, the Committee recommended the reception of the Rev William Brown as a Minister without charge (retired) and the General Board so approved.

RB SAVAGE, Convener

RECOGNISED MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

1. It was reported to the General Assembly last year that the Recognised Ministries Committee did not believe the category of “Recognised Minister” was necessary in the life of the Church, while wishing to affirm those already in recognised ministries. The Assembly accepted in principle that the category of “Recognised Minister” is not necessary and asked for appropriate legislative changes to be prepared. The intervening year has given time for further reflection and discussion with some of those involved. In particular a thoughtful letter was received and considered from “Restoration Ministries”. While conscious of the valuable contribution and experience which Ministers working in specialist ministries can bring to the Church, the Committee still believes that this can be achieved by Ministers without charge being given the right to sit and deliberate at Presbytery and General Assembly, without a vote. The Committee has therefore produced appropriate Overtures to phase out the “Recognised Minister” category. A resolution is also brought to discover the mind of the Assembly on “Ministers without charge” being given the right to sit and deliberate at Presbytery and General Assembly. If agreed, legislation will follow next year.

2. The list of Ministers without charge reported by Presbyteries was adopted as follows:

<i>Presbytery</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Recommendation</i>
Ards	Rev SI Dennis	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev CD Mawhinney	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev David McKee	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).
	Rev DM Spratt	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev James Todd	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev Bill Brown	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).
Ballymena	Rev JD McGaughey	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
North Belfast	Rev CI McKnight	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev WA Shaw	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev WM Smyth	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).
	Rev FW Vincent	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev Lee Eagleson	To be retained as Minister without Charge.

South Belfast	Rev. Simon Henning	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
Belfast East	Rev R A Crooks	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).
	Rev Dr Eliz Jamison	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).
	Rev Rex Pedlow	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).
	Rev W J Harshaw	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev R K Graham	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev Richard Hill	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev DJ Montgomery	To be retained as Minister Without Charge.
Coleraine	Rev JD Mark	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
Derry/Strabane	Rev. Dr LWH Hilditch	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev JC Teeney	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
Down	Rev Samuel Armstrong	To be retained as Minister without Charge
	Rev RN Stewart	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).
	Rev GR Stockdale	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
Dromore	Rev DJ Temple	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
Dublin & Munster	Rev John Rushton	To be retained as Minister without Charge
Foyle	Rev KG Patterson	To be retained as Minister without Charge
Iveagh	Rev EG McAuley	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).
	Rev JRI Harbinson	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
Route	Rev Dr Victor Dobbin	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
Tyrone	Rev Hugh Ross	To be retained as Minister without Charge.

Ministers in Recognised Service

The Rev Desi Maxwell reports:

“During this past year my classroom expanded. In fact, the walls disappeared and my teaching took to the road. Until Christmas I taught as

normal in Belfast Bible College, but at the beginning of the year a new teaching ministry called Xplorations was launched. While remaining a senior teaching fellow of the college, I now have the freedom to go to wherever people are, rather than wait for them to come to class. In November, a series of thirteen television programmes were recorded on site in Israel and they will be broadcast on the UCB cable network shortly. Teaching dvds, study tours in Israel, as well programmes taught in person, are all planned for the future. One of the main emphasis in the teaching is the Hebraic roots of our faith, but there is a wide variety of material on offer. More information may be found at www.xplorations.org”

The Rev Dr Ruth Patterson reports:

“The most significant development for us this year is that the movement of Faith and Friendship, inspired by Jean Vanier, and founded in 1997, has come in under the umbrella of Restoration Ministries. Faith and Friendship gives people who are already securely rooted in their own traditions opportunities to come together across the denominational divide and share their faith in an atmosphere of friendship and trust. Currently there are groups operating in Lisnaskea, Enniskillen, Omagh, Limavady and Belfast. Each year I write the scripture guidelines for the groups along with suggestions for sharing and action. We have found this to be a very useful tool in the growth of understanding and a recognition of unity in diversity. Our calling to prayer, listening, teaching, providing opportunities for days of reflection and speaking engagements throughout Ireland and beyond continue. We are greatly encouraged that more and more outside groups are seeking to use our premises either for their own programmes or to receive input from the ministry here.”

The Rev WJP Bailie reports:

Mission Africa (The Qua Iboe Fellowship) is one of Ireland’s oldest mission agencies. It is an unambiguously evangelical mission agency, working in partnership with like-minded missions and churches in Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Chad, and currently developing links in Kenya and Ghana. The mission concentrates on four areas of ministry: evangelism and church planting; the strengthening of existing church bodies through theological education and Christian literature distribution; medical mission, with particular emphasis upon HIV/ AIDS work; and compassionate ministry amongst disadvantaged and abused children. The mission has around 20 full time staff in the field, and operates a thriving short term programme.

My work is that of Chief Executive, with responsibility for strategic planning, administration of personnel, finance and partner relations.

Mission Africa was founded by Irish Presbyterians, so I am especially glad to report an excellent and growing relationship with the Board of Mission Overseas through the Mission Agencies Partnership. We have been delighted to see the number of strong partnerships develop between the Mission and several congregations and Presbyteries of PCI.

We appreciate deeply all those who maintain an interest in our work and remember us in prayer.

CHURCH AND SOCIETY COMMITTEE

1. The Church and Society Committee continues to seek out ways to engage effectively with society and to be aware of changes in government policy in particular. As ever, the Committee has responded to a variety of consultations and carried out a number of meetings. Thanks is given to God for the vision and dedication of Committee members, rejoicing in the often challenging conversations that are had at Committee meetings.

2. Meetings have been held with the Strategic Review of Parading body, the Group dealing with the past, the Taoiseach and some government ministers from the Republic, and His Excellency, the Iranian Ambassador.

3. Since last General Assembly Gordon Brown has become UK Prime Minister. The Committee wish him well and have assured him of the prayers of the Church. To lead a multi-cultural country, passing through many transitions, is an enormous challenge. It is the Committee's hope that a respectful society can be built where the lessons of the conflict in Northern Ireland can be learned so as to avert communities separated from one another across Great Britain and Ireland.

4. It has always been a challenge to maintain the cross-border nature of the Committee. With the fast changing world of Northern Ireland and the changes in Irish Society, it has become even more difficult to manage the Committee effectively on two sides of the border where legislation is different in both jurisdictions. The capacity of Committee members to be briefed in order to be effective is limited. In days gone by the work of the Committee very much focussed around Northern Irish politics, specifically the constitutional question and the violence. This narrow focus is no longer needed and if the Committee is to effectively tell the views of the Church in the public square then being well briefed is essential. We continue to try to rise to these challenges.

5. How the views of the Church are made known in the public domain remains a matter for regular discussion at the Committee. To have the media carry the Church's views is more difficult than it used to be and so the Committee has decided to be more focussed on a number of issues rather than to try to pick up absolutely everything. The Committee is grateful for the continuing advice and support of Stephen Lynas.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

1. Although the agenda for the Church and Society Committee is dominated by Northern concerns, both national and international issues relevant to the Republic also require attention. Despite the Presbyterian Church's minority presence it nonetheless receives repeated requests to make submissions to consultative and policy documents. Some, like the Medical Board's Guidelines on Medical Ethics or the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, are so specialised and complex as to make the often tight deadlines impossible to meet with limited local expertise to call on. Others, such as the submission on Restorative Justice, lie within the Committee's competence and have been well received.

2. The promised government consultations with faith communities, although put on hold during the General Election, became a reality following the re-election of Fianna Fail under the premiership of Taoiseach Ahern. Whilst the meeting with the PCI delegation took place on 6 February, 2008, the issues raised have been the main concerns of Presbyterians in the Republic throughout 2007. The most recent position on these is deemed beneficial for reporting purposes.

3. Protestant Schools generally have been unhappy with the Redeployment Scheme that effectively allows a Department official to place a teacher in a vacant post without any say by the School's Management Boards. The delegation (including representation from our Education Board) raised our concerns regarding ethos, freedom, entitlement and employers' responsibilities, all of which are threatened by this policy. The Minister for Education insisted that consultation via the Teachers' Conciliation Council had given the Protestant Schools appropriate opportunity for comment prior to the Scheme's launch, and that a legal safeguard requiring such teachers to sign up to ethos actually strengthens the relationship. In the Minister's view the concerns are disproportionate to the reality, given that the Scheme only effects 20-40 teachers per year (out of a national 7,000 teachers), with only 25 actually having been deployed. The Minister is satisfied that the limitations on applying the Scheme to particular schools should ensure a fair and satisfactory arrangement all round. Certain schools have, however, taken legal action and the Scheme will be reviewed by 31 March, 2008 in any event.

4. A further on-going issue that has exercised the minds and consciences of Presbyterians; and one that was raised again with the Taoiseach, is that of civil-partnerships legislation. PCI had previously submitted a response to the Working Group on Domestic Partnerships established by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform in April 2006. There the uniqueness of marriage between one man and one woman for the stability of society was emphasised. During the intervening period pressure has increased from the Gay/Lesbian lobby to seek legal recognition of same-sex partnerships as 'gay marriages' on fully equal terms. During our consultation the Taoiseach reaffirmed the unique nature of marriage as enshrined in Ireland's Constitution and insisted that there was absolutely no intentions on the part of the government to alter this. According to the Taoiseach and his Ministers, Ireland's right to legislate accordingly is recognised in Europe and there is no question of European pressure being brought to bear on the matter. It was, however, emphasised that the Government would be pressing ahead with legislation to regularise and safeguard the human rights and fiscal entitlements of such couples.

5. It is impossible for nation-states within the EU to conduct their affairs without reference to the European bodies. Indeed, Ireland has been drawing on the long experience of migration and integration on the continent to develop its own policies and legislation aimed at a more inclusive, diverse and integrated Ireland. PCI continues to be represented by George McCullagh at the European Forum and a delegation from PCI attended the Forum's meeting on 8 November, 2007. The ratification of the Lisbon Treaty is being debated in view of Ireland's unique referendum option. The Treaty enjoys broad cross-party support in the

Dail and the Minister for Europe was at pains to emphasise the limits of Europe's competencies over member-states and the strength of Ireland's opt-out clauses as a future safeguard.

NORTHERN IRELAND

6. Responses have been made to a variety of consultations and discussions – Strategic Review of Parading, Devolution of Criminal Justice and Policing, Draft Programme for Government, and Dealing with the Past. These are attached for your information, together with resolutions of the Committee that were brought to the General Board.

7. In the context of Northern Ireland the Committee has taken the decision to focus on a number of areas - Programme for Government, dealing with the past, parading, human rights. It is our hope that by becoming more focussed on these issues the Committee will also become more informed and able to engage in debate both in the public arena and privately with the relevant bodies and politicians. Members of the Committee have agreed to monitor government departments for issues of challenge and concern.

8. The Committee's response to the Draft Programme for Government drew attention, as did many other organisations, to the lack of reference to a shared future. This has been amended and the Committee is grateful to note the impact of lobbying. However, concerns remain about the energy behind the equality agenda which may subvert the shared future agenda. As Presbyterians we firmly believe in equality, for we believe that God created all people – of every race, religion, denomination and faith tradition. But equality can be experienced as an interest in power, which so easily becomes power over others, rather than a commitment to sharing and to acceptance of diversity. It is the Committee's belief that Northern Ireland will be well served by a commitment to a shared future so that everyone can feel at home and find society a place in which they can flourish, grow and change. Politicians at Executive and Assembly level, local Councils, Churches and other members of civil society are faced with the challenge of examining their commitment to a shared future and what it will mean for the way in which they carry out their business.

9. The challenge of a shared future, and creating a shared future, is a matter for the Churches who most often relate to the public domain as separate denominations. It is the Committee's belief that the Churches would, at least from time to time, be better served and more effective if they were to work together. Clearly the Churches cannot always speak with one voice and indeed it could be argued that if the Churches can disagree in public and still respect one another they will have contributed to a new ethos in society. However, the Committee believe, that regular meetings between the equivalent to Church and Society conveners would be useful. The Churches can then discover where their commonalities are and discuss their differences in a manner which will assist making our voice heard.

10. The recent St Andrew's Agreement provided for a Forum to advise the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission on the scope of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. Under the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement the Human Rights Commission must advise the United Kingdom Government on this question.

11. The Bill of Rights Forum is a multi-party, multi-sectoral body broadly representative of the people of Northern Ireland. In addition to an independent chairman there are 14 representatives of the political parties and 14 representatives of civil society. One seat was allocated to the Irish Council of Churches who appointed the Very Rev Dr Sam Hutchinson as their representative. A number of organisations were granted observer status.

12. The remit of the Forum was to prepare proposals for rights supplementary to the European Convention on Human Rights and which relate to the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland. Proposals need to be in conformity with the relevant international standards

13. Most of the detailed work was done in seven working groups, the membership of which was strengthened by the addition of persons who were not Forum members but who had some relevant expertise to offer. After appropriate consultations those nominated by ICC to various working groups were the Rev Patricia McBride, Mr Lindsay Conway and the Rev Dr Fred Munce (Methodist).

14. Dr Hutchinson was appointed convener of the working group dealing with Criminal Justice and Victims. The membership of the Forum and its working groups did not include a representative of any victims' organisation so that working group contacted about 100 such organisations and received oral and/or written submissions from those who responded.

15. The other six working groups dealt with the rights of (i) Children and Young People, (ii) Women, (iii) Economic and Social Rights (including education, employment and health) , (iv) Culture, Identify and Language, (v) Civil and Political Rights and (vi) Preamble, Implementation and Enforcement.

16. All of these working groups invested considerable time and energy in the process; the working Group on Criminal Justice and Victims alone met 18 times, including some all-day meetings. The other working groups also held many meetings involving thousands of man/woman-hours of study and discussion. The plenary Forum was also scheduled to meet 18 times, including a two-day residential meeting.

17. The reports of the working groups are being submitted to the Forum in March and the Forum will make the final decision on its proposals for the Bill of Rights. At the time of writing there is much discussion and negotiation still to come in the Forum, so it is too soon to say what these proposals will be.

EUROPE

18. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland continues to be represented and kept informed of European issues by the Rev Matthew Ross of the Church and Society Commission in Brussels. The most pressing issue at the moment is the Referendum to be held in the Republic of Ireland on the Lisbon Treaty. A fuller comment will be brought to the General Assembly in Supplementary Reports. The Committee continues to be grateful to Mr George McCullagh who represents the Church at the Forum on Europe in Dublin.

APPENDIX A**The Strategic Review of Parading**

1. Over the years, The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has made a number of submissions to different bodies on the matter of parading. As this is on the record we do not want to take too much of the review body's time repeating ourselves but it is worth reiterating our views, albeit briefly. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss matters further with you, specifically those detailed at paragraphs 4 & 5 (balance of rights; expression of identities; strategies to move away from conflict and towards cooperation and acceptance; the multi-faceted nature of any strategic response to the matter of parading).

2. Parading has been more than a knotty issue for the people of Northern Ireland, and in particular for those who live in areas where parades have been contested. We have affirmed, and continue to affirm, the rights of groups and individuals to parade and to protest. However, we have always called for an equal attentiveness to responsibilities as to rights. So neither parading nor protesting should be intent on causing offense or harm and should not be used as an 'excuse' for stirring up trouble.

3. While the difficulties surrounding the whole matter of parading have subsided, at least in the public view, and the excessive costs of maintaining order are not necessary at present, we would express concern about whether or not things are really resolved. We would not be the first post-conflict society to assume that because something is not presently an issue in the public domain that it is, in fact, resolved. Evidence, not least from the former Eastern Bloc countries, is that unless there is some actual resolution of matters, as opposed to their merely fading away, then they will at some time return to haunt us. For that reason we believe the Strategic Review of Parading to be important and we therefore welcome this long term, strategic review of the future place of parading in our society.

4. The balance of rights, the expression of identities and the acceptance of other identities, remain a challenge to our evolving society. But the larger challenge comes in the form of providing strategies which assist society to move away from conflict and towards not only co-existence but also acceptance. Any strategic response to the matter of parading must, therefore, resist the temptation to get drawn into the dynamics of local conflicts and their resolution. Strategies which move parading away from being a focus for conflict will be multi-faceted, taking account of all that we have learned through our engagement with this issue. These important areas for attention include:

- Social and economic well-being
- Education
- Access to those who have the power to make a difference
- The real sharing of space on a year round basis
- Community relations in general which provide the broad context, supportive or otherwise, in which any strategy is rolled out

5. Furthermore, we believe it to be important for all those considering the matter of parading to resist focusing on 2 opposed groups – the loyal orders and those who oppose the loyal orders. If a strategy requires a broad base,

addressing the context as well as the issue, then those engaged in the process must also be of a broad base group. This broad base response will, in our view, take account of and challenge:

- the parties in conflict locally
- the senior representatives of local groups whose scope includes all local areas
- the parades commission
- the police whose role it is to uphold the determinations of the parades commission as well as to ensure that law and order prevail
- the loyal orders
- those opposed to the loyal orders.

All of these parties to the matter of parading have responsibilities and as part of a strategic way forward these responsibilities need to be clearly defined, difficulties with them addressed and commitments to them made.

6. This is, I hope, sufficient summary of our views. We hope that you will be able to meet with us as we believe that face to face meetings are always more engaging and effective.

APPENDIX B

Devolution of Criminal Justice and Policing

1. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland includes members who have served as police officers and, particularly over the years of the 'Troubles', has been very conscious of the level of threat which many have lived with and also the suffering that has resulted from death and injury. We, therefore, make our comments from the context of having been supportive of policing.

2. We are also very much aware of the changes that have taken place in policing and are conscious of the challenges of adapting a policing service to the new situation. We have been broadly supportive of the changes while having reservations about, for example, the 50/50 rule. At the same time, we believe that a police service should be more representative of the whole community thus increasing its broad accountability.

3. With regard to the devolution of policing & justice we would express some caution. While our society continues to evolve in a peaceful setting we would want to resist any changes which simply devalue the efforts that were made in policing and justice to serve the whole community and the price that many paid in doing so.

4. While we believe it is a sign of a healthy society that it takes responsibility for maintaining its own rule of law, we also believe that the time when this responsibility is taken on will have to reflect a maturity and integrity within that community and among its leadership.

5. We would like to take the time to consult more widely before finally expressing a view and discussing it with you.

APPENDIX C

Draft Programme for Government

1. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland's Church and Society Committee welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Draft Programme for Government and wish, first of all, to acknowledge the work done in drafting the document and the opportunities afforded by the consultation process.

2. The Presbyterian Church is an Ireland-wide denomination, representing a wide variety of opinions, views and experiences. The Church and Society Committee is appointed by the most senior governing body, the General Assembly, to represent the Church in the public square and to relate to government and its institutions, North and South of the border.

3. We welcome the emphasis on entrepreneurship and an energetic economy, help to rural communities, and the environmental priorities, especially the commitment to renewable energy resources and a 25% in carbon footprint reduction by 2025.

4. The Presbyterian Church, which is working in virtually every local community in Northern Ireland (urban, rural and provincial), has a particular interest in the outworking of the commitment to the building of *'a peaceful, fair and prosperous society in Northern Ireland, with respect for the rule of law, and where everyone can enjoy a better quality of life now and in the years to come.'*

5. The Committee thoroughly endorses this over-riding policy aim, and the Executive's commitment to a full equality agenda. With the executive, *'... we are determined to seize this unprecedented opportunity to deliver a better and more sustainable future for all our people,'* with the ultimate aim of delivering a prosperous, fair and inclusive society.

6. It is our clear conviction, however, that this aim cannot be achieved without an equal commitment to a province wide 'good relations' policy. We believe that it is impossible to build, *'a society which is at ease with itself where everyone shares and enjoys the benefits of this new opportunity,'* if we do not address the continuing uncomfortable divisions which exist at every level of our society.

7. We sense that the open and public battles between members of the Executive are beginning to lead to apathy and disenchantment – even cynicism – amongst a still volatile electorate. This indicates to us that much work needs to be done, at every level of society, to build good relations and to provide a positive public model for civic society.

8. The absence of an apparent public commitment to any good relations policy on the same footing as the commitment to equality is therefore deeply concerning. This is heightened by the lack of any substantive cross party or cross community debate – never mind agreement - on the relationship between equality and community relations. The Church and Society Committee finds it unacceptable that there should be any room for an interpretation that allows equality and segregation to continue side by side.

9. We would add to this a concern about the cost of running a deeply divided society while at the same time failing to address that which divides. The cost of a divided education system, of providing segregated housing, of policing

a divided society, of ongoing issues around parading and of dealing with the past, suggests that work needs to be done so that the limited resources available to govern Northern Ireland can be used effectively and well. It is a matter of good stewardship of a limited resource.

10. We are therefore calling on the Executive to amend the Draft Programme for Government to include an unambiguous commitment to the building of good relations, and for that policy to be as equally supported and funded as the equality agenda. It is our firm belief that a good relations policy must underpin our movement into the new future and thereby address the places where divisions matter most, that is where people experience poverty and exclusion.

APPENDIX D

Dealing With The Past (1)

1. The General Board of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the discussion on what framework, if any, ought to be put in place to enable our society to address the events of recent decades in a way which is not divisive or disruptive. We wish the Eames- Bradley Group well in the task which they have been set, and pray that they may know the wisdom and guidance of Almighty God in all their deliberations.

2. The vision of a better society for all in Northern Ireland can only become reality when the bitter lessons of the past have been understood and applied. One aspect of that task is to address the past in such a way that those whose lives have been most dramatically altered through the tragic events of recent decades, have that measure of understanding that enables them to direct their thoughts forward. Others, who have not lived through these last decades—and only those in the sixth decade of life have meaningful memories extending before the onset of ‘The Troubles’—must learn the dangers which reside in sectarianism and violence.

3. Christian people are obliged to strive for justice and peace, and to display forgiveness. While the churches can rightly claim to have been forces for stability and restraint (never advocating vengeance), they have not been as active as they might have been in the quest for justice. In that quest for justice, we must also bear in mind that ours is a fallen world, and we ourselves are fallen creatures, and that no perfect solutions are to be found.

4. The construction of a framework for dealing with the events of ‘The Troubles’ will not, therefore, be easy. For one thing, some ‘victims’ or ‘survivors’ have already made their peace with events, or have found the release which forgiveness brings. Others seek an understanding of why their loved one was targeted, and by whom. For some that knowledge may promote healing, while for others it may only raise further questions, perhaps even shattering previously-held assumptions. Yet others simply desire a forum where they may speak of their pain, and be heard sympathetically.

5. One immediate impediment is the natural human unwillingness, manifest in all communities, to admit fault. For instance, even after forty years many in the unionist community refuse to concede the failings of successive

Stormont administrations. Likewise, paramilitary groups have been less than forthcoming in many of their utterances; attempting to disguise acts of naked sectarianism as heroic deeds of a short-sighted patriotism. For any group to feel bound by internal organisational rules, rather than the higher claims of truth, will hamper the endeavour entirely.

6. Any framework for dealing with the wounds of the past must be capable of being comprehensive. While the forces of the political and military establishment must be under the rule of law, the weight of investigation in recent years has been largely one-sided. No true survey of the past can deal with the wounds of our society unless all sides are prepared for honest disclosure of their misdeeds.

7. Such a framework must also be cost-effective. In any society, priorities need to be set, not least in the use of public money. Resources invested in one area are thereby denied to another. The future well-being of our society may be prejudiced if sums of public money, sorely need to improve our infrastructure, as well as health and education provision, are directed towards the pursuit of objectives designed to embarrass any one group of players in the communal tragedy.

8. To ensure that the 'victims' of the past decades do not suffer further hurt or disappointment, it is imperative that any process ultimately proposed should have considerable prospects of success. An ambitious scheme, not rooted in reality, could prove counter-productive. For that reason, the commitment of all parties to the conflict to participate fully and in good faith, must be rigorously tested.

9. The issue of sentencing policy is also central to any consideration of a process dealing with the past. Full disclosure of deeds and motivation is unlikely to be possible when the risk of further charges hangs like a Damoclean sword. The provisions for early release under the Good Friday Agreement was a step too far for many people. Somewhat similar provisions, tantamount to an amnesty on the fulfillment of certain conditions, may be essential. Yet this could prove utterly unpalatable to many others.

10. One other vital calculation cannot be ignored; i.e. the likely impact of such a process on political stability. In the medium-term the significance of that consideration may diminish, but the potential volatility of the present situation must not be ignored. Wounds must be allowed some time to heal.

11. Surveying the issues above, we are not convinced that the greater public good would be served by a South African-style 'Truth Commission' at this point. Admittedly, with the passage of the years, the number of eye-witnesses able and willing to contribute their information will diminish, unsubstantiated conjectures may flourish and certain myths be cultivated. Such may be the inevitable growth in a society not yet sufficiently at peace with itself to provide or face the unvarnished truth. The day for such truth-telling may have to wait.

Dealing With The Past (2)

1. We were grateful for the opportunity to meet the group recently, and for the invitation to make a further written submission. In the light of our

discussion, and following further reflection among ourselves, we are glad to do so in this paper.

2. We fully accept the multi-dimensional nature of the task of dealing with the past, which has left our whole society deeply segregated and, in spite of the major political developments of 2007, there is much 'unfinished' business from the past which is likely to haunt further progress for a generation to come.

3. We also accept that the role of the churches in the past has often focussed on the huge pastoral needs of those most acutely affected. One consequence of this essential work has been that we have rarely sought time or opportunity to challenge governments, civic society or ourselves on the ethics of response to terrorism. Indeed, we have not given the necessary leadership on the more general question of how to relate, in practice, to 'enemies' of all sorts.

4. Given that it is now clear that things were done which ought not to have been done, and that things were left undone which should have been done, we share, with others, a proper sense of shame at our shortcomings and are content for that to be on public record.

5. In terms of facing the past, we remain convinced that judicial inquiries are not feasible as a way forward. We are concerned not to perpetuate an adversarial model in a society that is as yet massively unreconciled.

6. We also accept that the issue of forgiveness is a hugely complex one for both individuals and the state, since it normally implies a moral judgement on the acts of the 'offender' by those offering the forgiveness – a view that may very well be unacceptable to the 'offender'.

7. Yet there is a 'political' forgiveness, in which political self interest enables leaders to work with former opponents for either political advancement or the common good without vengeance or even any agreement on the past. Whilst this approach is not 'value free', it is not fundamentally based on an ethical rapprochement, but on political pragmatism – and as we have seen recently, can bring substantial political and societal gains all round.

8. We can cautiously support such political accommodation – albeit with reservations, since reconciliation is still left outside the door.

9. Yet over the medium to longer term, we would be pessimistic of the sustainability of such political accommodation – the past must be faced, and must be as multi-dimensional as the past itself. We therefore urge that a serious place be given to:

- (a) the energetic commitment to and promotion of an active good relations policy at both central and local government level. The continuing struggle to embed this in the making and carrying through of public policy remains an unwelcome signal that it is either not genuinely desired or actually deliverable in present circumstances.
- (b) finding a mechanism by which all those who wish to tell their story can do so, and that it be archived in perpetuity.
- (c) the opportunity afforded by the RPA to enable local communities to remember their victims in a way that commends itself across the whole community in each new local council district. It is worth bearing in mind the comment from General Grant at the end of the American civil war that 'the best sign of rejoicing after the victory will be to abstain from all demonstrations'. This appeal for a lack of

triumphalism has to be accompanied by assisting the community to express its variety of identities with tolerance, and even mutual respect.

- (d) the funding of the work of the Victims' Commissioners to be agreed on a rolling 5 year period, so that there are no short term surprises to victims themselves or their representative groups.
- (e) an attempt in the Group's interim and final report to set out the actual limits of what can be reasonably be expected and achieved in the search for justice, either through the courts, enquiries, inquests or the HET.
- (f) an attempt in the Group's interim and final reports to spell out the contribution that each sector of civil society can reasonably be expected to make to dealing with the past – business; trades unions; churches; voluntary and community groups; political parties; combatants; victims' groups; law enforcement and security agencies; local councils; governments and their departments.

10. These latter two suggestions arise from our conviction that the Consultative Group is indeed the best placed and most informed and objective group to set the framework for dealing with the past. By making it clear that 'we have all sinned' and pointing to what each group can contribute to healing, the onus then falls on each group to search its own soul and offer its own public contribution. We believe that this is much preferable to either a truth commission or endless judicial processes. It also has the great advantage of mutual accountability within civic and political society for dealing with the past. It might also be worth a formal revisitation of the contributions that each sector has made 5 years after the publication of the Group's report to ensure continuing accountability, and offer fresh guidance as necessary.

11. At the heart of our submission is that we must all see dealing with the past as a structured 'process' involving the building of new relationships over the period of time needed for that – rather than being amenable to a series of external pressures potentially exerted by those who might well have been part of the problem.

APPENDIX E

Bill of Rights Forum

1. The recent St Andrew's Agreement provided for a Forum to advise the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission on the scope of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. Under the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement the Human Rights Commission must advise the United Kingdom on this question.

2. The Bill of Rights Forum is a multi-party, multi-sectoral body broadly representative of the people of Northern Ireland. In addition to an independent chairman there are 14 representatives of the political parties and 14 representatives of civil society. One seat was allocated to the Irish Council of Churches who appointed Very Rev Dr Sam Hutchinson as their representative. A number of organisations were granted observer status.

3. The remit of the Forum was to prepare proposals for rights supplementary to the European Convention on Human Rights and which relate to the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland. Proposals need to be in conformity with the relevant international standards

4. Most of the detailed work was done in seven working groups, the membership of which was strengthened by the addition of persons who were not Forum members but who had some relevant expertise to offer. After appropriate consultations those nominated by ICC to various working groups were the Rev Patricia McBride, Mr Lindsay Conway and the Rev Dr Fred Munce (Methodist).

5. Dr Hutchinson was appointed convener of the working group dealing with Criminal Justice and Victims. The membership of the Forum and its working groups did not include a representative of any victims' organisation so that working group contacted about 100 such organisations and received oral and/or written submissions from those who responded.

6. The other six working groups dealt with the rights of (i) Children and Young People, (ii) Women, (iii) Economic and Social Rights (including education, employment and health), (iv) Culture, Identity and Language, (v) Civil and Political Rights and (vi) Preamble, Implementation and Enforcement.

7. All of these working groups invested considerable time and energy in the process; the working Group on Criminal Justice and Victims alone met 18 times, including some all-day meetings. The other working groups also held many meetings involving thousands of man/women-hours of study and discussion. The plenary Forum was also scheduled to meet 18 times, including a two-day residential meeting.

8. The reports of the working groups are being submitted to the Forum in March and the Forum will make the final decision on its proposals for the Bill of Rights. At time of writing this interim report there is much discussion and negotiation still to come in the Forum, so it is too soon to say what these proposals will be.

LESLEY CARROLL, ALAN BOAL, Conveners

GLOBAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

1. Much of the work of this Committee is carried out by its three main panels. This year the Rev Dr Robert Buick is welcomed as the new Convener of the Environment Panel. We pay a glowing tribute to Mr Joe Furphy, its outgoing Secretary and thank him for his visionary work and pioneering contribution over a long number of years. The Peace and Peacemaking Panel has completed a comprehensive review of its work and is looking forward with renewed vision and energy. Race Relations has been concerned in particular with the plight of two Nigerian families connected with Mountpottinger Congregation. The work of all three panels is summarised below.

2. This year the Committee has written a major report on Christian lifestyle issues which appears below. Hopefully it will be discussed and implemented both at Presbytery and Congregational levels.

PANEL ON PEACE AND PEACEMAKING

The Rev Liz Hughes reports:

SETTING PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE WORK

1. This has been a busy year in the life of the Peace and Peacemaking Panel. A Conference was held in October, in conjunction with representatives from the Board of Youth and Children's Ministry, to establish our priorities as a Panel for present and future work. Five key priorities for peacemaking as a Church were identified:

- (i) International peace issues;
- (ii) Mainstreaming peacemaking as a gospel imperative;
- (iii) Conflict transformation;
- (iv) Healing the hurts of the past;
- (v) Conciliation & learning to handle conflict within the life of the Church.

Following a meeting with the relevant Conveners it was recognised that, while both areas were directly relevant to peacemaking, (iv) *Healing the hurts of the past* is presently being addressed by Church and Society and (v) *Conciliation and handling conflict within the life of the Church* is in the hands of the Moderator's Advisory Committee.

- (i) *International Peace Issues*: The Panel was originally set up within the context of studying international peace issues but of necessity moved to concentrate on more local challenges. It is felt there is a need to address the balance, so as to look at situations of conflict across our world and our responsibilities as a church.
- (ii) *Mainstreaming Peacemaking as a gospel imperative*: The *Gospel in Conflict* course, along with PYP, has been our primary means of helping to encourage every PCI member to take peacemaking seriously as an integral part of their witness to Jesus Christ. Other events such as looking at the theology of peacemaking with Professor Stephen Williams have been part of that challenge. Staff members seek out every opportunity to share what the programme is about with Presbyteries, Kirk Sessions and other agencies. Interboard cooperation has been identified as one of the key elements required for future progress.
- (iii) The area of conflict transformation has focussed on the issue of engaging with loyalists and loyalist communities. The November Conference last year "*Loyalists Matter Too?*" was the best attended ever. Those who have learned on the job were our special speakers and the Conference benefited from the expertise of Alistair Bates, Norman Hamilton, Diane Holt, John Coulter, David Brice and Jim Murdock.

The Conference has already been followed up with coverage in the Presbyterian Herald and the Committee expresses thanks to Stephen Lynas, who organised this for us, and Alf McCreary who wrote the report. One meeting for a small number of Ministers and Elders who are closely involved with loyalist communities has already taken place and a second follow up event is planned for

Thursday, 12 June. Topics to be covered include the issues affecting loyalists areas, the tools needed to reach them and how PCI could support in making that possible. Interested people are invited to register with Laura Coulter's office if you would like to attend. lcoulter@presbyterianireland.org

EVALUATION AND FUNDING

Rodney Green, of RG Consultants, has completed an initial professional evaluation of the IFI and CRC funded programme and the results are most encouraging.

Attached to this report you will find the executive summary of the evaluation. The full report is available for any who wish to study it from Laura Coulter or Deborah Erwin in the Peace Department in Church House. True to PCI form the quotations within the evaluation reflect a diverse range of opinions and make fascinating reading.

“Churches need to be more aware of the communities in which they are located and to respond to the needs in those areas. An outward looking church will grow”.

“The bit in the courses about exploring Presbyterian identity is extremely important as if you move into cross community dialogue and contact people will be asking you about this and what you believe”

“The course created a renewed sense of openness among the young people to meet with a group of peers from the Catholic Community and when they did meet up they were more prepared and confident to engage in discussion”

“This was a refreshing approach to study the Bible together in small groups”

“We need to equip people to live out the gospel in their lives – this course helps them to do that and to question; a lot of thought has gone into the questions”

“I have never forgotten the first session when we looked at what we have contributed to the troubles. You think that's nothing but as you reflect back you can see there are ways you have contributed to this”

“If the Church values this work how much it is willing to pay is a reflection of the value it is putting on this. At a structural level in our Church there are hard decisions to be made about central resources”

“Both PYP and GIC have given people skills to be more proactive and ideas about what they can do to contribute to peacemaking to think outside the box and to challenge them to take simple practical steps in their own lives and Congregations.”

“As a result of this initiative and with the support of the General Assembly this is getting down to Presbyteries and Congregations. Peacemaking is now more on the agenda of Presbyteries than ever before and filtering into Congregations.”

It is clear from the report that a huge debt of thanks is due to the competent staff members – Laura Coulter who has spearheaded the Adult programme and Deborah Erwin who is responsible for the Youth equivalent (PYP). Both have key skills which extend beyond the actual programme objectives. Laura is a trained mediator with many years of mediation and conciliation experience; and

Debs has extensive experience in working with young people outside traditional Church settings.

One key recommendation in the report is the urgent need “*to explore and secure funding to support the development of this initiative with young people and adults both internally from ‘mainstream’ sources within PCI and externally from Government or other sources, for example, Peace III, IFI, CRC Core Funding, Private Sponsorship, etc.*”

While it is noteworthy that approx 750 Church members have completed the GIC – loving your neighbour course in a range of different Congregational and Presbytery based locations, it is clear that there is still a long way to go. The following paragraphs from the executive summary give pause for thought: -

“Through the course of discussions held as part of the evaluation process, there was a general sense that the Church had moved a long way in the last 10-15 years with the concept of peacemaking and peace-building both at the individual, community and societal level more acceptable than it had been previously. That said, there was still evident opposition to the work, although this was less vociferous and people were more understanding of its purpose and possibilities.

The welcome contribution of funding from IFI proved the need for such a project although it was recognised delivery aims and objectives may have been over-ambitious within the 3 year grant period when one considers the long-term or generational nature of the work to contribute more actively to a stable and lasting peace in Ireland. There was a strong sense that this work must continue and be grounded in both the denominational and inter-church contexts in order to build upon the strong foundation and to reinforce progress made.”

As this report is being written a sub group from the Project Management Committee is vigorously exploring funding possibilities. Special thanks are due to the Revs Doug Baker and John Peacock for extensive work in this area.

COMING SOON

Finally the Panel’s next major Conference will take place on November 8 this year – details to be confirmed. It is hoped that members will take careful note and plan to attend.

APPENDIX

PCI PEACEMAKING PROGRAMME 2006-2009

INTERIM REPORT - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The work of peacemaking and reconciliation within PCI with both young people and adults is not a new phenomenon. Having developed largely separately, the two PCI Boards (General and Youth and Children’s Ministry) began to work more closely and in 2006 were awarded funding from IFI to take forward this work with the expressed purpose of: ‘Developing initiatives, targeted at both youth and adult levels, to challenge, equip, and support members, Congregations, Presbyteries, Boards, Committees and agencies of the

Presbyterian Church in Ireland to contribute more actively to a stable and lasting peace in Ireland’.

Achievements & developments: Since 2006, there was significant progress towards achieving the five strategic aims/objectives and there were several main achievements and developments during this time. ‘Gospel in Conflict’ (GIC) was developed, accompanied by supporting resource manuals and DVD’s, and delivered in 18 different venues with 707 people participating. Similarly ‘Preparing Youth to be Peacemakers’ (PYP) was revised, new resources produced and delivered in 12 different settings with 221 people participating. 23 new facilitators were trained, and 25 retrained, to deliver the new course.

There were three peacemaking conferences held focusing on important issues such as the implications for the Church of a ‘Shared Future’, the deal to broker devolved government in Northern Ireland and engagement with loyalist communities. These conferences have become more popular and were considered timely interventions. The involvement of the Peacemaking Programme Officer in the Conciliation Service was welcomed and helped to develop the support measures and programmes offered and the quality, content and circulation of Peacemaking News has improved. A raft of training events and initiatives were also organised for both young people and adults, some of the most significant focusing on the theology of peace building and discipleship.

The first strategic aim was: **to help to increase acceptance within PCI that peace building and reconciliation are a priority in the ministry of the church as a whole.** Particular inroads were made to the grounding of the work within biblical principles and to increase the priority given centrally to peace-building and reconciliation through the recruitment of PCI leaders to advocate peacemaking work, although the practical out-workings of this has still to filter through to all Presbyteries and congregations throughout Ireland, some of whom are engaged in peace building and reconciliation work in their own way/areas.

In considering what may help future progress, suggestions were made to: strengthen the biblical imperative for peacemaking work and the links with Union Theological College, develop greater understanding and clarity over why the Church is engaged in peacemaking, continue to identify PCI leaders to advocate peacemaking, review/improve communication between/within the peace agent and PCI structures and complete the review of the peace agent structure.

The second strategic aim was: **to help to deepen understanding of the measures required for a stable peace and good relations by leaders and activists in PCI.** Progress was made towards meeting this aim, particularly through the delivery of the training courses and annual conferences and helping people to understand the nature of sectarianism and racism, what constitutes good relations and steps to building peace and moving society forward.

It was identified, however, PCI Congregations involved may ‘only be the tip of the iceberg’ and further work was required to support and progress implementation, particularly targeting areas and communities mostly affected by the issues. In considering what may help future progress, suggestions were made to: continue to provide relevant training and initiatives, maximise usage/awareness of PCI resources and training materials, build upon the

momentum and awareness of the steps to peace building, identify and encourage the simultaneous running of GIC and PYP and consider appropriate measures to assess ongoing impact of the peacemaking programme.

The third strategic aim was: **to strengthen the capacity and infrastructure within PCI to sustain long term peacemaking activities.** There was progress made to achieve this aim through the: recruitment of PCI leaders both centrally and locally to advocate peacemaking, training of PYP facilitators, support and development provided to strengthen the peace agent structure and conducting an internal review and external evaluation of the programme.

In considering what may help future progress, suggestions were made to: re-double efforts to recruit PCI leaders centrally and locally and to ensure PCI Presbyteries and Congregations are aware of the work of this programme and the opportunities and support available; identify, recruit and train facilitators to support the delivery of Gospel in Conflict; consider the positioning of the Peacemaking Panel and its interface with other PCI structures and to continue to pursue 'sustainable' funding avenues for the peacemaking programme both internally within PCI and externally to Government and other sources.

The fourth strategic aim was: **to increase the number of PCI congregations developing ongoing cross community contact and undertaking initiatives that will contribute to peace in society.** This was achieved through identification of both single identity and cross community actions participants could take as a result of participation in training initiatives and encouraging the development of relationships across lines of division. Staff employed actively engaged in networking opportunities where they made contacts to support the outcomes of this aim. Some Congregations were already actively involved so the programme only marginally enhanced their contribution.

Further work was required to support groups wishing to engage in single identity and cross community initiatives and suggestions were made to: continue to identify and engage in networking and support opportunities, re-double efforts to capture experiences and activities and use these to encourage Congregations to become involved, review how the peacemaking programme contributes to/supports the concept of 'the Church in the community' and society and to explore the potential of inter-church working to enhance the development of peacemaking and the building of compatible programmes and support structures.

The final strategic aim was: **to encourage boards, committees and agencies in PCI to explore and make a commitment to their own contribution to community relations in society.** This was marginally achieved through collaborative work between the two Boards who managed the programme, some work and contact with other Boards and agencies within PCI and the identification of ways to 'mainstream' peacemaking within PCI structures, although these have yet to be 'actioned'.

Further progress was required to achieve this aim. In considering what may support this, suggestions were made to: champion the cause of peacemaking further at all levels, review the relationships with other Boards, Committees and

agencies within PCI to see what realistically can be achieved and to identify/negotiate implementation of mainstreaming opportunities.

Programme development was supported by the: changing political environment and circumstances, long term commitment of and support from PCI leaders for peacemaking, inter-board co-operation, support from external personnel and organisations, grounding in a theological perspective/framework, linking of conciliation and peacemaking, availability of skilled and experienced staff and trained facilitators, development of local relationships and the development and launch of structured programmes and resources.

Programme development was hindered by the: changing political circumstances and the apathy this engendered towards peace-building, legacy of the conflict, nature of PCI organisational culture, scepticism of centralised initiatives, differing theological perspectives, time available and competing priorities, limited local/outreach support, over-ambitious project objectives within the set timeframe and the time taken to develop/disseminate resource materials.

Ideas to enhance Gospel in Conflict: review the course title and place greater emphasis on 'Loving Your Neighbour', explore the appropriateness of the suggested delivery contexts, initiate facilitator training and ongoing support, develop supporting materials to complement the DVD and existing resource pack, place a greater emphasis on the steps to peacemaking and provide further ideas to groups and plan in advance possible options for course follow-up.

Ideas to enhance Preparing Youth to be Peacemakers: review the course manual and identify appropriate ways to provide facilitators with updated resources, improve DVD quality or provide additional support audiovisual materials, explore the emphasis placed on the scriptural context and content (some felt this was too much, others too little), encourage the residential experience, explore the delivery settings and adaptability of programme resources for various audiences and plan in advance possible options for course follow-up including the possibility of cross community contact and initiatives.

Conclusions: The evaluation identified a general sense that the Church had moved a long way in last 10-15 years with the concept of peacemaking and peace building both at the individual, community and societal level more acceptable than it had been previously. There was still opposition to the work, although this was less vociferous and people were more understanding of the purpose and possibilities of the peacemaking programme.

The welcome contribution of funding from IFI proved the need for such a project although it was recognised delivery aims and objectives may have been over-ambitious within the three year grant period when one considers the long-term or generational nature of the work to contribute more actively to a stable and lasting peace in Ireland. There was a strong sense that this work must continue and be grounded in both the denominational and inter-church contexts in order to build upon the strong foundation and to reinforce progress made.

Recommendations

Review of Project Aims/Objectives: There is a need to review the number of objectives and reduce the overlap of these between project aims (may provide

a framework for evaluation). In the review process, further consideration should be given to the 'fit' of PYP aims within the wider peacemaking programme.

Employment/deployment of staff: There is an immediate urgency to secure funding to ensure the contracts of employment for the two Development Officers are synchronized to project end date (June 2009). There is a further need to review the job roles to ensure the time/skills available are maximised and to secure on-going funding in line with identified future support needs.

Funding: There is an urgent need to explore and secure funding to support the development of this initiative with young people and adults both internally from 'mainstream' sources within PCI and externally from Government or other sources, for example, Peace III, IFI, CRC Core Funding, Private Sponsorship, etc.

Internal structures within PCI: there is a need to review how the work of this initiative with youth (through the Reconciliation Working Group and Board of Youth and Children's Ministry) and adults (through the Peacemaking Panel and General Board) is connected both centrally to other Boards, agencies, committees and organisations within PCI and locally in its relationship, contact and communication structures with Presbyteries and Congregations.

External inter-church working: There is an urgent need to explore the potential of working together with other denominations/churches (similar to the way YouthLink supports work with young people) to build on the single denominational and cross community work already in existence. Mechanisms need to be in place to ensure this takes place centrally, regionally and locally.

Continued leadership and direction: There is a need to build on the leadership and direction provided centrally by PCI whilst taking account of the need to encourage and support a 'bottom-up' approach to peacemaking and reconciliation in local communities/areas based on local needs and approaches.

Church in the community: There is an important role to review how the Peacemaking Initiative contributes to/supports the concept of 'the church in the community/society' and to identify support and action measures in this regard.

Training: The further development of working relationships and linkages to build on the positive work already undertaken through Union Theological College may be beneficial to providing further support for project development and encouraging the incorporation of some of this work on the agenda for training.

Management plan: The development of a Management Plan was considered an important initiative to guide future development.

Evaluation Report: Rodney Green, RG Consultants (February 2008)

PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr Joe Furphy reports:

As mentioned last year, the Panel is keen to see the Eco-congregation Ireland project rolled out and taken up by a number of our Congregations, as a first step to enabling them both to appreciate our Christian responsibilities for the environment, and to manage their resources in more environmentally-friendly ways. Representatives were glad to participate in the Lifestyles Day, organized by the Global Concerns Committee, at which the Project was

launched. Over the next winter it is hoped to visit Presbyteries throughout Ireland to raise awareness of Eco-congregation Ireland.

Two members of the Panel, the Rev Dr Robert Buick and Mr Joe Furphy, attended the Conference of the European Christian Environmental Network in Sweden in the autumn. Attended by almost one hundred delegates from all over Europe, one of the main themes was the use of energy and the need for the much greater use of renewable resources. One of the major outcomes of the Conference was the production of a Charter for helping Third World countries financially, and by projects, in an effort to offset the worst ravages imposed on them as a result of our profligacy in the developed world.

The Panel has continued to consider a wide range of issues on the Irish scene, although this year has not produced a topic of such great significance as those in the last few years. Articles continue to be supplied for the Presbyterian Herald, and talks and seminars given to Presbytery and Church groups.

The Panel was encouraged to see the setting up of a Faith Waste project in Belfast, a project which brought together various denominations, the City Council and Sustainability Northern Ireland. At an awards ceremony, Stormont Presbyterian Church was a major prizewinner. Although the project was only designed to operate in 2006, the impetus it generated is now carried on through an informal grouping of interested persons from several Christian denominations. The Panel is represented on this group.

As always, the Panel's theme is 'The earth is the Lord's' and all Church members are encouraged to treat God's Creation as one of the essential parts of His great gifts to us.

PANEL ON RACE RELATIONS

The Rev Richard Kerr reports:

Immigration Legislation and Enforcement

1. The major areas of focus for the Race Relations Panel over this past year reflect the complexities of immigration legislation, procedures, practice and enforcement in both jurisdictions on this Island. This is graphically illustrated by a number of personal stories of families removed from the UK and the ROI.

2. The experience of the Rev Johnston Lambe of Mountpottinger Congregation is perhaps most poignant. He shared his story with the Panel and movingly described his involvement with two Nigerian families active in Mountpottinger. The Falode and Adefowoju families were subsequently removed from the UK. Johnston's presentation drew attention to a number of pertinent issues.

3. The *policies and practice of the immigration system* frequently undermines the dignity and value of the human beings concerned. The nature of the questioning, the timing of arrests (frequently during holiday periods and unsociable hours), the excessive deployment of security forces in their detention, and the transport of the detainees, all reinforce this perception. Young children are clearly emotionally scarred by the process.

4. Good *legal representation* appears difficult to obtain. Although it is appreciated that some legal representation has been adequate, several well-documented examples have been brought to the Panel's attention of solicitors who provided a poor service for their clients.

5. Political representatives of all of the larger parties in the province were supportive of the campaign in support of the families concerned. However, it was clear that *neither our local politicians nor our church leaders were able to significantly impact decisions* made by the Home Office and enforced by the Borders and Immigration Agency.

6. *Pastoral care of immigrants*, and indeed those who have befriended them, can be challenging and time-consuming. Ministers of our denomination are generally inexperienced in dealing with cross-cultural issues and other immigration related matters; not least in providing pastoral care where the legal immigration status of the person is unclear.

7. In conjunction with Prof Drew Gibson, the Panel is exploring ways in which pastoral care of migrants can be raised on the Union College practical theology syllabus. The Panel is also aware of the need to provide additional support and resources for Ministers in service. Ways in which this can be done are being explored.

8. More generally, and in both jurisdictions, members of the Panel are concerned that due weight is not given by the Government to situations of forced marriage and religious persecution when considering asylum claims. The latter is an issue being raised with the Home Office by the Evangelical Alliance.

Republic of Ireland Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill 2008

9. In January, the Minister for Justice, Brian Lenihan, introduced the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill 2008. The Churches' Asylum Network, of which our Dublin and Munster Presbytery is a member, has responded to the Bill, noting that it "contains many provisions relating to both immigration and asylum which give cause for concern."

10. Specific issues of concern are: the lack of distinction between immigration and asylum cases in legislation; the excessive use of Ministerial discretion; lack of provision for family reunification; insufficient protection for trafficked persons; increased power of detention; a lack of an independent appeal mechanism for review of immigration decisions and restrictions on access to benefits and services for persons in an irregular situation.

Migration in European and Global Context

11. Migration does not and cannot take place in isolation. Factors which encourage people to uproot themselves include conflict, changing climates and global economic forces. It is frequently the most vulnerable who are compelled to migrate and who frequently are most at risk in transit and in their host country.

12. The European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu, Romania, in September 2007 drew attention to this trend. 24 million people living in Europe today were born outside of Europe. These people contribute to the rich diversity of a Europe where every state has been impacted by the complexity of migration flows.

13. The religious life of the continent has not been unaffected and this provides major opportunities and challenges for Churches. For some this will take the form of increased membership and a new vitality; for others a diversity of faiths brings new challenges for relationships and communicating our Christian faith.

14. The situation of vulnerable groups was given special mention. A seminar highlighting the plight of people crossing the Mediterranean Sea from North Africa estimated that 9,500 people had lost their lives in the past nine years attempting to make this journey. As one person put it “the Mediterranean is a cemetery without names of precious people”. Another noted that “there is no record, no recollection, no commemoration”.

15. The plight of the Roma people received a particular mention. The Convener was privileged to visit a Roma community and Church during his visit and since his return he has been able to make contact with the Roma community in Belfast. Many of the later are involved in selling newspapers at junctions around the city.

Relationships with other bodies

16. The Race Relations Panel continues to work closely with other groups in Ireland and the UK. These include Embrace, the Churches’ Asylum Network, the Churches Commission for Racial Justice, the All-Ireland Churches’ Consultative Meeting on Racism (AICCMR) and the Parish-Based Integration Project (PIP).

17. PIP is an initiative of the Inter-Church Committee on Social Issues which supports practical integration of immigrants based around Church communities across the Island.

18. The Panel continues to take an active interest in and support programmes to rebuild race relations in South Africa. In particular the Veluka Trust and the Diakonia Council of Churches are supported.

Proposed Race Relations Grants

Veluka Trust (South Africa)	£750
Diakonia Council of Churches (South Africa)	£750
Embrace (NI)	£1,000
Churches’ Asylum Network (ROI)	£500

LIFESTYLE REPORT

Introduction

Sir John Houghton, a Christian and eminent scientist who was director general of the UK Meteorological Office and a member of the British government panel on sustainable development, has described climate change as a “weapon of mass destruction”. David King, the British Government’s Chief Scientist, has argued that the catastrophic effects of climate change pose a much greater threat to world order than global terrorism. In a speech in September 2004 former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, gave this stark warning: “I believe (climate change) to be the world’s greatest environmental challenge, a

challenge so far-reaching in its impact and irreversible in its destructive power, that it alters radically human existence.” Former American Vice President Al Gore has produced an Oscar-winning documentary, “An Inconvenient Truth”, which is shocking in its portrayal of the future of our planet and apocalyptic in scope.

We can have various reactions to such statements. We can regard them as headline grabbing, political hype or totally alarmist. After all, changes to the earth’s temperature have occurred before and there is a strand of Biblical thought in which God promises as long as the earth endures to maintain seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night (Genesis 8:22). Many of the statistics concerning climate change may still be regarded as hypothetical or conjectural, although we need to take into account the mounting weight of increasingly irrefutable scientific evidence. For example, in June 2005 the National Academies of Science of the USA, UK, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Canada, Japan, India, Brazil and China issued a statement saying, “The threat of climate change is clear and increasing.”

The fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was published in February 2007 and noted many different observations confirming climate warming. The rate of warming has increased to 0.13 degree Centigrade per decade. Eleven of the twelve years between 1995 and 2006 have recorded the highest temperatures since records began in 1850. Widespread decreases in glaciers and ice caps have contributed to sea level rises. The annual average Arctic sea ice extent is shrinking at the rate of 2.7% per decade, a figure that rises to 7.4% during the summer. The temperature of the top layer of the Arctic permafrost has increased by 3% since the 1980s. Elsewhere in the world there is ample evidence of prolonged, severe droughts and more violent hurricanes.

For us living in Ireland there has been a tendency over the past fifty years towards milder but wetter winters particularly in the North and West as well as warmer and drier summers in the South and East. This may lead to increased flooding in the winter and longer periods of drought in the summer. We are also at the mercy of the sudden, severe storms which seem to be becoming more marked. A warmer climate may lead to a greater influx of tourists, and generally be favourable for us. On the other hand, we need to take into account threats to the Gulf Stream which has traditionally moderated our weather patterns.

Alternatively we can be defeatist as we conclude that since we are so locked into the world’s economic systems there is nothing we can do to bring about any meaningful changes. Any environmentally friendly alterations to our personal lifestyle, for example, would have less effect than the tiniest pebble on an already windswept lake. On the contrary, it was Edmund Burke who argued that “Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could only do a little”.

Another response might be that we should not make any sacrifices since we have a right to higher living standards, greater material ease and increased personal comfort. Surely our ongoing consumption of goods will in turn increase the prosperity of the emerging economies in the Far East. The arguments are difficult and complex, but we ought to be wary of any teaching that even begins to suggest that a man’s wealth consists in the abundance of his possessions.

We must also note that in a selfish, greedy world the flow of money tends to be from the poor to the rich. As the rich become richer, the poor become poorer. How do we respond? This report in itself has arisen out of the meeting of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) in Accra, Ghana (2004) and, in particular, the cry of our materially poorer brothers and sisters in Christ mainly from the southern hemisphere against economic injustice and their exploitation by the rich countries of the West. The resultant Accra Confession is part of a process by which the Churches can learn to respond to issues of economic justice and ecological degradation.

There are above all those who will see the primary mission of the Church as preaching the Gospel and winning souls for Jesus Christ. As we look forward to His return, the argument might be that we should not have to worry about any secondary issues like the environment. There will be some who will say that the latter is the preserve of New Age philosophy or some kind of nature worship. Again, there is the sense that the Church may be jumping on the bandwagon of current political thought, trying to catch up with something valid to say.

Our response is twofold. Firstly, Jesus Christ is either Lord of all or not Lord at all. That statement has profound implications for us as we lead our lives in relation to Him and to our neighbour, as we care for the poor and as we use the resources God has given us. Secondly, we note from earliest times and the creation of Adam and Eve that one of their primary God-given responsibilities was stewardship of God's creation. Christians, from the Church Fathers to the Celts and monks, have always had a legitimate concern for looking after their environment, and preserving it for the next generation. In recent years Christians have given much thought and prayer as to how we live in the global village of the early twenty-first century. One of the buzz concepts at the meeting of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in Seoul almost twenty years ago, in 1989, was "Justice, Peace and The Integrity of Creation." A few centuries earlier in his commentary on Genesis written in 1563 John Calvin was one of the first people to highlight the importance of using the earth's resources in a sustainable manner:

"Let him who possesses a field, so partake of its yearly fruits, that he may not suffer the ground to be injured by his negligence: but let him endeavour to hand it down to posterity as he received it, or even better cultivated... Moreover, that this economy, and this diligence, with respect to those good things which God has given us to enjoy, may flourish among us; let everyone regard himself as the steward of God in all things which he possesses."

Leaving the earth in better order for succeeding generations is Calvin's very noble ideal. The cumulative effects of the Industrial Revolution mean that we are likely to bequeath our descendants with the deleterious effects of global warming including the flooding of delta areas where many of the world's poor are currently located. We have selfishly exploited and abused God's creation in a manner similar to teenagers trashing their parental home or a vandal destroying a priceless painting. How are we to live responsibly and use resources sensibly? What changes do we have to make? How can we speak prophetically and give leadership as a Church?

Last year a resolution was passed by our General Assembly asking the Committee on Global Concerns to write a comprehensive report on Lifestyle.

The issues are much wider than what might appear from the preamble to be ticking the box of a few green issues. While we can celebrate living standards in the Western World that have never been higher, it is also true to say that we are part of an age of gratuitous consumption and seemingly insatiable greed. We build bigger barns and then have to work harder to pay off increased mortgages. Debt and borrowing have spiralled to crisis proportions. At the beginning of 2006 personal debt in Britain stood at £1.13 trillion. UK consumers account for two-thirds of EU credit debt. Levels of obesity are suggesting that for the first time in generations average life expectancy looks likely to be reduced. As Nick Spencer and Robert White suggest in an excellent recent publication, "Christianity, Climate Change and Sustainable Living": "(The) fact that national levels of obesity, alcohol and drug abuse, depression, sexually transmitted infection, teenage pregnancy, recorded crime and the prison population have risen significantly over recent decades does not suggest a population at ease with itself". In spite of our material prosperity we have become victims of endless stress, deep personal malaise and yearning after meaning, purpose and community. Family life and relationships in general have often been overstretched to the point of breakdown.

The economist and Labour peer, Richard Layard, delivered a series of lectures on economics and happiness at the London School of Economics in 2002, and noted that "People in the West have got no happier in the last fifty years. They have become much richer, they work much less, they have longer holidays, they travel more, they live longer, and they are healthier. But they are no happier."

There are many strands that are interwoven here. Just as we cannot afford to exhaust the earth's resources, we cannot continue the pace and sheer intensity of life at present levels. Central to this report is the concept of "sustainable development" or "sustainable lifestyle". Its most widely quoted definition occurs in the Brundtland Report (1987): "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Sir John Houghton describes sustainability in this way: "'not cheating on our children'; to that may be added 'not cheating on our neighbours' and 'not cheating on the rest of creation.'"

The Christian message is one of radical transformation as we discover the eternal joy of life in all its fullness in Jesus Christ. At a conference in West Church, Bangor, last year Dr Setri Nyomi, General Secretary of WARC, commented on Romans 12:2, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect." He said: "We live in a world in which conformity to the world and the world's standards is the norm. Christians are afraid to do the will of God. If the world says talking about "sin" is not politically correct, we refrain from talking about sin. If the world's economic systems value greed and neglect the cries of the poor, many Christians uncritically follow suit. We live in these kinds of challenging times. Yet Paul's words still ring in our ears today – Do not be conformed to this world – but be transformed. It is a call for examining our lifestyles in the light of the Word of God. Such an examination is done by Reformed Christians in the light of the word of God and how we read the times we are in."

Finally, we confess that we have been given an impossibly broad remit by the General Assembly and that the following paragraphs will be frustratingly brief. This report will attempt to outline some Biblical principles, give some pointers to what might be described as a Christian lifestyle and some practical examples. It does not purport to be in any way definitive, prescriptive or exhaustive. Hopefully it will engender discussion and produce some action in the wider Church and in the lives of individuals.

Biblical Principles

There are many basic Biblical principles governing our life and lifestyle, many of which emerge from the opening chapters of Genesis. For too long we have been consumed by the creationist debate rather than seeing these verses as a blueprint for life.

Creator God

The Bible opens with the words: “In the beginning God”. He is the transcendent and pre-existent God, holy, infinite and eternal. As Creator He made the world and as Sovereign holds everything together in His hands. He has revealed Himself uniquely and fully to us in and through His Son Jesus Christ who died on the Cross and rose again from the dead for our salvation. The Message paraphrase of Colossians 1 puts it like this: “We look at this son and see the God who cannot be seen. We look at this Son and see God’s original purpose in everything created. For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible, rank after rank of angels –everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him... He was supreme in the beginning and –leading the resurrection parade- he is supreme in the end. From beginning to end he’s there, towering far above everything, everyone. So spacious is he, so roomy, that everything of God finds its proper place in him without crowding. Not only that, but all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe –people and things, animals and atoms – get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies, all because of his death, his blood that poured down from the cross.”

These statements are important for a number of reasons. Primarily we ascribe to the Lord greatness, power, majesty and authority. He is pre-eminent and worthy of all praise. It is His world and not ours. Such a theocentric view reminds us that we are responsible and accountable to a higher authority and cannot selfishly lord it over the earth. Secondly, we acknowledge that there is a spiritual vacuum in the heart of sinful man that can only be met in and through coming to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. Thirdly, the Lordship of Christ for those who believe extends to every area of life. As Christians we can sometimes run the risk of nodding our assent to Christ but still being governed and driven by the demands of work, acquiring wealth, material comfort and prosperity.

The Accra Confession of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches is perhaps a little too quick to lay the blame of all the world’s problems at the door of what it commonly describes as “global neoliberal capitalism”. Its very striking, penetrating language ought to make us aware, however, of the ways in which we in the West have casually assumed that the economy is the great god

of everything. Unquestionably we see it as our right to become richer and can so easily be dictated to by the rules of profit and loss, Mammon rather than God.

It is worth quoting several paragraphs from the Accra Confession so that by God's Spirit we can be brought to that place of acknowledging or recognising that God is indeed Lord of all, including the euro or pound in our pocket. The confession makes several statements of belief or positive affirmation while concurrently rejecting all that is not of God. For example, it quotes Psalm 24 as it acknowledges that "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." It celebrates life and all its fullness to be found in Christ alone, but also rejects the way that so many in the West are driven by their desire to accumulate wealth that has already cost the lives of millions and destroyed much of God's creation. It states: "We believe that God has made a covenant with all of creation (Genesis 9:8-12). God has brought into being an earth community based on the vision of justice and peace. The covenant is a gift of grace that is not for sale in the market place (Isaiah 55:1)... Jesus shows that this is an inclusive covenant in which the poor and marginalised are preferential partners, and calls us to put justice for the "least of these" (Matthew 25:40) at the centre of the community of life. All creation is blessed and included in this covenant (Hosea 2:18ff). Therefore we reject the culture of rampant consumerism and the competitive greed and selfishness of the neoliberal global market system, or any other system, which claims there is no alternative. We believe that God is a God of justice. In a world of corruption, exploitation and greed, God is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor, the exploited, the wronged, and the abused (Psalm 146:7-9). God calls for just relationships with all creation. Therefore we reject any ideology or economic regime that puts profits before people, does not care for creation, and privatises those gifts of God meant for all."

Or again while standing for the principles of Micah 6:8 which include justice, kindness and walking humbly in God's way, the Confession makes this very striking statement: "Therefore we reject any theology that claims that God is only with the rich and that poverty is the fault of the poor. We reject any form of injustice which destroys right relations –gender, race, class, disability, or caste. We reject any theology which affirms that human interests dominate nature."

The difficulty with such statements is that they are inclined to be verbose and far beyond our personal reach as they speak of world economic orders. They leave us asking the question what kind of influence we can possibly have. Nevertheless there is the real challenge of recognising the Lordship of Christ over all our riches, acquisitions, possessions and treasures. Or are we free to acquire and spend as we choose without any reference to the Lord of all?

Celebration of Creation

"And God saw that it was good," is the repeated refrain during the creation narrative. Far from it being some mechanistic process we gain the very clear impression of a God absolutely delighting and revelling in everything that He made, lavishing His goodness and favour on the newly created order. What is created reflects something of His character as the Psalmist reminds us: "The heavens declare the glory of the God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands" (19:1). Paul writes these words to the Romans: "For since the creation of the

world God's invisible qualities –his eternal power and divine nature- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse" (1:21). Psalm 148 has all of creation singing the praise of Almighty God – the sun, moon, stars, waters, mountains, hills, vegetation, animals, birds and sea creatures. The God who created such beauty does not divorce Himself from the world but continues to sustain and care for it: "You care for the land and water it; you enrich it abundantly. The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so you have ordained it... You crown the year with your bounty, and your carts overflow with abundance" (Psalm 65:9-13).

To borrow Calvin's phrase, as we survey "the theatre of God's glory" all around us we ought to be totally amazed, captivated and overwhelmed by such breathtaking and awesome beauty. "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him" (Psalm 8:3-4)? The God who flung stars into space also gives His undivided attention to the tiniest flower of the field! Jesus said: "See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these" (Matthew 6:28-29). In creation we begin to catch a glimpse of God's wonderful grace which, of course, is fully seen in the revelation of His Son Jesus Christ: "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven" (Hebrews 1:3).

As we celebrate the beauty of creation and come to the Son who is full of grace and truth, again there are many implications for our lives and lifestyles. Totally surrendered to Jesus Christ and filled to the measure of all His fullness by the power of His life-giving Spirit, we need also to respond with the worship and service of our lives. His free but costly grace challenges us to respond with generosity and gratitude. We have an attitude to life full of thanksgiving, peace and contentment rather than being unsettled by the seemingly insatiable desire for more material gain. Also as we have been given much treasure by God, so there is the need to give away as much as possible for the benefit of those who are less well off: "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked (Luke 12:48). "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:6-8).

Of course, there is much more to grace than how we handle our finances, but to what extent does our giving reflect the level of God's blessing in our lives? Do we bring the whole tithe into the storehouse as God requires us? "'Test me in this,' says the Lord Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room for it'" (Malachi 3:10-12). There are huge implications here as we respond to the

generosity of our God who has literally given us everything in sending His Son into the world.

In terms of our giving we have responsibilities towards the poor. Imagine a restaurant where our plates are overflowing and we throw away all we cannot eat, while at our feet people are scrambling around for a few grains of rice. As Dave Bookless, national director of the Christian environmental mission A Rocha UK reminds us, “That is the reality of today’s world. Jesus tells us that if we love God, we must love our neighbour –not just our neighbour next door, but the one in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), Buenos Aires or Darfur. As a matter of justice, we need to live more lightly.”

In the UK estimates vary between 3.3 million and 6.7 million tonnes of food being thrown away annually. Some of the waste is made up of peelings, cores and bones, but the vast weight is good food that has been discarded from our plates or gone past its sell-by date in our fridges. The conclusion is invariably the same – about a third of all our food ends up in landfill. We live in a careless, cast off and indifferent throwaway society. Greed, selfishness and thoughtlessness are endemic. Attitudes towards giving need to be fundamentally changed.

Stewardship of Creation

As we marvel at God’s total delight and intimate involvement in every detail of His creation, we need to be reminded that if it matters this much to Him, it should also matter to Christians as they care for the world. Although humans are part of the created order, the Bible asserts that there is something special about us: “we are made in God’s image” (Genesis 1:27). Professor Bob White comments: “We are more than animals, even though we share our material make-up with animals. Being made in God’s image includes the ability to relate to God in a personal way, and to exhibit and experience, albeit in a greatly attenuated way, some of his characteristics such as love, justice, creativity and care. At the beginning of human history, God gave humans the command to rule over and take care of both the living and non-living creation. We are not to be passive spectators, but are to work at ruling and ordering creation without asking the earth for our own selfish ends. Our care for creation should be consistent with God’s care for it, enabling it to be fruitful in providing food and resources and allowing it to play its intended part in giving glory to God.”

This is a very helpful statement because quite often Genesis 1:28 has been interpreted in terms of our complete domination of the earth, giving us absolute freedom to act as we choose. Genesis 2:15 states that God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden with the instruction to work it and take care of it. Again, according to Bob White, “The word translated ‘work’ is *abad*, which carries the sense of ‘to serve,’ and the word translated ‘take care of’ is *shamar*, which means ‘to keep, guard, protect’. The dominion that humanity is given over nature is not to be one of exploitative and selfish rule, but rather one of careful and just service. And within that service, which should be part of the worship of God, there is blessing.”

The mandate to care for God’s creation must carry with it implications for our current lifestyle. Conceptually we do not need to find ourselves on the

higher plane grappling with complex issues such as “neoliberal capitalism”, as defined in the Accra Confession. Instead the collective wisdom seems to be that we should apply changes to our way of life which, although minuscule in themselves, undoubtedly would have cumulative significance. Examples might include switching to energy saving light bulbs, reducing the thermostat by one degree, running our washing machines at thirty rather than forty degrees, no longer keeping electrical equipment on stand-by, increasing recycling, cutting our air miles and buying fairtrade or local produce. Initiatives similar to Tearfund’s Lenten Carbon Fast are informative and inspiring as they encourage mindset changes. There are many websites, including the UK Government’s environment and greener living page at www.direct.gov.uk, which enable us to check our carbon footprint and suggest savings and alternatives. Even if carbon dioxide emissions are maintained at present levels, there will be potentially catastrophic consequences to the world environment. We cannot continue to expect constantly rising living standards while running the risk of irreparably damaging the planet for future generations.

In relation to lifestyle issues we can adopt the Pauline approach that everything is permissible, but not everything is beneficial. We can argue that in Christ we have freedom to make our own choices about the size of house we build, where we spend our holidays or the number of conference trips we make. Richard Chartres, Anglican Bishop of London, has taken a much more robust, controversial and challenging stand. His remarks have been widely quoted in the press: “There is now an overriding imperative to walk more lightly upon the earth and we need to make our lifestyle choices in that light. Making selfish choices such as flying on holiday or buying a large car are a symptom of sin. Sin is not just a restricted list of moral mistakes. It is living a life turned in on itself where people ignore the consequences of their actions.” The Anglican Bishop of Liverpool, James Jones, has drawn similarities between climate change and the abolition of slavery. He argues that future generations of Christians will look back and be amazed that we were so complacent about global warming, just as we find it difficult to believe that two hundred years ago many Christians failed to oppose slavery.

These are difficult issues but if we are to take our stewardship responsibilities seriously then we are compelled to make significant adjustments to our lifestyle expectations, choices and actions.

Worship and Rest

“Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done” (Genesis 2:1-2). Sabbath rest is an integral part of the creation narrative. The Reformed theologian Jurgen Moltmann has argued that humankind should not be regarded as the pinnacle of creation, but rather this seventh day of rest which completes the creation process. Such a refreshing view helps diminish an otherwise anthropocentric approach with all its tendencies towards self-centredness and sinful exploitation.

The Sabbath is outlined in detail in Exodus 20:8-11 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15. It is a day to be kept holy for every member of the household as well as working livestock. Even the land was to be guaranteed by Sabbath legislation from being overly cultivated. The Sabbath served as a reminder to everyone of the rhythms and cycles of life, including work and rest. There is the opportunity to return to the Lord as the source of life, to worship and glorify Him. The Sabbath had the advantage as well of guaranteeing leisure time for relationships including family. It had economic consequences because otherwise there would have been unrestricted trade. Sabbath desecration was one of the sins for which Israel came under God's judgment, with Ezekiel stating in particular: "I gave them my Sabbaths as a sign between us, so they would know that I the Lord made them holy. Yet the people of Israel rebelled against me" (Ezekiel 20:12-13).

Jesus had several bruising encounters with contemporary religious leaders as he dared to heal people on the Sabbath. Bob White comments: "In reality, however, his apparent subversion of the Sabbath was more of a rescue mission than an abandonment of the principle. Rather than being a time of rest, reorientation and a symbol of redemption, the Sabbath had been turned into a burden, a day in which those who were hungry or sick were held captive by their misfortune. Jesus' multiple healings and his corn-eating debate were rescuing the original intent of the law..."

The Sabbath can be set against the wider background of making time for God and for one another. It is part of a pattern stressing simpler living and joyous festivals (Ecclesiastes 5:18, 19; Leviticus 23). Israel is urged to be content with the ordinariness of life. Luxury is never commended and sometimes condemned. The festivals in the Pentateuch punctuate the year with God-centred celebrations, often involving feasting. The rites of passage are also joyful occasions.

The Western world is suffering from ever increasing levels of stress because it has failed to take seriously God's provisions for rest. In an article entitled "A Vision of Sustainable Living" Nick Spencer looks forward to the time when there will be greater recognition of the principle of rest. He imagines a grass-roots movement growing significantly to 'give us a break' and protect workers' family time. He envisages Sunday trading accordingly becoming less efficient, resulting in tightening pressure for renewed regulations limiting the opening times of larger departmental stores.

It is wishful thinking but all part of a consideration of improved work ethics and trading practices. Living in a global economy we need to become much more focused on issues of fair trade, treatment of overseas workers and sustainable agricultural practices.

In the same futuristic article Spencer also writes: "Corporate Social Responsibility is now taken seriously, with widespread recognition that companies that pay serious attention to stakeholder concerns rather than just shareholder concerns actually perform better, securing better quarterly results, more robust brand reputation, and attracting some of the most able young recruits to work for them."

Our debate on the importance of Sabbath rest has widened beyond principles of worship, rest and renewal to highlight social concerns for workers,

and ethical standards of trade and investment. All we are doing is stressing the importance of caring for the whole person by obeying God's ordinances for personal well being. We should not regard ourselves as pawns or machines in any economic system but as human beings made in the image of God.

While on the subject of rest it is also worth noting that Church can often be a place which in itself is a mirror of a busy world, perpetuating so many activities and organisations. We need to create a sense of sacred space, an oasis of Christian calm and peace.

Relationship

“The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him’” (Genesis 2:18). Adam and Eve remind us of the importance of cultivating friendship and companionship. There is the security, affirmation and joy of lasting relationships.

Writing in the March 2008 issue of *Christianity* Mark Greene of the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity draws examples from Oliver James' latest book “*The Selfish Capitalist*” in which the author tackles what has become known as “*affluenza*”, an analysis of contemporary materialism which suggests a decline in general levels of well-being in spite of increased prosperity. Emotional distress is apparently twice as marked in English-speaking nations compared with Western Europe. James explores the phenomenon of what he describes as “*selfish capitalism*”, a more aggressive form of the market economy experienced in Britain and America than anywhere else.

In terms of policy ‘*selfish capitalism*’ is characterised by measures which were originally designed to facilitate globalisation, including increasing labour market flexibility and reducing public sector spending by allowing more privatisation. Results, for example, in the UK have included decreasing job security and longer working hours than any other EU nation. One of the spin-offs of “*selfish capitalism*” has been soaring property prices with mortgages being serviced over four times the size of our annual income as compared to two to three times in the late 1970s. Savings have radically declined and levels of debt soared. A survey carried out by UNICEF in 2007 discovered that British children were the worst off, the unhappiest and unhealthiest in Europe.

Mark Greene writes: “No wonder we’re unhappier: we’re working longer for the same money in real terms, have less time for our children, our spouses, our friends or our hobbies. To put it another way, we have less time for relationships and the things that feed our souls. Of course, people need food and clothes and shelter and medicine but the materialism that we have in the affluent West is ‘*relative materialism*’, the materialism that impels us to judge our self-worth and success by money, possessions, appearances and fame and sadly, how it compares with other people”.

If we are to speak of a distinctively Christian lifestyle, then we need to guard the priority of relationships. Jesus was once asked to outline the greatest commandment in the Law. This was his response: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matthew 22:36-40).

Love is not the language of finance or economics; it is the language of relationships. Love has been described as the heartbeat of New Testament spirituality. Here we speak of “agape” love that is holy, unconditional and selfless. The primary requirement of a relational lifestyle is the need for long-term, deep, committed relationships. These will be generally focused within strong families, but how vital also it is to see Church as an expression of vibrant Christian community where people find meaning for life, purpose, affirmation, support and encouragement. Bringing harmonious relationships to the fore is decidedly counter cultural in an age where the personal agenda of human rights has displaced the twin concepts of duty and responsibility towards our neighbour.

Dr Michael Shlutter is the founder and director of the Jubilee Centre, a Christian research and campaigning organisation based in Cambridge. He is also director of the Keep Sunday Special Campaign and the Relationships Foundation. For over twenty years he has searched to discover an alternative social paradigm which is closer to Biblical norms than democratic capitalism or market socialism. He has concluded that the principles of Biblical law, interpreted in relational terms, provide a coherent basis for public policy and personal lifestyle decisions. The Relationships Foundation is founded on the ethical values of the Judaeo-Christian tradition and seeks to stress the importance of building community and neighbourhoods.

He writes: “Time is the currency of relationships. In society today, technology facilitates contact with greater numbers than ever before, but such wider contact is generally characterised by greater superficiality. To have a few close and deep friends, inside and outside the extended family, it is essential to prioritise relationships. Jesus sets relational priorities in his ministry after much prayer (e.g. Mark 3:13-17, 5:37). His relationship with his father in heaven always takes priority over all other relationships (e.g. Mark 1:35-37).” To counter the loneliness, heartache, brokenness and worthlessness of today’s society we need to build, cultivate, nurture and sustain genuine community and lasting relationships in Christ.

On the subject of relationships there is a strong thread throughout the Scriptures advocating care not only of the neighbour we know but also the stranger and the outcast, the poor and the vulnerable. When Jesus was dining with a Pharisee he instructed him when hosting a banquet to “invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed” (Luke 14:12, 14). The poor always remained close to His heart. In the Old Testament there are specific laws protecting the vulnerable (Exodus 22) and securing justice for the poor (Psalm 140:12).

Prophetic denunciations of injustice directed towards the poor are too many to quote. This is how Zechariah proclaims the word of the Lord: “Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other” (7:10). Amos laments the vile practices of the rich towards the poor: “You trample on the poor and force him to give you grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them; though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine” (5:11). Those who profess with their lips or maintain outward religious observances but whose hearts are

far from the Lord are frequently condemned: "...on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers... Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter –when you see the naked to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?" (Isaiah 58, 3, 7)

In our generally affluent lifestyle we need to take the Gospel warnings seriously as we care for those less fortunate than ourselves. Otherwise we stand the risk of heavy judgment. More generally, in such a driven age we need somehow to be proactive in safeguarding and nurturing friendship. Again this is a distinctive advantage of the Christian life in that we belong together to the Church, the body of believers and the family of God's people.

Fall and Redemption

Adam and Eve ate the fruit from the tree in the middle of the Garden of Eden they were expressly forbidden to touch. If the two opening chapters of Genesis concentrate on the beauty of creation, the third chapter is about what might be described as "decreation"- the marring, spoiling, or pollution of the world through the sinfulness of man and woman. The selfish agendas of Adam and Eve now come to the fore. Here is the reality of The Fall from grace and its manifold manifestations include, as we have seen, selfishness, greed and the over exploitation of earth's resources.

God's redemptive plan comes to fruition in Jesus Christ, His life, death, resurrection, and ascension, the outpouring of His Spirit and the promise of His return. As Christians we rejoice in the fullness of life we enjoy in Jesus Christ.

It is worth pausing for a moment to consider three aspects of Jesus' lifestyle while on earth. Firstly, He challenged the rich young man to lay his considerable wealth on the altar since it was binding him from complete loyalty to Him, and concluded: "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:17-23). The fact is that whatever we fix as our treasure will dominate our entire life: "For where your treasure is there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21). It is impossible to serve two masters. We are not to lay up treasures for ourselves here on earth but in heaven. Secondly, Jesus displays beautifully compelling simplicity in how He lived. We find Him sharing meals on the hillsides and in various homes, enjoying company and even being prepared to turn water into wine. In His teaching He constantly drew richly from natural illustrations all around Him, delighting in creation, rejoicing at God's rich provision and marvelling at the potential of the tiny mustard seed, for example. Most of his life was spent in close proximity to Galilee, living, working and subsequently ministering locally. He commented that "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head" (Luke 9:58). Not for Jesus the endless accumulation and clutter of possessions, gadgets and gizmos. Thirdly, there was nothing about His life and ministry that was stinting or lacking generosity. He appreciated His anointing by a sinful woman and her outpouring of costly, sacrificial love appealed to His heart. He was not concerned about economic systems and always invested totally in people. His manifesto is summarised at the beginning of His ministry: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of

sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19). In summary, Jesus lived simply and identified fully with the needs of others while walking closely with His heavenly Father.

Hope

As we have contemplated lifestyle issues and set them against the backdrop of so many global concerns, it is important that we should not despair. Hope is a recurrent Biblical motif and a vital contribution we can make to today’s world as Christians. We recall that God made the world and saw that it was very good. He promised also to maintain seedtime and harvest as long as the earth endures. So committed to the world was He that He sent His one and only Son: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Central to our hope is the Resurrection and the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his letter to the Romans Paul speaks of the whole creation anticipating its redemption (Romans 8:22). The Book of Revelation presents a vision of a new heaven and a new earth and of all things being made new.

As early as the Old Testament there are powerful glimpses of a new order established on the peaceful reign of Almighty God. The Lord says: “Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years... They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit” (Isaiah 65:17-25).

We give God thanks for those Christians throughout the ages who have campaigned against injustice and for a new social order. In this generation there are those who are willing to engage in issues that threaten the long term well being of our planet and who urge us to make lifestyle changes. One of these activists is Sir John Houghton who remains positive and hopeful because of the degree of consensus already reached among scientists, the technology that is available to make the necessary changes which would be at a cost less than the present Iraq war and can have a much greater impact on the world. Above all, he believes that God is there to help us.

Altogether we need to hold before us a vision of a society that is transformed by God’s grace and power. It was CS Lewis who said: “Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you get neither.”

Practical Pointers

By concentrating on the opening chapters of Genesis we have emphasized the beauty of creation and the importance of enjoying all that God has given us. We have stressed the need to care for creation and to be wise stewards of this treasure the Lord has entrusted to us. We have highlighted the need for meaningful relationships. We have reaffirmed the need for work as well as rest,

being able to learn and follow the unforced rhythms of life and grace. We have asserted the Lordship of Christ over every aspect of our lives, including the choices we make about spending our money. What follows is a series of practical pointers towards what we might describe as sustainable living or sustainable lifestyle. We want to focus on denominational initiatives, congregational suggestions as well as topics for individuals to consider.

Denomination

There are opportunities to lobby local councillors, MLAs, MPs and political parties on the distinctive contributions we can make to lifestyle in the hope that these issues are taken more seriously than they have been in the past. Housing development, for example, could be encouraged along stricter energy standards. We applaud the banning of plastic supermarket bags from supermarkets in the Irish Republic and hope that similar measures will soon be implemented in Northern Ireland. Some thirteen billion plastic bags are given free to UK shoppers every year, and they take an estimated 1 000 years to decay! Government needs to legislate to improve public transport infrastructure in our two major cities, Dublin and Belfast. Measures need to go much further to tax cars according to fuel consumption. Consideration needs to be given to increasing air travel tax or developing carbon-offset schemes. We would urge our national governments to play their part in securing internationally binding agreements to reduce the level of carbon emissions.

Congregations

Christmas celebrations:

As a denomination a major focus of our Christmas celebrations is the very well supported World Development Appeal with its emphasis on the true spirit of giving to those in need. Many Congregations also have their own toys' appeal or grocery collections to help others. Recently there has been the emergence of alternative gifts which can be purchased through Tearfund, Christian Aid and World Vision, for example. These are all laudable attempts to witness to selfless giving and concern for other parts of the world.

On the other hand, we have all written, preached or heard sermons lambasting the commercialism of the season, but perhaps have not heard too many practical ideas as to how we can effect change. As Congregations do we need actively to consider ways in which we can develop a less stressful and materialistic celebration of Christmas? Do we need to send so many cards and give as many unwanted presents?!

Harvest Thanksgiving:

This is an ideal opportunity in our church calendar to thank God for the fruit of the harvest as well as to focus on lifestyle or Two thirds World issues.

Weddings:

According to one website the average cost of a wedding in Ireland is 20 – 25,000 Euros. The average cost of a wedding reception meal is in the region of

60 to 80 Euros per guest. Photographers are in the region of 1,000 to 4,000 Euros. While appreciating the generous hospitality of receptions, do we need to be much more proactive at suggesting simpler, less extravagant weddings that bring the service and the exchange of the vows to the fore?

Eco-Congregation Ireland

Eco-Congregation is an environmental programme for Churches, available to all Christian denominations throughout Britain and Ireland. It developed through a partnership between the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) and the environmental awareness charity “Going for Green” (now ENCAMS).

Eco-Congregation Ireland has been developed in co-operation with four Churches – the Church of Ireland, the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Roman Catholic Church – whose ecological representatives are in touch with the many groups operating in Britain and Europe. The programme is available to all parishes with a keen interest in environmental issues and offers resources and support to help them to take practical action in the context of their Christian faith.

A simple environmental audit is provided to help Congregations assess what they are already doing and to determine future priorities. They are then encouraged to download the appropriate resource modules which aim to integrate environmental care into different areas of Church life. Each Church will normally choose three modules on which to concentrate for the year from a list including: Worship and Teaching, Children’s and Youth Work, Property and Grounds Management, Finance – Purchasing and Waste, Personal Lifestyles, Working with the Local Community and Thinking Globally.

Eco-Congregation Ireland is an internet initiative and therefore all resources are free and can be downloaded from this website. The modules are designed to enable congregations to become self-sufficient and monitor their own progress.

Tearfund Carbon Fast

This is a suggested initiative not only for Congregations but also for individuals. It is estimated that in the UK we emit 9.5 tons of carbon dioxide per person per year; in Ethiopia the average is 0.067 tons and in Bangladesh 0.24. Apparently the earth can sustain 0.8 per person. Although Lent has not been an observance that has been particularly marked in the Presbyterian Church, traditionally people have given up things for Lent. Last year in the Anglican Diocese of Liverpool, for example, many parishioners tried to reduce their carbon footprint.

Building Community

Our Churches need to be at the heart of their local areas and pray with vision for ministries that will develop a deepening sense of community and belonging.

Individual Responses

In his book “A Good Life” Leo Hickman seeks to define the concept of “ethical living”. He states that it is promoting a mindset which takes responsibility for our actions, thinking long-term rather than short-term, and putting the needs of others before our own. We have already commented on some of these issues elsewhere in this report. Here we shall limit our responses to two areas: how we live in relation to our environment and our neighbour.

Environment

There are a number of initiatives we can positively take as individuals. Many of these issues are conscious decisions to try and save energy. We can implement energy-saving measures, such as wall and roof insulation and more efficient appliances, which significantly reduce wastage. Governments should encourage those living in “fuel poverty” by giving them substantial grants to improve their homes. Turning our washing machines to 30 rather than 40 degrees centigrade would save forty per cent in electricity compared to washing at higher temperatures. Recycling and reusing are other ways in which we can help save our planet’s resources.

On the level of transport we should seek to reduce the number of flights perhaps by videoconferencing or having more holidays at home. We need to decrease our dependence on cars by using public transport, sharing lifts, and walking short distances rather than simply getting behind the wheel. If everyone in the UK shared their daily car trip to work, in a year we would save three billion litres of petrol, twenty four billion miles of driving and stop the release of six million tons of carbon dioxide –the equivalent of planting 5.4 million trees (Source: Radio Times: “Seventy Ways You Can Save the Planet”).

In our shopping we should attempt to source and buy fairly traded goods and local produce. In 2003 “The Guardian” bought a basket of fresh food containing twenty items. It included pears from Argentina, garden peas from South Africa, tomatoes from Saudi Arabia and lettuce from Spain. Cumulative distance travelled by twenty items of fresh food in a shopping basket was a staggering 100, 943 miles –just under half the distance to the moon. We can also reduce our reliance on plastic bags and encourage our supermarkets not to use as much packaging. It is important that we learn not to waste so much food!

Neighbour

We have already stressed the importance of much greater giving towards the needs of others, particularly the poor.

Above all, we want to encourage one another to rediscover the importance of nurturing friendships and building family life. Earning money should never be at the expense of relationships. “Too much “stuff” is making us sick! If the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6:10), then our lifestyles contain the worst kind of spiritual cholesterol, clogging and choking the arteries of our relationship with God and each other” (David Bookless).

Concluding Remarks

In some ways this report may be interpreted as pushing a Christian agenda that is decidedly green! We would want to see our Christian faith as much more multi-coloured than that, applying to every area of our life and witness as we acknowledge Christ as Lord of all. We have attempted in these few paragraphs to combine theology and praxis.

We do not want to run the risk of being legalistic, by creating an onerous set of lifestyle rules and regulations. There must be room for variety and diversity as we celebrate God's creation. However, while acknowledging the freedom we have in Christ, we need to be much more conscious of the decisions we take economically, financially and individually. Our choices need to be much more consonant with the idea of sustainable lifestyle which will preserve our planet intact for succeeding generations. We renounce waste and oppose extravagance. We must not be driven and consumed by selfish economic gain, but be prepared to lay our wallets on God's altar. The desire to be rich can destroy us and we need to learn to be more content with what we have. In the Christian life there is a staggering call for joyful simplicity and radical generosity.

A Christian lifestyle is one in which there will always be the priority of relationship – to God and to one another. In the 1880s Mahatma Gandhi arrived in London to study law. He was inspired by Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount and even considered becoming a Christian. When asked later what put him off, Gandhi responded, "So many of you Christians are so unlike your Christ." Reflecting on his time in England, Gandhi talked of "Western nations groaning under the heel of the monster god of materialism". Another Indian of the same period, the poet and Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore said, "On that day when we see Jesus Christ living out his life in you, on that day we Hindus will flock to your Christ even as doves flock to their feeding ground." Dave Bookless comments, "If Jesus is our Lord, we need to live more lightly. I have a dream that as Western Christians we can live simply so that others can simply live. We can model to our society that you can live more with less. We can demonstrate a sustainable relationship with the planet and our neighbours. Maybe, just maybe, we can rediscover the lifestyle Jesus is calling us to: one where we receive the gifts of time, creation and possessions with simple gratitude; one where we live in community –sharing rather than forever comparing. Maybe we can foresee a day where we Christians live out the teachings of Jesus and others come flocking to Him, as doves to a feeding ground."

There are many Christians who are increasingly aware of the issues presented in this report. It is our hope that at least some will be prompted to take prayerful action in order to make a difference. Altogether it is the cumulative effect of small changes that will make that difference. There is the familiar story of the little boy who was rescuing stranded starfish by throwing them back into the sea. He refused to be discouraged by his father who, given the overwhelming numbers involved, asked him how he possibly could achieve anything worthwhile. The little boy looked down at the starfish in his hand, and then threw it out to sea: "I've made a difference to that one," he said.

Above all in this report, we acknowledge that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, as we give Him the praise and the glory. Let us place ourselves entirely at God's disposal in the words of the Methodist Covenant prayer: "I am no longer my own but yours. Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed for you or laid aside for you, exalted for you or brought low for you; let me be full, let me be empty, let me have all things, let me have nothing; I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal. And now, glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. So be it. And the covenant made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen."

Sources

We are indebted to a number of websites, including those of the Church of Scotland, Church of England, Tearfund, Christian Aid, the BBC and the environment pages of Directgov, the official UK Government site.

Various pamphlets have been helpful, including a briefing paper written by Sir John Houghton for the John Ray Initiative entitled "Global Warming, Climate Change and Sustainability". Various Cambridge Papers offer excellent discussion and deep theological insight and are accessible on line at www.jubilee-centre.org The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity has also been an invaluable resource as well as various articles in "Christianity" magazine.

Some books have been particularly helpful:

"Planetwise" by Dave Bookless (IVP, 2008)

"Living Simply" by Fiona Castle (Kingsway, 2006)

"Freedom of Simplicity" by Richard Foster (SPCK, 1981)

"A Good Life. The guide to ethical living" by Leo Hickman (Eden Project Books, 2005)

Above all, we are deeply indebted to "Christianity, Climate Change and Sustainable Living" by Nick Spencer and Robert White (SPCK, 2007)

CJC McMULLEN, Convener

CHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE

1. The Committee met twice during the year. Both meetings were well attended, indicative of the high level of commitment of its members to the abiding importance of maintaining, monitoring and deepening our denomination's relations with other Church bodies on this island and beyond. The Committee is grateful to those who have participated in various inter-Church activities over the past year and who have kept us abreast of the important issues involved.

2. **Irish Council of Churches.** The AGM was held on 2 April in Bray Methodist Church, County Wicklow. The theme was "Witnessing together in a changing Ireland". The keynote speaker was David Quinn from the Iona Institute with a response from the Rt Rev Richard Clarke, Church of Ireland Bishop. There were also three workshops for delegates to attend: Family Life;

Suicide and Congregational Life. The Rev Tony Davidson, PCI, was elected as President of the ICC for a two year period and the Rt Rev Richard Clarke also began his two year spell as Vice President. The sale of 48 Elmwood Avenue was agreed and the issue of finding a suitable replacement administrative centre was discussed. The increasingly diverse Irish populace means that there is also a greater diversity of Churches than hitherto. Seven of these have joined the ICC since 1997, with several more seeking membership. The criteria for membership of the ICC has thus become a major issue and a sub-group has been tasked to reflect and report back to the ICC in the near future. The ICC website was redesigned. The Very Rev Dr Sam Hutchinson has been doing a great deal of work on the ICC's behalf regarding the possibility of a Bill of Rights.

3. **Irish Inter-Church Committee.** The study day was on 24 October 2007 and Dr Mary Tanner gave the keynote address entitled – ‘A general overview of biblical dialogues: doors and obstacles from a global perspective’. Other speakers included Ms Gillian Kingston on the Methodist/Roman Catholic International Commission; Bishop Tony Farquhar on the WARC/Roman Catholic Dialogue; Prof. Cecil McCullough on the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe; and the Rev Peter Thompson on the Covenant council of Methodist/Church of Ireland. Among the continuing difficulties in theological ecumenism, Dr Tanner highlighted the following: the relation of scripture and tradition; the identity of the church; the articulation of a shared vision of church unity; issues relating to ministry, in particular, women's ordination; apostolicity and succession oversight, and universal primacy. The Minister for Europe, Dick Roche, will speak about the EU Reform Treaty Referendum at the next Committee.

4. **Conference of European Churches.** Six PCI delegates attended the 3rd European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu, Romania from 4-9 September 2007. The theme for EEA3 was “The Light of Christ” and involved a daily routine of plenary sessions, reflections on important sub-themes, evening cultural events and diverse forms of worship in local churches. The Rev Ken Crowe gave a presentation on the Northern Ireland ‘peace process’ that was well received. Through our delegates’ attendance at EEA3, PCI is able to learn of, and participate in, the many important issues that are facing the churches in the vast and varied continent that is Europe.

5. **British-Irish Reformed Consultation.** Seven PCI delegates met with representatives from the Church of Scotland, the United Reformed Church and the Presbyterian Church in Wales who hosted in Cardiff from 6-8 January 2008. Issues such as regional identity, restructuring for mission and reformed liturgy were explored. These periodic consultations continue to afford an ongoing structure for the reformed churches of these islands to learn from and share with each other at a formal level.

6. **World Alliance of Reformed Churches.** The Rev Dr Donald Watts attended two meetings. The WARC Executive Committee met from 18-29 October 2007 in Trinidad. Momentum had been growing towards a proposed merger of WARC and the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC). After much discussion it was agreed that the name for this new body will be the ‘*World Communion of Reformed Churches*’ (WCRC). Given the diverse understandings

of the word 'communion' the following definition was agreed, as it relates to WCRC:

'Communion is an expression of our being together in the body of Christ as we move towards that oneness which is the gift and calling of God, fully expressed in the Trinity. Our desire to enter into communion signifies the commitment of our Churches, in the richness of our diversity, to mutual caring, respect and service of one another, as witness to our common calling by the Spirit of God in Jesus Christ.'

The other main topic on the agenda was 'Justice' since this had emerged as a major topic at the General Council in Accra.

The second meeting of the re-structured WARC Europe Council took place in Paris from 31 January-1 February 2008. The main items discussed were covenanting for justice; mission in unity; the 500th Anniversary of Calvin's birth; and the WARC/REC merger as outlined earlier in this report. WARC Europe gave warm endorsement to the proposed merger to form the WCRC. Planning will lead up to a Uniting General Council, provisionally scheduled for 18-28 June 2010 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA.

ALLEN SLEITH, Convener

CHURCH HOUSE PANEL

The Rev Adrian McLernon reports:

1. Following the General Assembly's 2007 decision, the Church House Panel were tasked with the following remit:

“Seeking to minimise any direct assessment on Congregations, to proceed with the refurbishment of Church House under Option 2 (*External Stonework/Widows/Roof Repairs and Minimal Internal Refurbishment*), and to develop a business plan for further consideration under Option 3 (*External Stonework/Window/Roof Repairs and Extensive Internal Refurbishment*).” (Minutes 2007, p 91, res 60)

2. Reflecting on this remit and perusal of the various reports received from professionals and others, the Panel's initial assessment was as follows:

- (a) While the remit obliged the Panel to carefully budget, it did not include or exclude the option of selling Fisherwick Buildings.
- (b) As the Church House Panel is accountable to the General Board and the Property Management Committee is accountable to the Board of Finance and Personnel it is paramount that communication between both Committees and the responsibilities of each be clear.
- (c) Before any definitive decisions are recommended the Panel needs to define a vision of what the building could/would be used for in 10 years time. Such a brief is essential prior to proceeding to Architects or other professional consultants.
- (d) It is essential that the Panel looks at a range of options for the future use of the building, while conscious of the spiritual ethos of our denomination. These options might include retail, office, residential, conferencing, Christian resource centre, city centre ministry/outreach etc.

3. In the light of these observations the Panel acknowledged that a comprehensive economic appraisal was required to “underpin” decisions with regard to the future use of Church House and Fisherwick Buildings.

4. A team from the University of Ulster at Jordanstown, under the leadership of Professor Alastair Adair, was commissioned to carry out a full economic appraisal. The aim of the appraisal was to define a vision for how Church House could be used over a medium to long-term timeframe i.e. ten years. Such a vision needed to take into account a range of options for the future use of the building while conscious of the spiritual ethos of our denomination.

5. The Report was published on 31 January 2008 and identified the following key factors in relation to Church House –

- (i) The Northern Ireland economy is buoyant in terms of employment, incomes, wealth and business and consumer confidence. Increased political and social stability, generous European funding support and a favourable global economy have all contributed to the unparalleled regeneration of Belfast.
- (ii) Growth areas of the Belfast local economy are forecast to be hotels and restaurants and financial and business services.
- (iii) The analysis of planning applications within one mile of Church House indicates a dominance of hotel and office uses as the future growth areas.
- (iv) The completion of Titanic Quarter, Victoria Square and Royal Exchange will contribute to the expansion and migration of the retailing centre of gravity towards the east and north of the City Centre.
- (v) A very low vacancy rate of 2% of office space within the Church House area highlights the high demand for office uses in this location. With significant improvement in the internal layout and finishing Church House and Fisherwick Buildings would represent a quality office investment.
- (vi) High quality apartment development within Church House would attract significant interest for both sale and rental given its close proximity to the City Centre. However residential use in Church House and Fisherwick Buildings is considered to be a less profitable and sub-optimal option in the longer term than office, or conference uses. There are additional developmental constraints namely, size and optimal configuration of units, car parking provision off-site, bespoke entrance to the apartments.
- (vii) Demand for bespoke conference facilities of 1,000 seats in this location is high. Church House, if refurbished to ‘state of the art’ levels would be at a considerable advantage over other venues in attracting conferences from all of the identified market segments.
- (viii) The preservation of the Assembly Hall and Minor Hall may restrict the potential of Church House as a hotel. The economics of either a bespoke hotel development or a combined hotel and conference centre depend critically upon a number of bedrooms. Even with the inclusion of Fisherwick Buildings it is unlikely that a combined hotel and conference facility would be feasible on this site.

6. On the basis of the analyses undertaken the research team proposed 3 potential options:

- (i) Ethos related retail on ground floor of Church House together with Conference facilities on remainder of ground floor and upper floors. It is recognised that the optimal location of retail activities is on the ground floor towards Fisherwick Buildings. The residual space in Fisherwick Buildings on first, second and third floors could be used for high quality office accommodation with retail on the ground floor.
- (ii) Northern Ireland's first state of the art conference centre located on ground, first and second floors incorporating catering and exhibition facilities on the ground floor. PCI administrative offices would be located on the third floor of Church House and have their own separate entrance. As in Option 1, Fisherwick Buildings could be utilised for quality office space incorporating some element of retailing on the ground floor, if required.
- (iii) Boutique hotel in Church House and office accommodation/retail in Fisherwick Buildings as outlined in Option 1. This option requires a reconfiguration of the Assembly Hall and the likely loss of the Minor Hall. The PCI administrative offices would be retained on the third floor with a separate entrance as detailed in Option 2.

7. The Report concluded that Option 2 "a state of the art conference centre on ground, first and second floors incorporating catering and exhibition facilities on the ground floor, represents the optimal mix of uses for Church House. Fisherwick Buildings could be utilised for quality office space incorporating some element of retailing on the ground floor, if required."

8. On reflection, the Church House Panel, would tend to favour Option 1, as outlined above, in principle but would also be keen to see a greater Church presence on the ground floor. However this option needs to be tested with a Business Plan. Such a Business Plan has to take into account the following priorities –

- (i) Establish detailed PCI accommodation requirements for office and ancillary purposes.
- (ii) Conferencing Market needs to be analysed in order to establish the range of facilities required and implications of equality legislation.
- (iii) Assuming that the Mall is no longer commercially viable the use of the Ground Floor for Church use, ethos related retail and other uses needs to be appraised.
- (iv) An Architect to be appointed to create the necessary infrastructure to make Priorities 1-3 work.
- (v) While seeking to minimise the cost to congregations a financing plan is required. Such a plan must take the following into consideration –
 - the future of Fisherwick Buildings
 - VAT status
 - Commercial Rates liability

9. Presently the Panel are working on these priorities with a view to producing a comprehensive Business Plan for further consideration.

CENTRES' REVIEW PANEL

The Rev Dr Donald J Watts reports:

1. The main work of the Centres' Panel has been to consider the future use of the Lucan site. The Board of Social Witness had indicated an interest in using part of the site for sheltered accommodation/social housing. The Presbytery of Dublin and Munster would like to take responsibility for the present residential Centre and submitted a detailed Business Plan. It is also understood that a local developer is interested in the site.

2. The Panel is conscious that this is a valuable asset which belongs to the whole Church. The General Assembly has recognised Guysmere as the Church's one continuing residential centre, to be managed by the Youth and Children's Ministry Board. It is necessary, therefore, that sufficient resources are found to do so effectively. The Panel would also wish to retain some physical resource in the greater Dublin area. In this case the Board of Social Witness has been identified as the prime agency for doing so, while recognising also the broader work of the Board of Mission in Ireland. Provided these two fundamental objectives have been met, the Panel will continue to talk with the Dublin and Munster Presbytery as to whether the existing Centre should be transferred to the Presbytery and on what terms.

3. While the Presbytery's Business Plan was being considered, a new factor was introduced in that the Presbytery indicated it would wish to enter a leasing arrangement with Taylor University (USA) for approximately seven months of the year. For the Panel this has raised two issues

- The mix on the site would no longer be residential/social provision and the changing clientele of a residential centre but two residential communities for much of the year. The Board of Social Witness will need time to consider this change, in consultation with its partners.
- There are planning implications relating to the use of the whole site

4. The Panel are continuing to explore the possibility of Board of Social Witness use, with the present Centre being transferred to the Presbytery. Only if this does not prove to meet the objectives outlined above will the Panel consider the involvement of a developer. It is hoped to be able to report further to the General Assembly.

PANEL ON PRESBYTERY BOUNDS

The Rev Dr Donald J Watts reports:

1. The Presbytery Bounds Panel has continued to meet and discuss with Presbyteries during the year. Following a meeting in Banagher the following proposal was put and accepted by Presbyteries in the North West:

NORTH-WEST BORDER AREA

Presbytery (1): All present Coleraine Congregations plus 1st Limavady, Magilligan; 2nd Limavady, Myroe; Drumachose, Derramore; Balteagh, Bovevagh; Dungiven, Largy; Banagher. [27 charges].

Presbytery (2): Remaining Foyle Congregations plus Derry and Strabane without Urney, Sion, Badoney, Corrick, Glenelly; Ardstraw, Douglas; Newtownstewart, Gortin; 1st Castleberg, Killeter; 2nd Castleberg, Alt; plus all Donegal Congregations. [28 charges].

Presbytery (3): Omagh Congregations Plus Urney, Sion; Badoney, Corrick, Glenelly; Ardstraw, Douglas; Newtownstewart, Gortin; 1st Castleberg, Killeter; 2nd Castleberg, Alt. [21 charges]

2. The other area on which the Panel would like to move forward is around the Monaghan and north Dublin and Munster Presbyteries. Suggestions last year for a “Midlands” Presbytery did not find support in the Presbyteries so the Panel looked at a more thorough cross-Border approach. This involved a linkage between Monaghan and Armagh, with part of Newry and consequent changes to the Presbyteries of Dromore, Down and Iveagh. This was discussed at a meeting in Richhill and drew strong opposition from some Presbyteries who did not see these changes as necessary.

3. Members of the Dublin and Munster and Monaghan Presbyteries were invited to a meeting in Drogheda to share their ideas for a way forward with the Panel, but there was no clear evidence of a willingness to move beyond the status quo.

4. The Panel met again to discuss four possibilities:

- (i) To maintain things as they are, except to move Dundalk, Castlebellingham and Carlingford into the Monaghan Presbytery. This was not seen as a realistic option.
- (ii) To create two Presbyteries with a line from south of Drogheda on the east to south of Galway in the west and including Tullamore and Mountmellick in the northern section. This has the advantage of making a geographically smaller Dublin and Munster Presbytery. One disadvantage is that road networks lead towards Dublin.
- (iii) To create a “Greater Dublin” Presbytery and another Presbytery surrounding it. Some feel that this would allow many of the Home Mission Congregations to be together and support one another. The disadvantages the Panel identified were (a) distance (b) not all Congregations would be rural e.g. Cork (c) the “Greater Dublin” Presbytery would be small. The Panel concluded that this would not be the solution.
- (iv) One Presbytery for the whole of the Republic except Donegal. For this to be successful the Presbytery would need to develop a radically new way of working – with area groups and “deputy Clerks or area Conveners”. The Panel decided to send suggestions (ii) and (iv) to the two Presbyteries for discussion and feed-back. It is hoped to have a report on these for the General Assembly.

5. During discussions since the Panel was set up, it has been struck by a lack of any coherent vision of what a Presbytery should be doing, or indeed what a Presbytery is for. Too often it seemed as though members of Presbytery were content if vacancies could be sorted and forms filled. Some elders expressed the view that it didn’t really matter to which Presbytery a Congregation belonged because most members wouldn’t know anyway. The concepts in the Panel’s first report of vision-strategy and support-networking did not seem to have received

much attention. This may be because the Panel's practical focus was on enabling stronger Presbyteries to emerge by changing boundaries. The Panel therefore believes that its work should end, but would ask the Priorities Committee to consider, as an urgent priority, initiating discussion to refocus the work of Presbyteries as a vital layer between Congregations and the General Assembly. Once the role and function of a Presbytery has been clarified, optimum size should also become clear. It would then be useful for the General Assembly to return to the question of Presbytery boundaries in a much more inclusive way

PANEL ON PASTORAL CARE

The Rev Gabrielle Farquhar reports:

The main piece of work that the Panel engaged in during the year was the gathering of information from Ministers and Manse families i.e. difficulties, blessings, challenges, issues of being a Manse family in present society. The need for someone they could go to who would listen and react in a pastoral, caring manner, total confidentiality assured, was a recurring request. In response to this need the Panel set about bringing together people with a variety of expertise in ministry and life experiences, e.g. family issues, bereavement, spiritual crises, addictions, marital, retirement. This group will form a **Care Panel** which will be available for Ministers and Manse families from **June 2008**.

As Liaison person, the Convener, the Rev Gabrielle Farquhar, will act as the initial contact from the Minister or member of the Manse family – matching the need to a member of the **Care Panel**. That member would arrange to meet the person concerned for no more than 3-4 sessions. The member of the Panel may suggest more specialised help if necessary. It is **not** a counselling service that is being offered but rather a pro-active service that will provide Pastoral Care to those who often feel they have no listening ear and nobody to pray with them.

In February, the Panel and proposed **Care Panel** had the benefit of listening to the Rev John Chalmers, full time Senior Pastoral Adviser (Church of Scotland). What came across was the ongoing care for their Ministers when they left college. For the first 5 years, following a call to their first Congregation they have a Pastoral Adviser (a continuation of what was in place in college) - this person is not necessarily a minister! Compulsory in-service training during this period includes issues such as time management; finance for the future (including advice on purchasing a home); conflict management; dealing with change and its consequence. Along with the Ministerial Development Committee, the Panel is hopefully on the way to providing similar care for our Ministers and Manse families here in Ireland.

PANEL ON MINISTRIES

The Rev Prof WP Addley reports:

The remit of the Panel was to implement the recommendations of the Doctrine Committee Report (2006), namely:

- (i) That the PCI explore the value of (i) 'specialist' teaching elders, (ii) part-time teaching elders, and (iii) non-stipendiary teaching elders.
- (ii) That, in order to achieve consistency across the Church, PCI should develop an in-service training programme for all Additional Pastoral Personnel (APPs) and draw up guidelines for a service of induction for APPs.

The Panel now wish to present an outline report giving a summary of its recommendations:

1. Non-Stipendiary Ministry of Word and Sacrament (NSM)- see Appendix A

In addition to Ministers of word and sacrament, operating in existing spheres of service and under existing conditions, the Panel recommend that a new category of ordained ministers of word and sacrament be created, namely that of Non-Stipendiary Minister (NSM).

NSMs would be selected and trained in a manner the same or very similar to that by which 'normal' Ministers are trained. Perhaps there would be some differences in the way some training courses would be delivered. The Panel recognises that selection, training content and methods of delivery are the responsibility of the Board of Christian Training.

The costs of such training would not be borne by the Students' Bursary Fund but be met from private, congregational or presbyterial sources.

NSMs would work under the direction and supervision of Presbytery.

They would be paid on an 'Expenses Only' basis and would not acquire any stipend or pension rights or benefits.

It is not envisaged that NSMs would normally enter the 'regular' Ministry.

2. Reader – see Appendix B

The Panel recommends that the office of Reader be created.

Readers would be those of spiritual maturity and practical experience, mainly but not exclusively elders, who after suitable training would be available to conduct services and preach as required.

Readers would be commissioned by Presbytery in a manner similar to that of Irish Mission Workers.

Readers would be under the supervision and direction of Presbytery.

Readers would receive no remuneration but expenses would be met.

3. Additional Pastoral Personnel (APPs) – see Appendix C

It is recommended that:

- All full time APPs be commissioned at a service of public worship in the Congregation where they are to serve;
- This service should be conducted by the Minister of the Congregation with representatives of Presbytery present;
- The form of service should be similar to that laid down for the commissioning of deaconesses and others (Code para 202);
- Neither formal subscription to the Confession nor the laying on of hands should be practiced;

- The Right Hand of Fellowship should be given by the Minister and the Clerk of Session;
- The Questions to the Candidate should be as follows or similar:
 - Do you believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and do you confess your faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord?
 - Do you believe the Word of God as found in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
 - So far as you know your own heart, are love for the Lord Jesus Christ and a desire to assist others to follow Him your chief motives for accepting this opportunity for service?
 - Do you promise, relying on divine grace, to walk worthy of the Lord, to be loyal to the teaching and practice of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, to discharge your duties faithfully and diligently, and at all times to seek to further the Kingdom of God?

APPENDIX A

Non Stipendiary Ministry in the PCI (NSM)

The Panel recommends that PCI should adopt a model of selection, training and deployment of NSMs as follows. Most applicants will opt for part-time posts but full-time ministry posts should be open to NSMs.

Selection:

NSM applicants should be assessed by the same nomination and assessment procedure as all other ministerial applicants with input from Session, Presbytery and Board of Christian Training, including a congregational placement (part-time).

Candidates should normally be not more than 63 at the time of application. This should allow for a minimum of 5 years service after training.

Training:

The Board of Christian Training should be invited to set out in detail what courses and placements should be required but there should be parity in training between all ministers of Word and Sacrament whether paid or non-stipendiary.

Training should be modeled on a minimum of the reduced course sometimes prescribed for over 40's, namely:

- Either two years full-time
- Or a minimum of four years part-time.

Applicants opting for full-time study would be assigned as student assistants in the second year. Part-time students could be assigned as (very) part-time student assistants in the last two years.

Students should be encouraged to take the part-time degrees and diplomas on offer from QUB or, where ineligible, UTC.

Many students are likely to candidate with completed or part completed degrees in Theology – in these cases Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) should be undertaken and the course shortened as appropriate.

Where a student presents with a completed degree and ministerial courses, he/she should fulfil a one-year student assistantship such as those undertaken by 'returnees'.

Call

After one year's licentiate assistantship the Candidate should be eligible for call and ordination in the same way as regular students.

The restrictions on first call outlined in the code should apply. Calls could be as Parish ministers or Associate ministers and should follow normal call procedures. They would be ordained on 'call' whether the post to which they are called is full-time or part-time.

Money

Congregations who call an NSM should continue to pay CMF and Stipend as set by the Union Commission. Full expenses should be paid at congregational level. The object here is to provide a level playing field in the call system – an NSM should not be a cheap option and therefore more attractive in a small congregation than a regular minister.

NSMs appointed as Associate Ministers should receive full expenses from the employing Congregation except where Union Commission/BMI agree to top up from central funds on the same conditions as currently happens with regular ministers. Part-time ministries would receive expenses pro rata for hours worked.

The Students' Bursary Fund will not be responsible for training costs.

Rights:

Full-time posts

When an NSM is called as a parish minister or associate minister he/she should have the rights associated with the post:

- The right to reside in the manse
- A seat on Presbytery and Assembly with voting rights

As they are not salaried they will not be required to nor have the right to:

- Join the Widows of Ministers Fund or
- The Ministerial Pension scheme

The latest age of retirement for full-time posts should be 70 as for regular ministers.

Part-time posts

Part-time posts should not carry voting rights in Presbytery and Assembly.

Part-time paid and NSM Ministers could be invited to sit and deliberate in Presbytery where they are the subject of a call. This would not apply to those working in informal arrangements similar to retired ministers taking pastoral posts in congregations.

The General Board or Business Board should look at the implications for membership of Church Courts if a large number of ministers are to be ordained in their 60s.

Transfer:

It is not envisaged that there would be transfer from NSM to regular status.

APPENDIX B

A Proposal for the development of a ministry of ‘Reader’ in PCI

Preamble

The Panel takes it to be axiomatic that it should be trying to put in place structures that support all Christians exercising the gifts that God has given to them for the benefit of the local congregation. Within this general mutually supportive fellowship certain activities can be described as ‘ministry’. Ministry differs from fellowship in that it is structured, it is authorised by the leadership of the local Congregation, those who engage in it are accountable to the leadership and normally some training should be offered to and undertaken by those who minister.

The twin role of preaching and leading corporate worship clearly falls within any definition of ‘ministry’. The purpose of this proposal is fivefold:

- (i) to enhance the glory of God by improving the leadership of public worship and the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ;
- (ii) to build up the people of God through improving the quality of preaching in PCI pulpits;
- (iii) to develop latent gifts of preaching and leading worship which we believe exist within the membership of PCI;
- (iv) to support, encourage and strengthen the ministry of those already engaged in regular or occasional preaching and leading in PCI;
- (v) to support and encourage in situations in which Teaching Elders are under significant pressure or are in short supply.

With these ends in mind it is proposed that Readers become part of the structure of ministry in the PCI. Readers (with different designations and slightly differing roles) have long been part of the structures of our nearest neighbours in the Church of Scotland, the Methodist Church in Ireland and the Church of Ireland as well as in many denominations worldwide. Throughout PCI, the tradition of lay leadership of worship and lay preaching has a long and honoured history, although it has always been largely ad hoc. In addition, we ought to keep in mind the guidance of our Subordinate Standards: ‘The Word of God is to be preached only by such as are sufficiently gifted, and also duly approved and called to that office.’ (*Westminster Larger Catechism*, A 158). This proposal seeks to enhance what is good and guard against what is unworthy.

In order to maintain good order and provide pastoral support, each Presbytery should appoint a supervisory committee to oversee the work of Readers within its bounds.

Qualifications for Readers

Potential Readers should be identified by Kirk Session and recommended to Presbytery for interview, training, appointment and oversight, with their names added to a Presbyterial register. No-one should become a Reader without the support of his or her Kirk Session.

Readers should be of a sufficient degree of maturity to command respect.

Readers should be appropriately trained either before being appointed or within three years of being appointed.

Readers should satisfactorily serve a probationary period of one year or conduct services twelve times (whichever is longer) following appointment.

Readers should carry out their ministry in a way that it consistent with the teaching and practice of the PCI.

After the period of probation, Readers should be assessed by the Presbytery Committee and, if satisfactory, commissioned to the work in a formal service in their home Church, conducted under the authority of Presbytery (but not necessarily with a full commission of Presbytery).

Readers should be free to exercise their ministry outside the bounds of their home Presbytery. However, if a Reader is to lead worship and preach in a given Congregation outside his or her home Presbytery on a regular basis (say, an average of more than once per month over a period of six months), permission of the Presbytery in which the Congregation is situated should be sought.

Desirable qualities in Readers

Readers should be Elders in PCI or of sufficient spiritual standing within their local Congregation to warrant significant positive consideration in an election of elders.

Readers should preferably have already proved themselves in some appropriate form of leadership within their local Congregation.

Readers should not be:

- Ordained to this position;
- Authorised to celebrate the sacraments;
- Seen as Pastoral Assistants by virtue of their position as Readers although Pastoral Assistants, Youth Workers and other APP's, along with Deaconesses, would be eligible to become Readers;
- Remunerated for their work, although reasonable expenses ought to be paid and a gratuity or Pulpit Supply Fee should be offered;
- Under the illusion that becoming a Reader will entitle them to the right to lead worship and preach in their home or any other Congregation. Invitations to lead worship and preach remain in the hands of the Minister of the Congregation or Convener of the vacancy;
- Understood as the only people, other than Teaching Elders, who can lead worship and preach in PCI. Persons who are not Readers are by no means barred from pulpits, however, it is strongly recommended that any person who undertakes to preach with any

regularity or frequency should be encouraged to become a Reader.

Readers may be:

- removed from the ‘register of Readers’ by Presbytery for any activity or teaching deemed by Presbytery to be incompatible with holding the position of Reader;
- eligible to conduct funerals;
- persons exploring the possibility that God may be calling them to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament.

Conclusion

This proposal represents a very significant, yet by no means revolutionary, development within PCI. Its aim is to recognise, order and enhance existing practice and therefore it is offered to the General Assembly to be sent down to Presbyteries for discussion. It is to be hoped that we can have more than one round of response and amendment to enable an improved proposal to be brought to the General Assembly for adoption in June, 2009.

APPENDIX C

Recommendations regarding employment of Additional Pastoral Personnel in PCI

Background

The landscape in our denomination and others has changed dramatically in the past 10 years or so due to the changing nature of ministry with young people in particular, and changing demands on serving members of our congregations. Once only a “privileged few” employed any kind of APP. Now over 70 different Presbyterian churches have youth and children’s workers, as well as family workers and other posts. These represent over 15% of those employed in our congregations. Several youth workers in particular have worked in this capacity for over 10 years. Permanent contracts are not unusual and church based work is now seen as a realistic and respected career. This has presented challenges to employers and employees alike and, although much has been learned, there are still too many situations of poor practice and congregations can find it difficult to negotiate the maze of legislation and procedures.

As a denomination we have huge responsibilities to respond to this changing climate in a manner which facilitates best practice without unnecessarily restricting congregations’ individual discretion. We must both support and educate congregations as employers and also address the associated issues for employees such as training, pay and conditions of service. Therefore a number of key recommendations are judged timely.

Posts

It is recommended that jobs are designed in such a way as to achieve a clear shared understanding of why someone has been employed. Accordingly:

- (i) A job title should be chosen to broadly describe the nature of the post (worker, director etc).
- (ii) Job descriptions should be written carefully in response to the aim and vision of the post, preferably in line with a strategic plan for the area of congregational work to which it relates and must explicitly state the spiritual nature of the post.
- (iii) The employee should be associated with an appropriate Board which may provide appropriate support and training (i.e. YAC, BMI, and BSW).
- (iv) Congregations are strongly encouraged, ideally at an early stage, to avail of support from the appropriate Board as they engage in the employment process, from designing job descriptions to interview and appointment.

Requirements of workers:

In order to seek to employ the most suitable people, it is recommended that:

- (i) Applicants should be given sufficient opportunity to “demonstrate an active Christian faith”.
- (ii) An information pack should be provided to job applicants containing clear information on the distinctive ethos and environment of the Congregation and the doctrine and practice of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. As employer, it is the responsibility of the Kirk Session to ensure the preferred candidate makes an informed commitment “to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, and working within the aims and ethos of the specific Congregation”.
- (iii) The following minimum levels of training / qualification should normally be achieved by applicants for youth and children’s posts or obtained within 18 months of commencement of employment:
 - PCI Youth Ministry Course or Children’s Ministry Course
 - OCN Training for Youthwork, level 2 & 3
- (iv) Thereafter, Congregations should follow the guidelines on theological training for APPs.
- (v) Congregations should have a policy for the ongoing training and Personal & Professional Development of employees; this should include a budget and appropriate study leave and should include time for personal, spiritual renewal and development.
- (vi) Annual appraisals should identify skills gaps and training needs of employees.
- (vii) Congregations should normally support the employee by funding the full cost of such training.

Needs of workers

It is essential that Congregations protect their investment and ensure that the right environment exists for longevity and realistic employment conditions. Therefore it is recommended that:

- (i) Job descriptions be sufficiently clear and unambiguous with a realistic workload so that the employee has clarity in role and boundaries.

- (ii) Effective line management be provided on a weekly or at least fortnightly basis where the employee's workload is agreed in a way which reflects his or her experience and skills; the line manager should be someone who has the skills and time to do this effectively - this may not necessarily be the Minister but could, for example, be an elder with the appropriate skills.
- (iii) Consideration be given to a small management group who would help to steer the broader priorities of the work according to the job description, on an ongoing supportive basis.
- (iv) The employee receive suitable pastoral support.
- (v) Consideration be given to the employee meeting regularly with a supervisor, separate from the line manager, to help with practice issues and personal development.
- (vi) Congregations should facilitate access to necessary practical and theological training (as detailed elsewhere), for ongoing personal and professional development.
- (vii) Congregations should seek advice from the relevant Board regarding the suitable salary scale for their employee, and set the salary in consideration of the salary levels of their other Ministry staff.
- (viii) Expenses should be paid monthly using expense claim sheets; there should be clarity about mileage rates, what can be claimed as out of pocket expenses and to what maximum value.
- (ix) Salary, where possible, should be paid directly into the employees bank account on the same stated day each month and expenses also if appropriate.
- (x) There should be a defined budget for programme expenses, distinct from personal expenses.
- (xi) The employee should have an annual appraisal of the post using a structured scheme which allows both the employee and employer to review progress in different areas of the job; this should use an appraisal form completed by both parties prior to a review meeting which, although structured, should be as informal as possible.
- (xii) An annual salary increment should be awarded to each year's appraisal if the worker is agreed to have reached the objective and measurable outcomes set the previous year, up to the maximum salary scale set within the contract of employment.
- (xiii) Employees should be encouraged to access a suitable pension scheme and, if possible, congregations should consider employer contributions.
- (xiv) It is good practice for APPs to be invited by Kirk Sessions to sit and deliberate in Session meetings when matters relating to their area of work are discussed, except if business relates to their employment; they should also be asked to report in person to Kirk Session on at least an annual basis.
- (xv) There should be clear disciplinary and grievance procedures according to Peninsula guidelines.
- (xvi) There should be suitable policies on health and safety, maternity and paternity, sick leave etc according to the Peninsula guidelines.

- (xvii) Congregations must act according to legislation on renewal of fixed-term contracts and seek advice from Peninsula when renewing or terminating any contract, even a fixed-term contact.

MEMORIAL RECORD

The Rev Dr WTJ Richardson, MBE, reports:

The Rev Cecil David Adams, BA, died on 12 August, 2007 in the 87th year of his age and the 59th of his ministry. Born in March 1920, the son of a farmer, he was brought up in the Congregation of First Ballymena and educated at Ballymena Academy, Magee University College, Londonderry, Trinity College, Dublin and Assembly's College Belfast. He graduated in Arts from Trinity in 1942. Licensed by the Ballymena Presbytery in June 1946, he was Ordained and Installed to his first charge of Smithborough and Scotchtown in 1948. Here he remained until he accepted a Call to Spa and Magherahamlet in 1955. After a long and greatly valued ministry he retired to reside at Ballywalter in September 1985. During much of his time in Smithborough he was Clerk of the Monaghan Presbytery. It has been said that no Minister and his wife ever won their way into the hearts of their people more effectively than Cecil and Anne Adams. With a tremendous capacity to love and be loved they epitomised all that a "minister couple" should be to their people and even when Cecil's most compelling sermons have been forgotten, his genuine pastoral love and compassion for his people will be remembered with appreciation and affection. His interests extended far beyond the bounds of his Congregations as evidenced in his chairmanship of local school management committees; his involvement in the local Young Farmers Club, Ballynahinch Rugby Club and his local Unionist Association. Very much a "people" person, he made himself available to the entire communities of which he was a part and his quiet saintly presence brought benediction to many circumstances irrespective of whether they were sad or happy. To his wife Anne, his daughter Sara and son Robin, the sympathy of the General Assembly is extended at this time of sorrow and loss.

The Rev John Lyle, MA, died on 11 October, 2007 in the 85th year of his age and the 61st of his ministry. He grew up on the family farm at Thornhill near Doagh, the eldest of six children. He was educated at Doagh Primary school, Ballyclare High School, Magee University College Londonderry, and Trinity College Dublin from which he gained a first class honours degree. He did his Theology at what was then Assembly's College, Belfast. After serving his assistantship in Megain Memorial Congregation he accepted a Call to First Ahoghill Congregation where he remained until retirement forty years later. John Lyle exercised an exemplary ministry – the kind that so many of our Congregations are looking for even to this day – with a heart for people irrespective of age or status. The love of his life was to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ and to pastor the people over which he had been called by God to exercise spiritual leadership. In the year 1972/3 he was Moderator of the Synod of Ballymena and Coleraine. In 1947 he married a daughter of the then minister of Ballyclare – Miss Anna Juliette Marie McBeth- who until his death almost sixty years later was his constant companion and support. They had two

children– Jennifer and Brian. The family circle can be confident that the sympathy and prayers of the General Assembly are with them as they continue to adjust to life without their loved one.

The Rev Professor Thomas Samuel Reid, BA, BD, MTh, Dip Ed, DD, died on 29 November, 2007 in the 74th year of his age and the 49th of his ministry. An east Belfast man, he was brought up in the Congregation of First Ballymacarrett and educated at Methodist College, Queen's University where he gained honours in Classics and Assembly's College, Belfast where he was a Leitch prize winner in New Testament Greek. He was licensed by Belfast Presbytery in May 1957 and Ordained and Installed to his first charge in Cargyreevy in September 1958. There he spent six happy years before accepting a Call from Gilnahirk Congregation in September 1964. For the next twelve years he exercised a much appreciated ministry before moving to the Congregation of First Newtownards in September 1976. At the General Assembly in 1983 he was appointed to the Chair of Practical Theology where he remained until retirement in September 1998. He was Principal of the College from 1992 until 1998. His experience in the rural Congregation of Cargyreevy, the city Congregation of Gilnahirk and the provincial town Congregation of First Newtownards was invaluable for his work in the College and his many students for the ministry benefited greatly from Tom's vast store of stories, illustrations and insights gained from experiences he had had in these vastly different Congregations. Many Ministers throughout our denomination today give thanks that such a well informed, down-to-earth and Godly man as Tom Reid was, not just their teacher, but their friend and role model in ministry. Fourteen years before he died Tom's heart failed and he had no option but to undergo a heart transplant operation in the famous Papworth hospital in Cambridgeshire. This turned out to be most successful, giving him such a long extension to his life and enabling him to return to his work in the College. In addition, the operation added a tremendous dimension to his ministry in the teaching of Practical Theology and indeed to the development of a most useful ministry after retirement to the wider Church. Many Congregations and groups within Congregations, such as PWAs and mid-weeks, were amazingly enriched through Tom's shared experiences of coping with the pain and uncertainty that accompanies serious illness and the role and relevance of the Christian Faith at such times. Coincidentally, Tom's Call to Cargyreevy came on the same day that he was married to the former Miss Anne Geary- that is, 2 September, 1958. What a team they became and what an example of the love and devotion of a truly Christian marriage! To Anne, their daughter Karen and son Gavin, the sympathy of the entire Church is directed in their sorrow and loss.

The Rev Andrew Milling Adams, BSc, BD, DD, died on 8 December ,2007 in the 95th year of his age and the 69th of his ministry. A North Belfast man, he was brought up within the Congregation of St Enoch's and educated at the Junior and Day Technical College Belfast, Queen's University where he obtained a first class honours in Mechanical Engineering as well as a Bachelor of Divinity and the Assembly's College, Belfast. Here he excelled as a student, particularly in the area of Old Testament and his ability in the Hebrew language

was, for many years, put to good use as the College's external examiner in Hebrew. Licensed by the Belfast Presbytery in 1937, he served his assistantship in Ballysillan Congregation before being Ordained and Installed in his first charge of Buckna in March 1938. Here he remained until his Call to First Newtownards Congregation in June 1947. In January 1972 he accepted the Call of 3rd Portglenone where he remained until retirement in 1979. Despite his academic gifts – equally at home lecturing in the Mechanical Engineering Department of Queen's University or in Old Testament in the Faculty of Theology – he remained a pastor at heart. The fact that he was born of parents who were deaf and dumb gave him great insight into the world of those who were in any way disabled. Throughout his ministry he laid strong emphasis on teaching God's Word and his life, so beautifully complimenting what he taught, gave the authentic ring of one who by lip and life practiced what he preached. As a young man he had been greatly encouraged in his Christian life through his involvement in the Christian Endeavour movement and for several years he held the position of General Secretary of the Irish Council. Andrew Adam's interests were many and varied. In addition to those already mentioned he loved music, languages (particularly French), reading, swimming etc. His long life was usefully and well lived in the service of his fellow human beings and to the Glory of his God. To his faithful and most supportive wife Alice, their daughter Elizabeth and sons David and John, the sympathy and prayers of the General Assembly are directed at this time of sorrow and loss.

The Rev David John Holmes Browne, MA, died on 8 December, 2007 in the 79th year of his age and the 47th of his ministry. A Belfast man, he was brought up in the Albert Hall – Shankill Road Mission – Congregation and his higher education was undertaken at Magee University College Londonderry, Trinity College, Dublin and Assembly's College, Belfast. He served his student assistantship in Whitehouse Congregation and his assistantship in Megain (Mersey Street) Congregation where he was Ordained in July 1960. He was installed in his first charge of Kells and Ervey in January 1962. After a short ministry there he received a Call to the Congregations of Bellaghy and Knockloughrim in 1965 where he remained until 1974 when he accepted a Call to his final charge of Ballykelly, from which he retired in 1995. During his time in Ballykelly he was Moderator of the Synod of Derry and Omagh. David throughout his life and ministry, maintained a strong interest in the Shankill Road Mission. It was as a teenager attending a Watch Night service conducted by his minister – the Rev Andrew McNab – that he committed his life to Christ. Before entering the ministry of our Church he spent some time with the Faith Mission in Edinburgh, where he received a good grounding in the scriptures that was to stand him in good stead throughout his ministry. David often spoke of the influence of the Boy's Brigade upon his life and it was no surprise to see him influential in the formation of a Boy's and Girl's Brigade in Ballykelly. During most of his ministry in Ballykelly he was chaplain in Gransha and Stradreagh hospitals, where his care and concern for people was greatly appreciated by staff, patients and the families of patients. His interest in the wider communities within which his Congregations were set was evidenced in his chairmanships of various School Committees and his membership and interest in the Loyal

Orders. It was while studying at Magee College that David met the girl who was later to become his wife and constant support throughout his ministry. To June, their daughter Alison and son Gareth, the sympathy and prayers of the General Assembly is extended at this time of sorrow and loss.

The Rev William John Henning Mc Kee, BA, DipTh, PhD, died on 19 December, 2007 in the 65th year of his age and the 29th of his ministry. A Belfast man, he was brought up in the fellowship of the Christian Brethren and educated at Carr's Glen Primary School; Belfast High School; Queens University, Belfast where he studied history and politics and the Presbyterian College, Belfast where he undertook his theological training. Before entering the ministry of our Church he taught history in Omagh Academy. It was while teaching in Omagh that he met the former Miss Doreen Robb, who was later to become his wife. It was while attending the ordination of a friend that he initially felt that God might be calling him into the ministry of our denomination. This sense of call was nurtured through his attendance at Fitzroy Congregation. Upon completion of his theological training he was licensed by South Belfast Presbytery in Fitzroy Church in June 1978. Having served his assistantship in Cooke Centenary Congregation he was ordained by the Presbytery of Tyrone to be Assistant to the Convener of Upper and Lower Clonaneese Congregations.

In 1980 he received the call of these Congregations to be their Minister and here he remained until 1988. After a short ministry in Berry Street Congregation he moved to Westbourne Congregation in 1990 and remained there until, having received a call from the Congregations of Cumber and Cumber Upper in 1999, he again moved. His stay in these Congregations was short for in November 2002 he moved to his final charge of Newtown Stewart and Gortin where he remained until his retirement in 2007. A keen historian, John McKee was never more at home than when he was in his study absorbing the great lessons of history and gems of theological insight. Just as much at home on the lecturer's rostrum as in the pulpit, he had the gift of effectively communicating even the most complex of historical and theological debates. Many today are grateful that this informed and highly articulate man of God passed their way. His involvement in the wider Church included convenerhips of the Social Service Committee and the Presbyterian Historical Society. His series in the Presbyterian Herald – "Chips of History" – were read with great relish and gave much illumination to several of the great debates and controversies of our denomination. His wife Doreen can rest assured that she is being borne up by the sympathy and prayers not only of the Congregations in which John served, but by the denomination of which he was an esteemed and much loved servant.

The Rev Mervyn Alexander Crooks, BD, died on 15 February, 2008 in the 79th year of his age and the 40th of his ministry. Born and brought up on a farm at Dunmore in the Lissan area of Cookstown, his home Congregation was Claggan and his primary education at the adjoining Claggan Public Elementary School. After serving his time as a joiner he accepted God's call to study at the Bible Training Institute in Glasgow in preparation for missionary work in Nigeria with the Qua Iboe Missionary Society. He and his wife Florence served in Nigeria for 10 years, during which time their four children – Rodger, Stephen,

Jillian and Timothy – were born. These proved to be among the most satisfying years of Mervyn's ministry and involved him in the building of a hospital at Ochadamu and a school at Ochaja. In 1964 he returned home to study for the ordained ministry of our Church. After study at both Magee and Assembly's Colleges he was licensed as a probationer and having served as assistant in Glengormley Congregation he was ordained and installed in Carland and Newmills in 1970. Five years later he responded to the call of Portrush Congregation where he remained until called to the Congregations of Newtownstewart and Gortin in 1983. On retirement he and his wife Florence moved back to Portrush where he exercised a most fulfilling ministry in pastoral visitation. Mervyn and indeed his wife Florence had a tremendous heart for mission. Their years in Nigeria left a lasting impression and added a dimension of ministry within the various congregations where they served that was both enriching and challenging. Their wealth of stories and variety of experiences brought life to many a sermon and indeed many a conversation. Mervyn's winsome personality and gentle persuasiveness was the means God used in leading many to a living encounter with Christ and very many within and beyond our denomination give thanks for the day when Mervyn Crooks passed their way. Outside the Church Mervyn maintained his early interest in working with wood. He was a master craftsman and when off duty, nothing pleased him more than to spend creative time at his workbench. He was predeceased by his wife Florence in July 2005 and is survived by his aforementioned children and their families. They can be confident that the sympathy and prayers of the General Assembly are with them in their sorrow and loss.

The Rev James Andrew Fullerton, BA, MA, died on 15 February, 2008 in the 83rd year of his age and the 56th of his ministry. He was born at Drumquin where his father was Minister at the time and in early childhood moved with his family to Lisburn when his father became minister of Sloan Street Congregation. He was educated at Wallace High School; Magee University College, Londonderry; Trinity College, Dublin; New College, Edinburgh and Assembly's College, Belfast. Having served assistantships in Greenwell Street, Newtownards and Ulsterville Congregations, he was Licensed by the Dromore Presbytery in May 1952 and later that same year he was Ordained as a chaplain in the Royal Air Force. On leaving the RAF he served for a short time as minister of Craigy Hill, Larne before moving, in 1970, to Adelaide Road Congregation in Dublin. In 1977 he moved to the huge Congregation of Carnmoney where he remained until retirement in 1990. Jim Fullerton's warm personality, wide reading, extensive travels and vast experience of life in the RAF all contributed towards making him the arresting preacher, the compassionate pastor, the engaging conversationalist and wise counsellor that he undoubtedly was. Those who had the privilege of knowing him well were often astonished at his energy, enthusiasm and deep commitment to the huge workload which he appeared to carry so lightly that nothing ever appeared an imposition or trouble to him. He loved life; he loved his calling within the Church; he loved the people to whom God had called him to exercise spiritual leadership; he loved his sport; he loved his wife, Joyce, his children William and Patricia and the memory of his late son Ian. Above all, he loved his Lord whom

he served so faithfully and well. Those of us who had the privilege of knowing him thank God for every remembrance of him. His wife Joyce and their family can be assured that the sympathy of a multitude of people is with them in their loss and sorrow, including the membership of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland of which he was such an outstanding servant.

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the Report be received.
2. That the Rev Prof Laurence Kirkpatrick be appointed Principal of Union Theological College for a five-year term.
3. That the General Assembly thank the Rev Prof JP Taylor for continuing his responsibilities as Principal of Union Theological College for a further year.
4. That the General Assembly approve the revised Order of Service for a Wedding in the Republic of Ireland, to meet the provisions of the Civil Registration Act (2004).
5. That the General Assembly thank the Rev Dr WP Addley for his work as Acting Deputy Clerk.

Priorities Committee

6. That the General Assembly adopt the recommendation of the Priorities Committee that the employment of both Peacemaking Officers be continued to 30 June, 2009, with any necessary expense being a charge on the Incidental Fund.

Moderator's Advisory Committee

7. That the General Assembly agree a budget of £1,000 from the Incidental Fund for the Conciliation Service of the Moderator's Advisory Committee.

Reception of Ministers and Licentiates Committee

8. That the resignation of the Rev Dr RB Savage as Convener of the Committee on the Reception of Ministers and Licentiates be accepted, that he be thanked for his services and _____ appointed in his place.

Recognised Ministries Committee

9. That legislation be prepared for the next Assembly to require that "Ministers without charge" be invited to sit and deliberate at Presbytery and General Assembly.

Church and Society Committee

10. That the General Assembly support the Committee in choosing to focus on a number of selected areas in order that their contributions to public debate and discussion be more effective and informed.

11. That the General Assembly note the responses made to government regarding the Strategic Review of Parading, Devolution of Criminal Justice and Policing, Draft Programme for Government, and Dealing with the Past.

12. That the General Assembly express support for the concept of a 'shared future'; encourage every effort to secure that shared future and urge politicians and leaders of civil society to incorporate strategies to develop a stronger future together which is a shared future.

13. That the General Assembly support the Church and Society Committee in their view that representatives of the different denominations should meet together regularly to discuss matters of concern across society.

14. That a budget of £2,000 be made available from the Incidental Fund for the work of the Church and Society Committee.

Global Concerns Committee

15. That the Report on Lifestyle be sent to Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions for discussion and appropriate implementation, with responses sent to the Convener of the Global Concerns Committee by 31 December, 2008.

16. That copies of the Report on Lifestyle be printed for distribution, as a charge on the Incidental Fund.

17. That the General Assembly commend the vital work being done by the two staff members most closely involved in the peace programme, Laura Coulter and Deborah Erwin.

18. That the General Assembly encourage the Peacemaking Project Management Committee to pursue funding to enable the programme to continue for a further three years from June 2009 – 2012.

19. That the General Assembly recognise the vital and challenging ministries to the community being carried out by Ministers and Congregations working in traditional loyalist areas and seek to provide prayerful, pastoral and where possible practical support.

20. That the Race Relations Panel be encouraged to explore ways of improving support to ministers dealing with pastoral issues in relation to immigrants.

21. That the grants reported in the Race Relations Panel Report be paid from the Incidental Fund.

Church Relations Committee

22. That the General Assembly appoint the following:

To the Irish Council of Churches Executive: the Revs John Brackenridge, Lorraine Kennedy-Ritchie, Dr Donald Watts.

To the Irish Inter-Church Committee: the Revs Gabrielle Farquhar, Dr Donald Watts.

23. That the following grants be made from the Incidental Fund:

Irish Council of Churches	£17,500
Irish Inter-Church Meeting	9,000
Conference of European Churches	4,500
Church and Society Commission	11,000
Community of Protestant Churches in Europe	2,000
World Alliance of Reformed Churches	11,000

Presbytery Bounds Panel

24. That the General Assembly adopt the new Presbytery structure in the North-West, as outlined in the Report, with effect from 4 March, 2009.

Pastoral Care Panel

25. That the General Assembly offer prayerful support to the Care Panel as it begins its vital work.

Ministries Panel

26. That the General Assembly accept the recommendations on Additional Pastoral Personnel contained in the Report of the Panel on Ministries and ask that these be merged into one comprehensive set of Guidelines.

27. That the General Assembly ask Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions to carefully consider the recommendations on Non Stipendiary Ministry and the Office of Reader in the Report of the Panel on Ministries and respond to the Convener of the Panel by 31 December, 2008.

General

28. That the General Board with its associated working committees for the ensuing year, be appointed in accordance with Par 272 of the Code as follows:

MEMORIAL TRANSMITTED

To the Venerable the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to meet in Belfast on 2nd June, 2008.

The Memorial of the Kirk Session of Saintfield Road, Belfast, Respectfully Showeth:

That Ruling Elders, when elected, are ordained to the office of the ruling eldership, and installed to the oversight of a particular Congregation, or to a sphere of special service, e.g. with the Board of Mission Overseas.

That a Ruling Elder desiring to resign may either resign the duties in a Congregation or from the office of the eldership in the Presbyterian Church with the consent of the Presbytery [Code Par 33 (3)].

That when a Ruling Elder has resigned the duties in a Congregation he/she should be placed upon a roll of Elders without charge [Code Par 33 (4)].

That after 3 years upon the roll of Elders without charge a Ruling Elder is deemed to have resigned from the office of eldership [Code Par 33 (5)].

That in recent years provision has been made for Ruling Elders to step down from the duties of the eldership for a specified time, after which a return to those duties is envisaged [Code Par 25 (1)].

That there is no provision for Ruling Elders who, due to age, infirmity or declining health, wish to retire from the duties of the eldership, while still remaining an Elder of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

That a Minister/teaching Elder who retires from a charge, being still ordained continues in the office of Minister of the Church, with the title Minister Emeritus. [Code Par 225]

That a Ruling Elder should be permitted to retire from the duties of the eldership with a title such as Elder Emeritus, and be placed on a roll of such Elders Emeriti.

Memorialists, therefore, pray your Venerable Assembly to refer this matter to the General Board with a view to possible implementation at the General Assembly 2009.

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

Adopted by the Kirk Session of Saintfield Road, Belfast, at its meeting on 21 February 2008.

ALISTAIR R BILL, Moderator
HAROLD HAMILTON, Clerk of Session

Licensed by the Presbytery of East Belfast as its meeting in Knock on 4 March, 2008, and transmitted with the strong recommendation that its prayer be granted.

JOHNSTON R LAMBE, Moderator
DOUGLAS COWAN, Clerk

OVERTURES ON THE BOOKS

Anent Pars 29(1)(b); 97(h)(iii); 137 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in:

Par 29(1)(b) of the Code the words “Presbytery, Synod” be deleted and the word “Presbytery” substituted in their place.

Par 97(h)(iii) of the Code the words “or Synod” be deleted.

Par 137 of the Code the words “‘Synod’ when used in relation to a Presbytery means the Synod with which the Presbytery is connected but does not include either of the historic Synods mentioned in paragraph 93;” be deleted.

DJ WATTS

Anent Pars 63 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 63 of the Code the words “from their number representatives” be deleted and the words “representatives, from among the ministers and ruling elders,” substituted in their place.

DJ WATTS

Licensed Amendment

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 63 of the Code the words “from their number representatives” be deleted and the words “representatives, from among the ministers and ruling elders of the Church”, substituted in their place.

SAMUEL HUTCHINSON

Anent Par 126 (5) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 126 (5) of the Code the words “the Judicial Commission, the Union Commission, the Shankill Road Mission Commission” be deleted and that the words “the Judicial Commission, the Special Commission, the Union Commission” be inserted in their place.

DJ WATTS

Anent Par 127 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that Par 127 of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:-

“**127. (1) The Judicial Commission** shall consist of the Moderator and Clerk of Assembly and one person (being a minister or a ruling elder) nominated by each Presbytery together with not more than ten persons nominated by the Business Board.

(2)(a) Appointments shall be made from members on the roll of the Assembly to hold office for five years. During the period of office ruling elders who are members of the Judicial Commission shall be constituted members of Assembly, ex-officio.

(b) Any vacancy which may occur in the Judicial Commission membership through death, resignation or removal from the Presbytery shall be filled by the Assembly on the nomination of the Presbytery having the vacant seat, or of the Business Board respectively.

(3) Seven members shall form a quorum for the Judicial Commission.

(4) The Judicial Commission shall have 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 this Code. However, where the Judicial Commission deems it appropriate, it may refer cases to the Special Commission to hear and to issue.

(5)(a) **The Special Commission** shall consist of the Moderator and Clerk of Assembly and ten other members of the Judicial Commission appointed by the General Assembly having due regard to all relevant factors. It shall hold office for five years.

(b) Any vacancy which may occur in the Special Commission membership through death, resignation or removal from the Presbytery shall be filled by the Assembly on the nomination of the Judicial Commission.

(6) Five members shall form a quorum for the Special Commission.

(7) The Special Commission shall have the same Assembly powers as the Judicial Commission to dispose finally of any cases of appeal or reference which may be referred to it.”

DJ WATTS

Anent Par 129 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that Par 129 of the Code be deleted.

DJ WATTS

Anent Par 225 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that Par 225 of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

225. "When a minister of a congregation has been permitted to retire in the usual way, the minister shall -

- (1) cease to be a member of the Kirk Session (unless the General Assembly declare otherwise);
- (2) cease to receive the benefit of all the general endowments for the minister of the congregation unless specifically allocated to the minister emeritus by the terms of the trusts on which they are held;
- (3) (a) if ordained and appointed to a pastoral charge after 5th June, 1935, cease to have any right to the continued use of the manse or glebe, from the day when he avails himself of the leave given, and cease to be "the minister for the time being" of the congregation in respect of their manse, glebe or farm, without affecting any of the rights of such a minister which do not relate to the use of any such manse or glebe; (b) if ordained and appointed to a pastoral charge before 5th June, 1935, retain all rights to the continued use of a congregation's manse, glebe or farm, as he was possessed of prior to that date."

DJ WATTS

OVERTURES TRANSMITTED**Anent Par 81(3) of the Code**

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that Par 81(3) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

"It is the right of a minister to employ any minister or licentiate or accepted student of the Church as a temporary assistant. A minister of another Church may be employed for a period not exceeding 12 months, after which the approval of the Committee for the Reception of Ministers and Licentiates must be obtained."

RB SAVAGE

Anent Pars 200(1) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 200(1) of the Code the words "and appointments outside such jurisdiction approved by the General Assembly" be deleted.

Anent Par 200(5) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that Par 200(5) of the Code be deleted.

DJ WATTS

JUDICIAL COMMISSION

Convener: THE CLERK

1. The Judicial Commission met once before the time of writing this report. A further meeting will be required before the General Assembly and a report brought in Supplementary Reports.

2. An appeal of Mr Richard Williams against a decision of the Presbytery of Dublin and Munster concerning Howth and Malahide Congregation was considered. As on a previous occasion it was determined that Mr Williams does not have the right to appeal under Code Par 163(1).

3. Letters were received from the Presbytery of Derry and Strabane concerning issues arising from a recent case and advice was given.

4. The Union Commission continues to consult on special arrangements following resignations under Code Par 226.

5. Overtures transmitted to the General Assembly were considered and approved.

6. The Assembly this year will be asked to appoint a new Judicial Commission as the 5-year term of the current Commission has come to an end. The present members are thanked for their dedication, insight and pastoral concern for all who have had contact with them. The workload in this 5-year period has been particularly heavy and in some cases extremely demanding. Thanks are expressed especially to Mr Mervyn A Morrow QC, who as Chairman has led the Commission with great skill and kindness.

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the Report be received.

2. That the Judicial Commission be appointed in accordance with Par 127(1) of the Code as follows:

3. That the Special Commission be appointed in accordance with Par 127(5)(a) of the Code as follows:

UNION COMMISSION

Convener: Rev Dr SA MATTHEWS
Secretary: Rev Dr I HART

INTRODUCTION

1. The period covered by this Report is from March 2007- February 2008.

The first three paragraphs outline the main considerations which have guided the Commission in its work; the remainder of the Report deals with other issues and the work of the various Committees of the Commission.

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

2. The 2007 General Assembly passed the following resolution:

That the General Assembly ask the Union Commission to note paragraphs 36-44 of the Report, Towards “Vibrant Communities of Christ...” (Appendix A), and to consider both a Congregation’s vision and commitment to mission, and a Presbytery’s overall mission strategy, when reaching decisions on subjects such as Leave to Call, Unions, Amalgamations and Dissolutions.” The Commission has therefore asked vacant Congregations to put their ministry and service in that context when completing the required forms and when preparing for the presentation of their request for Leave to Call to the Commission. It is accepted that there isn’t just one model for mission. It has been encouraging to find that deputations coming to the Commission have shifted the focus of their presentations away from telling the story of the past to articulating their hopes and visions for their Congregation in the future. The Commission continues to work with Presbyteries as they move through the process of producing a mission strategy.

LIMITED ORDAINED MINISTRY RESOURCES

3. The most recent figures available at the time of writing this report indicate that there are 402 Charges; i.e. united Congregations are counted as one Charge. This means that to meet our ministry needs we require that number of Ministers. Unfortunately at the moment we only have 352 Ministers involved in parish ministry – this includes 7 Associate Ministers. There will always be a certain number of vacancies as Ministers move; however it is clear that some Congregations are facing long term vacancies. In some situations ministry is being provided on a continuing basis by Vacancy Conveners, most of whom already are responsible for at least one other Congregation. This brings its own challenges and pressures. The Commission continues to pursue the difficult path of trying to find ways of sharing ministry in situations where that is appropriate. Projections which are being done suggest that this ministerial shortage is not going to be a short term problem. It is often quoted that there are encouraging signs in the number of Students for the Ministry attending Union College, **however** first indications are that that number seems to be more than matched by the number of projected retirements and the number of Ministers leaving

ministry for other reasons. If these first impressions are confirmed, it means that the number of Ministers available for call will not change appreciably in the next five years or so. There will still be a shortfall of 50. In this situation the growing number of Additional Pastoral Personnel being used in the work of Congregations and the explorations concerning the use of other non-ordained personnel in ministry being undertaken by other agencies of the Church, are important.

INCREASING PAYMENTS BY CENTRAL MINISTRY FUND TO AUGMENTED CONGREGATIONS

4. The Board of Finance and Personnel has been in ongoing discussions with the Commission about the increasing amount being paid in augmentation and the impact this is having on the assessment paid by Congregations. The Commission has kept this concern in mind in issuing Leave to Call in situations where augmentation would be required. The Board has drawn attention to a category of Congregations where specified sources have been increasing considerably, but under the Tyrone Memorial system the Minister's stipend has not been keeping pace with that increase. In some circumstances the Congregation may even have moved into an augmented situation for the first time. The Commission has asked those Congregations to increase their stipend on a voluntary basis (hopefully to lift the Minister out of augmentation); but the Commission declined to impose this through review, as this would have meant a return to a fraction system for one group of Congregations. It was felt that this was contrary to the decision of the General Assembly to move away from calculation of stipend by fraction. The Commission has therefore encouraged the Board of Finance and Personnel in the coming review of the Tyrone Memorial to go beyond mere analysis of the figures and to address the issue of increasing augmentation and other fundamental issues which have come to light in the operation of the Tyrone Memorial system.

MEDIUM TERM MINISTERIAL ILLNESS

5. The Commission has been contacted about some cases where Ministers are on extended sick leave.

(1) Guidelines have been prepared to deal with questions arising out of any request for a reduction in expenses paid to Ministers in this situation. This provides interpretation of the document on Ministerial Expenses issued by the Board of Finance and Personnel in January 2007. Guidance will be provided by the Convener if requested by the parties involved.

(2) The following guidelines have also been prepared concerning any payment to Ministers who provide cover for their Colleagues in these situations. These are presented to the General Assembly for approval.

Guidelines

Emergency cover would be provided by a Colleague on a voluntary basis up to the end of the first three months, when the relevant guidelines indicate that there could be a reduction of the Minister's expenses. After three months an Interim Moderator's fee could be funded out of a reduction in the expenses paid

to the Minister. Any such reduction must have the agreement of the Presbytery and the Union Commission. This fee could be at a rate of 75% of the Convener of Vacancy fee. The fee could be varied and agreed locally according to the level of responsibility. Any Interim Moderator who takes the services is entitled to supply fee and travel expenses as well as any payment under above. It is accepted that local variations may mean that sometimes there will be an additional charge for Congregations due to the Minister's illness. Any payments as expenses should be declared in the usual way by the Interim Moderator under the terms of the document on Ministerial Expenses issued by the Board of Finance and Personnel in January 2007. The guidance contained in this document continues to apply to the Minister during illness.

THE MEMORIAL OF THE KIRK SESSION OF BLOOMFIELD CONGREGATION, BELFAST

6. The 2007 General Assembly received this Memorial and granted its prayer. (Reports p71-72; Mins p 73).

The Union Commission consulted with the Memorialists seeking to understand their concerns. It is clear that the context for this Memorial was dissatisfaction with the perceived inflexibility in the figure for stipend set by the Commission for one particular vacant Congregation – the figure set was higher than the stipend paid to the long serving and very experienced previous Minister, whereas the Congregation had requested some flexibility should his successor be significantly younger or less experienced.

However moving beyond that particular debate, the Memorial asks for consideration of a system where, rather than the Commission setting a minimum figure, Congregational Committees would be given power to set the initial stipend themselves within the range of a scale set by the Commission. This would give a Congregational Committee power to assess the experience of the Minister appointed and place him/her at the “appropriate point” on the scale. While some of those consulted were particularly concerned about the initial stipend, it is clear from the consultation that the Memorial could be interpreted in such a way that the principle of financial reward and salary scales might be extended so that a Congregational Committee could make an annual assessment of the ministerial work and reflect that in the scale point they would fix.

The Commission acknowledges the clear commitment of the Memorialists to Christ and to his Church, their financial generosity and their desire to improve the system of remunerating Ministers. However, having considered the Memorial, the Commission feels that the present system of the Commission setting a minimum stipend is preferable to a system which the Memorial itself recognizes has its roots in the “common practice throughout all sections of the business community”. Though some church appointments now of necessity come under frameworks, legal and otherwise, which are common in secular employment, and while this does not prevent the personnel involved from rendering committed service to Christ, the relationship between the parish Minister and the Congregation has always been seen as drawing on the motivations and values expressed in Scripture. Within our system stipend has been seen, not as a reward for work done, but as making material provision for the Minister and the Manse family to set the Minister free to undertake service

in Christ's Church. The commercial model may be seen as having some influence on the way we set stipends, in that each Minister is not paid the same or simply according to his needs; but the Commission feels that to further strengthen the influence of the commercial model would further diminish our hope of expressing the biblical ideals. The body responsible for holding the Minister to account for his work is the Presbytery which exercises spiritual authority over him, rather than the Church Committee seeking to assess him, so that it might reward him financially. Accordingly the Union Commission recommends no change.

ELIGIBILITY TO BE CONSIDERED AS A CANDIDATE IN A VACANCY

7. The Commission was asked by the Presbytery of North Belfast to advise on the interpretation of the Code Par 190(2)(b) and its relevance to the question of the eligibility of Ministers to be considered as Candidates in vacant Congregations. The Presbytery indicated that "there appears to be some confusion and a lack of consistency among Presbyteries as to whether someone who has preached in a vacant Congregation may subsequently be considered as a Candidate." The Commission referred to the advice which has traditionally been given by the Clerk's Office on this matter, namely that if someone happened to preach in a vacancy, genuinely not being considered as a Candidate but simply helping to supply the pulpit, then later emerged as a possible Candidate, there would be no bar to their being considered for the vacancy. Of course in that situation the person should not preach again in the vacancy until being officially "heard". Each case would have to be judged by the Vacancy Commission.

In discussion of this issue the question was raised about the phrase "except a Minister of the Presbytery concerned" in Par 190(2)(b). This could be taken to imply that a Minister of the Presbytery can supply in a vacant Congregation even if he is being considered as a Candidate. An overture is presented to give the General Assembly the opportunity to remove this phrase from the Code.

ADDITIONAL APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

8. From June 07-March 08, approval was given for the appointment of 11 youth worker related posts and 2 pastoral posts. It is obvious that the demand for such positions continues within PCI.

In order to assist Congregations with arrangements for the appointment of Additional Pastoral Personnel, Union Commission Guidelines (approved by 1997 Assembly) are currently under review. This is being done in conjunction with the Panel on Ministries and the Board of Youth and Children's Ministry. The Union Commission intends to draw up a comprehensive set of APP Guidelines, taking account of both the reports of the Panel on Ministries and the Youth and Children's Ministry Board and also the original 1997 set of guidelines (1997 Reports, p 57, par 19).

Recent legal advice from the General Assembly's Solicitor regarding APPs indicates that as any employee can only have one employer, the Kirk Session of the local Congregation must be clearly recognized as that employer. One consequence of this is that in the Kirk Session alone lies the authority to make and terminate an appointment of an APP. In doing so the Kirk Session is of course obliged to follow not only the up to date requirements of employment law, but also the up to date Union Commission Guidelines.

It should be noted that all applications for the approval of APP posts must be with the Convener of the APP Committee no later than one week prior to the relevant meeting of Union Commission.

PANEL ON PLANNING FOR THE STRATEGIC USE OF RESOURCES

The Rev Jim Stothers reports:

9. The Panel was set up by the Union Commission to help it progress the remit given by the General Assembly in 2006 when it 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 present circumstances and that the worship and mission of the Church are hindered by this. The Union Commission is therefore encouraged, in consultation with Presbyteries and the Board of Mission in Ireland, actively to address this issue.' (General Assembly Minutes 2006, p 53, res 3).

The Panel includes representation from a variety of Presbyteries and from the Board of Mission in Ireland.

It began its work by gathering statistical data through Presbytery representatives to the Union Commission. This data includes average attendance at worship, distances between Congregations, and, from the General Assembly Minutes of 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2006, the number of Contributing Families, the Specified Sources, and the numbers in Sunday School and Bible Class for each Congregation.

At the time of writing there are 402 Charges in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, and 352 active Ministers available to fill those charges, a shortfall of 50. Work is being done to discover likely trends in the number of active Ministers available in the medium term. While not complete, early indications are that the number will not change appreciably in the next five years or so.

The Panel is aware that the Church of Scotland allows Presbyteries up to a certain number of Ministers on a quota basis, and it is up to each Presbytery to deploy that resource in whatever way best fits its own situation. The Panel has looked at how a quota system might be applied in our own situation. Two models have been examined, one based on the number of Contributing Families in each Presbytery, and another based on the number of Contributing Families *and* on the distances between Congregations. These have produced widely differing results, and it is recognised that they are too crude to use on their own. One Presbytery, which would be entitled to 36 Ministers of the 352 available on the first basis, would only be entitled to 15 on the second; another, entitled to just 6 on the first basis, would be entitled to 22 on the second. Other factors might need to be taken into account, for instance, local population density; the

cultural make-up of the community; and demographic trends. In addition, statistics cannot take into account the spiritual dimension, so if a quota system were to be used there would be a need for the Union Commission and/or the Board of Mission in Ireland to be able to allocate additional ministry resources to specific situations on the basis of existing spiritual vitality and future missional opportunities. No conclusions have been reached on the matter of quotas, and it is hoped that some members of the Panel will be able to visit the Church of Scotland to gain understanding of how their system works.

The Panel is also looking at patterns of growth and decline since 1991. Despite the overall decline in numbers in our denomination in recent years, some Congregations have shown marked growth. An initial examination has been done on the basis of, separately, Contributing Families, Specified Sources and numbers in Sunday School and Bible Class. It is recognised that these figures have to be treated carefully. For instance, in the Republic of Ireland growth is masked by the fact that some active members of a Congregation don't commit to traditional formal membership with envelopes, and there are signs of this becoming a trend in some parts of Northern Ireland also; direct financial comparisons cannot be made between north and south because of currency differences; and factors in society and church life make the attribution of certain meaning to Sunday School numbers difficult. The Panel intends to discover from the data which Congregations have shown strong growth in *both* Contributing Families and Specified Sources since 1991 to seek to discover how this information may help the Union Commission in some of its decisions.

It has been drawn to the Panel's attention that in 1967 there was a report to the General Assembly from the Union Commission commenting on the use of manpower and buildings throughout the Church, and which addresses similar issues to those being addressed by this Panel. It proposes some 'Guide Lines to Church Needs' and proposes some limitation on the number of Congregations in a given area, based on the situation (Country, Country Towns, and City), and on the distance between Congregations. It also recognises that particular circumstances may mean that exceptions may need to be made as special cases. (General Assembly Reports, 1967, pp 17f). It is not clear what action, if any, followed this report. It is, though, clearly relevant to the remit given to the Union Commission by the General Assembly in 2006 and will be taken into account in the further work of the Panel.

LEAVE TO CALL A MINISTER

Note: This is only a summary; there may well be conditions attached to the Leave to Call which are not recorded here. Expenses are "Initial Ministerial Expenses" and are to be kept under review and paid in accordance with the procedures agreed by the Board of Finance and Personnel.

Congregation	Stipend	Expenses
Ballyalbany	€15,000	[2007] €5,000
and Glennan	€ 5,367	[2007] €2,500
Tandragee	£25,000	[2007] £7,000
1st Limavady	£23,759	[2007] £5,000
and Magilligan	£ 5,800	[2007] £1,700
Newtownstewart	£15,250	[2007] £5,000

and Gortin	£ 5,100	[2007]	£2,100
Adelaide Road, Dublin	€32,302	[2007]	€12,000
St Columba's, Lisburn	£21,000	[2007]	£6,800
Ballyhenry	£26,000	[2007]	£6,500
Warrenpoint	£ 9,000	[2007]	£4,200
and Rostrevor	£ 4,850	[2007]	£2,800
Maghera	£24,500	[2007]	£7,000
Stormont	£39,000	[2007]	£7,000
1st Monaghan	€20,196	[2007]	€5,304
and Smithborough	€5,500	[2007]	€1,500
Edengrove, Ballynahinch	£27,000	[2008]	£6,000
Ballyrone	£18,500	[2008]	£5,000
and Drumlee	£ 7,700	[2008]	£2,000
1st Moneymore	£15,400	[2008]	£3,990
and 2nd Moneymore	£10,600	[2008]	£3,010
1st Ballybay	€13,000	[2008]	€3,000
and 2nd Ballybay	€13,000	[2008]	€3,000
and Rockcorry	€ 7,000	[2008]	€1,750
and Drumkeen	€ 4,000	[2008]	€1,750
Fintona	£14,250	[2008]	£4,200
and Ballynahatty & Creevan	£ 8,500	[2008]	£2,800

LEAVE TO CALL UNDER HOME MISSION DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

Maynooth	€23,511	[2007]	€8,000
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LEAVE TO CALL UNDER URBAN MISSION CONGREGATION SCHEME

Westbourne	£11,500	[2007]	£5,500
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LEAVE TO CALL AN ASSOCIATE MINISTER

Congregation	Salary	Expenses
High Kirk, Ballymena	£21,000	£3,000
Cunningham Memorial, Cullybackey	£24,000	£4,500
Orangefield	App Min	£6,582

STATED SUPPLY

Gortnessy: The Commission extended the Rev Alastair Kerr's term until 30 September, 2008.

Milford, Fannet, and Rathmullan: the Commission nominated the Rev Ker Graham for 6 months from 1 October, 2007, and agreed the terms.

Clontibret: The Commission extended the Rev Jim Hagan's term until 31 March, 2008.

1st Castlederg and Killeter: The Commission nominated the Rev Stanley Irwin for 6 months from 1 December, 2007 and agreed the terms.

Armoyn and Ramoan: The Commission extended the Rev Tom Luke's term until January 2009.

2nd Ards: The Commission extended the Rev Trevor Anderson's term until 28 February 2009.

CONGREGATIONS AMALGAMATED

Donegal and Ballyshannon

The 2007 General Assembly amalgamated Ballyshannon with Donegal, on terms to be set by the Union Commission. The Commission has set the following terms:

- (a) That the Congregation of Ballyshannon be amalgamated with the Congregation of Donegal from 10 September, 2007, or other suitable date under the name 'Donegal'.
- (b) That the two Kirk Sessions become one Kirk Session and the two Congregational Committees become one Committee until new Committee elections are held.
- (c) That all existing or future assets, including property or lands not disposed of, become the property of the amalgamated Congregation except that all property or lands in connection with Ballyshannon become the property of the Board of Mission in Ireland.
- (d) That any expenses accruing through failure to dispose of any property held by Ballyshannon, or through having to make the buildings secure and insured, be the responsibility of the Board of Mission in Ireland.

Raphoe and Ballindrait

The 2007 General Assembly amalgamated Ballindrait with Raphoe, on terms to be set by the Union Commission. The Commission has set the following terms:

- (a) That the Congregation of Ballindrait be amalgamated with the Congregation of Raphoe from 31 December 2007, or other suitable date under the name 'Raphoe & Ballindrait'.
- (b) That the two Kirk Sessions become one Kirk Session and the two Congregational Committees become one Committee until new Committee elections are held.
- (c) That all existing or future assets, including property or lands not disposed of, become the property of the amalgamated Congregation.
- (d) That any expenses accruing through failure to dispose of any property held by the two Congregations, or through having to make the buildings secure and insured, be the responsibility of the amalgamated Congregation.
- (e) That where no arrangements regarding the sale of any properties and distribution of the proceeds therefrom have been agreed by the Union Commission under Code, Par 274(6)(d), no such sale or distribution shall take place for three years from the date of amalgamation without such agreement being obtained by the amalgamated Congregation.

Oldpark and Immanuel

The 2007 General Assembly amalgamated Oldpark with Immanuel, on terms to be set by the Commission. The Commission has set the following terms:

- (a) That the Congregation of Oldpark be amalgamated with the Congregation of Immanuel from 30 September, 2007, or other suitable date agreed by Presbytery, under the name 'Immanuel'.
- (b) That the two Kirk Sessions become one Kirk Session and the two Congregational Committees become one Committee until new Committee elections are held.
- (c) That, with respect to the assets of Oldpark, 50% (by monetary value) becomes the assets of the amalgamated Congregation.
- (d) That all future assets become the property of the amalgamated Congregation.
- (e) That all other assets will have previously been transferred: 30% (by monetary value) to the new Church Plant in Cliftonville Road area; 10% to the Board of Mission Overseas for use in a project, preferably in Africa; and 10% to the Congregation(s) which will inherit the parish areas of Westland and Alliance following the re-drawing of parish bounds.
- (f) That, notwithstanding the date given in clause (a) above, amalgamation will not in any case be effected until Presbytery is satisfied that the transfers referred to in clause (e) above have taken place.
- (g) That the amalgamated Congregation will remain responsible for any Oldpark liabilities, and will not benefit from any Oldpark assets, apart from those which enter its possession under clauses (c) and (d) above.
- (h) That the Stipend of the new Congregation be £28,000 [2007], with Initial Ministerial Expenses of £7,500 and that this be reviewed for 2009.

CONGREGATIONS UNITED

1st Monaghan and Smithborough

The Commission united the Congregations of 1st Monaghan and Smithborough on the following terms:

- (a) That the Congregations of First Monaghan and Smithborough be united as from an appropriate date.
- (b) Each Congregation shall maintain its separate identity with its own Kirk Session, Congregational Committee and Finances.
- (c) Each Congregation shall have the right to appoint representatives to the Superior Courts of the Church.
- (d) In the choice of a Minister the two Congregations shall act as one Congregation and the two Kirk Sessions as one Kirk Session.
- (e) There shall be two stated services each Sunday: (a) at 10.10 am at Smithborough (b) at 11.30 am at First Monaghan. The times of these

two services may be varied as the two Kirk Sessions acting together shall determine; notwithstanding, one single united service for the two Congregations may be held from time to time as agreed by the two Kirk Sessions and evening services may be held from time to time at times agreed locally.

- (f) That the Stipends be: First Monaghan €23,000 [2007]; Smithborough €5,500 [2007]; and Initial Ministerial Expenses per annum: First Monaghan €5,304; Smithborough €1,500. Holiday Supplies, Manse, Telephone Rental and Business Calls, and all other manse expenses, including an extra €1,000 for oil, to be borne in the proportions: First Monaghan 80%; Smithborough 20%.
- (g) That Rent, Rates, Taxes and Maintenance of First Monaghan Manse be borne in the proportions: First Monaghan 80%; Smithborough 20%.
- (h) That the Minister shall reside in First Monaghan Manse.

MANSES

Through its Manses Sub-committee the Commission dealt with a wide variety of matters.

The following Congregations were given permission to sell or demolish their Manse and buy or build another: 2nd Killyleagh; Union Road, Magherafelt; Lissara; Loughmorne; Railway Street, Lisburn; Christ Church, Dundonald; Rathcoole; Howth and Malahide; Brookside, Ahoghill; Ballyweaney.

Various other Congregations were given permission to let their Manse during a vacancy, or to use the proceeds from the sale of a Manse for appropriate purposes.

In addition the Manses Convener gave advice on a variety of issues connected with Manses or Manse land.

Decisions on Manse issues are generally made by the Commission after the required permissions from other bodies have been obtained and assurances given that the appropriate guidelines have been observed.

Congregations are reminded that, before letting a Manse in a vacancy, the permissions of both Presbytery and the Union Commission are required, together with the drawing up of a proper legal agreement. It is also strongly recommended that the detailed survey of the vacant Manse be carried out before any tenants move in so that the eventual Leave to Call is not delayed.

TRAVEL EXPENSES

The Commission, through its Expenses and Fees Sub-Committee, each year gives guidance to Congregational Committees on the amount to be included for Car Allowance in the Minister's Expense Allowance as defined in the circular produced by the Board of Finance and Personnel in January 2007. The average distance a Minister travels on business is 14,400 miles, and for that mileage the recommended figure for 2008 is NI £5,478, ROI €8,460. Ministers doing a higher mileage should be paid more, and those doing a lower mileage should be paid less.

SUPPLY FEE

Through its Expenses and Fees Sub-Committee, the Commission set the Supply Fee for 2008 at £57 (€97) (single) and £86 (€145) (full). Travelling expenses should be paid in accordance with the rate set for attendance at Assembly Boards, currently 14p (22 cent) per mile.

**ASSESSMENTS ON FULLY CONSTITUTED CHURCH EXTENSION
CHARGES — 2008**

Under Par. 234 (3)(a) of the Code

<i>Church</i>	<i>Fully Constituted</i>	<i>Families (†)</i>	<i>Assess 2008 £</i>	<i>Spec. Sources £</i>	<i>Income £</i>
Downshire	1993	230 (160)	240	69,199	150,486
Lisnabreen	1993	160 (126)	189	41,677	61,163
Scrabo	1994	240 (147)	220	77,527	289,019
Burnside	1995	160 (137)	205	67,343	107,913
Movilla	2001	247 (192)	288	65,009	93,901
New Mossley	2005	95 (83)	124	24,296	48,232
Ballysally	2007	153 (67)	100	32,344	68,173

† Families contributing at least £5.00 per annum

ASSESSMENTS ON CHURCH EXTENSION CHARGES — 2008

<i>Church</i>	<i>Building £</i>	<i>Spec. Srs. £</i>	<i>Stip. £</i>	<i>C.M.F. £</i>	<i>Ch. Ext £</i>	<i>H.M. £</i>	<i>Total £</i>
Taughmonagh	—	15,643	4,693	2,346	1,564	939	9,542

LICENTIATES — 2008

Licentiates are paid 75% of the ministerial minimum = £16,087 plus House Allowance p.a. (single — £702; married — £1,002) if applicable. House Allowance is shared equally between the Congregation and C.M.F.

FIRST YEAR — From 1st January, 2008

<i>Congregation</i>	<i>Assistant</i>	<i>Date of Licensing</i>	<i>Ministers Stipend £</i>	<i>Congregations Contribution £</i>	<i>C.M.F. £</i>
1st Ballymoney	David Brownlow*	03.06.07	30,652 (30%)	9,696	7,393
Fisherwick	William Buchanan†	10.06.07	36,850 (30%)	11,406	5,383
Greenisland	Andy Carroll†	08.06.07	27,529 (30%)	8,610	8,179
Craigy Hill	David Clawson†	03.06.07	31,500 (30%)	9,810	6,988
2nd Comber	James Cochrane*	03.06.07	37,761 (30%)	11,829	5,260
Ballywalter	Molly Deatherage†	24.06.07	23,638 (25%)	6,260	10,529
Harmony Hill	Clarke Deering*	01.06.07	33,408 (30%)	10,523	6,566
1st Larne	Martin Gracey*	17.06.07	34,642 (30%)	10,894	6,195
Hamilton Road	David Leach*	24.06.07	39,425 (30%)	12,328	4,761
1st Bangor	Karen Mbayo*	20.05.07	35,545 (30%)	11,164	5,925
Abbot's Cross	David McCarthy†	01.06.07	27,560 (30%)	8,619	8,170
Greenwell Street	Michael McClenahan*	01.06.07	33,742 (30%)	10,624	6,465
Dundonald	Andrew McConnell*	03.06.07	40,813 (30%)	12,745	4,344
1st Antrim	Philip McCullough*	03.06.07	32,368 (30%)	10,211	6,878
Glengormley	Peter Turton*	10.06.07	32,575 (30%)	10,273	6,816
Ballygilbert	Ben Walker*	27.05.07	31,163 (30%)	9,450	7,639
St Andrew's Belfast	Dario Leal Zamora*	27.05.07	27,035 (30%)	8,611	8,478

* Married House Allowance † Single House Allowance

No House Allowance — House provided by congregation

s/a Special Arrangement

LICENTIATES — 2008

Licentiates are paid 80% of the ministerial minimum = £17,160 plus House Allowance p.a.
(single — £702; married — £1,002) if applicable. House Allowance is shared equally between the Congregation and C.M.F.

SECOND YEAR — From 1st January, 2008

<i>Congregation</i>	<i>Assistant</i>	<i>Date of Licensing</i>	<i>Ministers Stipend £</i>	<i>Congregations Contribution £</i>	<i>C.M.F. £</i>
Eglinton	John Montgomery*	16.06.06	23,614 s/a	2,500	15,662
Ebrington	Richard McIlhatton†	28.05.06	30,432 (32%)	10,089	7,773
Ballyclare	Heather Rendell†	19.05.06	31,939 (32%)	10,571	7,291
Gardenmore	Scott Woodburn*	09.06.06	33,656 (32%)	11,271	6,891
Saintfield 1st	Martin Cowan*	21.05.06	32,400 (32%)	10,869	7,293

* Married House Allowance

† Single House Allowance

No House Allowance — House provided by congregation

s/a Special Arrangement

ORDAINED ASSISTANTS — 2008

From 1st January, 2008

<i>Congregation</i>	<i>Assistant</i>	<i>Date of Ord.</i>	<i>Ministers Stipend</i>	<i>% Min.</i>	<i>Salary</i>	<i>House Allow.</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Cong. Cont.</i>	<i>C.M.F.</i>
			£		£	£	£	£	£
Cregagh	Troy Morgan	24.08.03	29,581	100	21,450	702	22,152	6,637	15,515
West Kirk (to 16.1.08)	Hiram Higgins	01.02.03	23,364	100	940	44	984	0	984
St Andrew's, Bangor	Gareth Stewart	27.10.00	25,272	100	21,450	1,002	22,452	2,500	19,952
Hillhall	Craig Wilson		33,000	100	21,450	1,002	22,452	14,526	7,926
Hillsborough West Church	Kiran Wimberly		36,409	90	19,305	1,002	20,307	14,154	6,153
Bangor	Annes Nel		36,000	95	20,377	1,002	21,379	14,901	6,478
Stormont	Warwick Smart		39,000	100	21,450	1,002	22,452	17,076	5,376
Ballygowan	Daniel Reyes Martin		34,750	95	20,377	1,002	21,379	14,401	6,978
Harryville	AJ Dunlop	13.05.07	32,883	100	21,450	1,002	22,452	2,000	20,452

ASSOCIATE MINISTERS 2008

<i>Name</i>	<i>Congregation</i>	<i>Salary</i>		<i>House</i>	<i>Annual Assessment</i>
		<i>Paid</i>	<i>Recovery</i>	<i>Allowance Paid</i>	<i>Recovery</i>
		£	£	£	£
NSR Lockhart	Hamilton Road Bangor	21,450.00	15,770.00	2,000.00	392.56
JE McDowell	Wellington Street	21,500.00	14,470.00	2,250.00	3,672.33
G McFadden	High Kirk	24,000.00	17,608.80	3,000.00	7,532.98
J Rogers	Whiteabbey	21,450.00	13,942.50	2,000.00	3,643.82
M Gibson (to 9 Jan 2008)	Westbourne	528.90	s/a 234.12	49.34	8.62
CWP Kennedy	Knock	26,004.00	24,522.00	n/a	2,793.01
s/a Special Arrangement					

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the Report be received.
2. That CMF be authorized to pay grants towards expenses incurred by Ministers in Congregations, up to a limit of NI £5,478 or ROI €8,460, within the terms of resolution 3, General Assembly Minutes, 1988, p 70.
3. That the General Assembly authorise the Union Commission to draw up a comprehensive set of Guidelines on Additional Pastoral Personnel, as outlined above.
4. That the General Assembly accept the guidelines prepared by the Union Commission concerning payments to a Minister who provides cover and acts as an Interim Moderator for a colleague during medium term illness.
5. That the Union Commission be appointed for the ensuing year in accordance with Par 128 of the Code, as follows:

OVERTURE TRANSMITTED

Anent Par 190(2)(b) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 190(2)(b) of the Code the words “except a minister of the Presbytery concerned” be deleted.

SA MATTHEWS

BOARD OF MISSION OVERSEAS

Convener: Rev SJ HANNA

Secretary: Rev WS MARRS

‘Together in Mission’

1. Christianity is the largest world religion, represented in every nation, and making up approximately one third of the world’s population. This means that the Church has the opportunity, as the greatest global network the world has ever known, to share together in taking the love of Jesus Christ to every corner of the world. While for much of the last century Western Christians may have viewed mission as being conducted *from the West to the rest*, today mission is *from everywhere to everywhere*. Again, mission is not simply expressed by churches and agencies intentionally sending out missionaries in their ones and twos, but perhaps some of the most significant missionary journeys take place amidst the voluntary and involuntary migration of people all around the globe.

2. It is in this context that people in Ireland should lift their gaze to the horizons, continually reassessing their place in the global Church family and their role as they share together in mission, so that they do not find themselves stagnating in a backwater but caught up in the mainstream of what God is doing.

3. Resolution 2 of the Board of Mission Overseas (BMO) Report 2007 asked the General Assembly to give thanks to God for partner relationships with Churches, united missions and institutions around the world, and to encourage the Board to consult with partners in an ongoing process of audit, mindful of the underlying question, “what kind of partner do we want to be?”

4. In September 2007, the Steering Committee held a ‘Day Away’ to begin to outwork this resolution, and arising from this an underlying theme arose for the year, *Together in Mission*, along with a series of questions:

5. **What kind of God calls His people to serve in mission partnership?** The Steering Committee was reminded afresh that God is the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. By taking time to *behold* the Lord, the church is empowered to *become* all that He wants us to be in the service of His Kingdom. It is out of the context of fellowship and sharing within the Godhead, that the Father sends forth His Son as the Redeemer of all creation. Similarly through the fellowship of the global mission family a broad range of resources are shared for mission, including the sending in all directions of called and gifted mission personnel. While some may focus on mission as ‘sending’, and others emphasise mission as ‘sharing’, both models are reflected in the Godhead and in the Scriptures.

6. **What kind of partners does BMO have?** Over the past nine months a process of audit has been carried out on BMO’s mission partnerships around the world. BMO have sought to assess appreciatively its existing relationships and at the time of writing it is anticipated that this task will be completed by the General Assembly.

7. **What kind of partners does BMO seek in the future?** As BMO seeks to keep the focus on mission, to whom should the Board be relating? What steps can be taken to deepen existing relationships? To what extent should BMO be encouraging the wider church at every level to initiate and sustain partnerships? There is an obvious need within PCI for a programme of education in mission partnership, especially as it relates to the growth of direct involvement at congregational level.

8. **What kind of partner has BMO been?** Perhaps this question should have taken priority, bearing in mind the challenge of Philippians 2 v 3, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.” While BMO may be able to reflect on this in some measure through self-examination, it is keenly aware of the need to be listening more carefully to what our partners are really saying to us, in a way that allows their authentic voices to be heard. Such a process is not carried out quickly, but is ongoing through visits, consultations and informal interaction with partners, giving opportunity to hear from them what they think of PCI. For example, might PCI have shown a lack of humility, displayed a colonial, imperialist approach, or created a culture of dependency? Consequently, in what ways is there a need to repent? Over the next two years BMO wish to work through a consultation process with as many of our partners as possible and guidelines have been developed to aid this process. It is hoped that this may culminate in a partners’ symposium.

9. **What kind of partner does BMO want to be?** In as much as partner consultation is ongoing, so this question still remains before the Board. BMO, however, has been challenged over this past year by the need to be more humble, indeed to display a greater brokenness, and to be ready to be part of and learn from genuinely reciprocal relationships of co-dependency, in which partners help each other to fulfil their calling. The future will not be about BMO simply being the sender, while overseas partners are the recipients, but where *together in mission* all partners share a broad range of resources, including the sending of mission personnel from everywhere to everywhere. This will have implications for how, within PCI’s denominational structures, mission boards connect for mission within Ireland.

10. **What kind of partnering is sought internally as a Church?** Developing mission partnership in a truly reciprocal way has further implications for the functioning and structuring of the Board beyond 2010, not least on how BMO relates to the Global Concerns and Church Relations Committees, and the Board of Mission in Ireland, as it responds to the fast changing developments in immigration in Ireland. BMO is mindful of the fact that the challenge of working *together in mission* applies not only to how PCI relates to the Church in the wider world, but to the other PCI mission boards.

OUTREACH MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

11. Last year the Outreach Ministries Committee (OMC) reported to the General Assembly that their first priority was to examine five major areas of mission:

- Evangelism and church planting
- Scripture translation, distribution and literacy work
- Hospital and community based healthcare mission
- Schools and other educational establishments
- Sustainable development and crisis intervention

12. These areas would be researched, looking at PCI's historical involvement, her current involvement, and the current mission situation around the world. Thereafter BMO would seek to develop policy and strategy to guide in future work. In the General Assembly Reports for 2007 OMC reported in some detail on mission through education and the substantial focus of this year's report is on the way forward in medical missions. During the past year this has taken up most of the Committee's time and focus although it has already begun some work on evangelism and church planting.

13. It is anticipated that in next year's report OMC should be in a position to report on church planting and evangelism and also Scripture translation and literacy work. It is intended that as in looking at Scripture translation and literacy work OMC would also examine a number of other specialist services such as television and broadcasting services.

Medical Mission - The Way Forward

14. This report is based on feedback to the Outreach Ministries Committee from two meetings of a working group chaired by Dr Heather Williamson, and discussion at the OMC meetings of September 2007 and February 2008. The aim is to draw up guidelines for PCI's involvement in medical mission that will be of benefit to decision-making in BMO, and not least to executive staff as they relate to partners around the world and to those applying for service overseas.

15. **History of involvement:** Medical mission has played an important role right from the outset of PCI's overseas mission from the mid-nineteenth century and especially in the early years of her overseas involvement when churches were being planted. PCI has sought to engage in medical mission as a practical outpouring of Christ's compassion in a hurting and needy world, especially amongst the poor and marginalised. She seeks to be a channel of the presence of Jesus the Healer.

16. With time, as churches were planted and became more established, PCI's relationships with them have moved gradually onto a new footing. Mission hospitals were handed over to partner churches to be run by local medical staff and management. Down through the years many emotional attachments have been formed by PCI members and missionaries with hospitals in a number of countries, especially in India, China, Malawi, Kenya and Nepal. In constantly reviewing PCI's role, there have been times when she has shared with partners in difficult decisions of hospital closure, withdrawal of personnel, or her diminishing involvement in mission hospitals. It is acknowledged that such times were on occasions very painful, with a need to grapple with emotive and thorny issues.

17. For all that PCI's involvement in medical mission has diminished over the years it is proposed that under the leading of God BMO should plan to continue to support different expressions of medical mission together with her

partners. Throughout the recent process of review particular concern for churches where Christians are a persecuted minority were highlighted; for unreached people groups especially in East and Central Asia; and for new outreach initiatives in Europe. It is, however, partners in East and Central Africa who are calling most urgently for PCI to share with them in medical mission, such is the prevalence there of HIV/AIDS, Malaria and malnutrition. In endeavouring to gain something of a global perspective on medical mission, BMO prayerfully seeks God's wisdom and guidance in wrestling with challenging questions and deciding where and how best to be involved.

18. As PCI seeks God's leading for future involvement, and in ongoing discussion with partners, the following approach is proposed:

19. **Partnership:** It is clear that as BMO journeys together with its partners, it must place a priority on listening rather than simply advocating its own ideas and what it thinks it is good to do. It is recognised that there is no simple formula, but the need for much prayer and deep discussion to discern together what pleases the Lord.

20. **Local leadership:** It is acknowledged that in many cases the concept of 'hospital' was a western introduction which means that to a certain degree dependency is locked in and PCI has a responsibility to continue supporting mission hospitals that she may have helped to start. At the same time, as in seeking to foster a move from dependency to independency with a focus on local care, local control and local standards of excellence, new initiatives of our partners will be supported.

21. **Christian Character:** Whenever PCI invests in partner church healthcare workers she wishes to do so not only in a way that builds medical expertise but also encourages Christian character and commitment to serve in the local context.

22. **Integral Mission:** It is considered that evangelism should always be an integral part of any medical mission in which BMO is engaged. BMO wants to share with partners in a clear, Christ-centred witness in the world.

23. **Training and mentoring:** PCI's role should have a major focus on facilitating education, with an emphasis on leadership training within the medical mission remit right up to university level; also important are short-term roles for medical mission personnel with an emphasis on the training of trainers and one to one mentoring in matters medical and of Christian discipleship.

24. **Prevention better than cure:** While PCI's link has traditionally been with hospitals BMO is also ready to support community based primary health care initiatives as they are pioneered by local people, embedded in the social structures and engaged in a holistic approach to health care.

25. **The role of Mission Personnel:** It is recognised that there is a broad range of Allied Health Professionals with expertise and experience that may be able to fill a key role. Those in the early stages of their careers may need advice regarding overseas electives. The difficulties of taking time out of the healthcare system in the West and then trying to re-enter, are increasingly clear.

26. When needs are so great, it would be easy to simply try to send as many people as possible. It is clear, however, that this is normally not the best solution, either in terms of medical care or the extension of Christ's Kingdom, and particularly where there is a local person to do the job. The exception would

be where local personnel are in very short supply or unavailable, and even then posts would only be filled that are of a strategic nature. Consideration is being given to offering top-ups to salary to encourage local Christian healthcare workers to stay and work at home.

27. **Local Government and Health Associations:** From the point of view of medical care, there is a need to be especially aware of the level of support available to partners from local governments and health associations. For example, the strategic role of Emmanuel Hospital Association should be encouraged as they continue their work in India and build on their base in Africa (especially in Malawi). The work of Christian Health Associations in Malawi (CHAM), Kenya (CHAK), and elsewhere should also be investigated more fully.

28. **Hospital management:** There needs to be encouragement and support for partners' initiatives to take forward new developments in hospital management, administration, finance, IT and communications.

29. **Mission involvement:** There should be encouragement of congregational 'extra-mile' giving for the funding of medical student scholarships and missionary hospital projects where there is no central funding provided.

30. **Flexibility:** BMO should not lose flexibility, but handle enquiries for overseas service prayerfully so that it is not restricted by overly rigid guidelines. In all things, together with partners, BMO seeks to know and submit to the leading of God so that His Name would be truly glorified and His Kingdom extended.

31. PCI has had a rich history of involvement in many different aspects of healthcare services. She continues to be served by dedicated individuals around the world who are being used of God to bring healing and help not only to the body but also to the spirit. BMO looks forward in the future to continuing this work in many areas as God leads us forward.

STEPHEN RICHMOND, Convener

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

32. The task devolved to the Leadership Development Committee (LDC) by the 2006 General Assembly was that of implementing a leadership development agenda in mission, in the global context. In its second year of existence, as LDC has become progressively more involved in decision-making, it has endeavoured to keep focused prayer for wisdom and for the leading of the Holy Spirit as its highest priority.

33. To paraphrase a word of Jesus, LDC prays – and asks the whole Church to pray – the Lord of the harvest to send out committed, mission-minded leaders into his harvest field. We pray that, through the work of the Committee, PCI may both give to and receive from the worldwide Church the leaders she requires - mature followers of Jesus whose character, words and actions foster and inspire discipleship in others and so enable the Church to testify, with integrity, to the transforming power of the Good News of the love of God in Jesus Christ.

34. Last year we reported that most of LDC's initial effort had been invested in forging *two precision tools*, one for remit and the other for audit. Since this was a work in progress, the Committee expressed the hope that it would be finished in time for this Assembly and that the present report should describe the first steps taken, in concert with PCI's overseas partners, towards the setting and pursuing of cooperative leadership development goals.

35. It can be reported that LDC has now finished a comprehensive exploration of procedures, objectives, skills and resources which should make for good leadership development practice. Members have found this process, over nearly eighteen months, to be a significant learning experience. Working to sharpen its remit has exposed the Committee, as a Committee, to a wealth of wisdom and knowledge as well as to hands-on experience of leadership development practice. The expertise of BMO executive staff and of PCI mission personnel has been put to good use by LDC in various leadership development scenarios across the world.

36. The materials compiled by LDC working groups have now been processed and turned into a first set of *Guidelines* for leadership development. These were presented in specimen form to BMO in March 2008. They represent a basic tool-kit for tackling what is seen as three distinct but related aspects of leadership development work: *Vision and Purpose*; *Strategic Resources*; and *Partnership Issues*. The principal challenge, as the Guidelines are followed, will be to insure that each aspect of leadership development always keeps its missional thrust and focus.

37. This tool-kit is a starter kit only. It will certainly require updating and improving over time. Nevertheless, LDC considers it adequate for beginning the task of setting, pursuing and achieving clear leadership development goals in mission. The Committee has, in fact, been able to put some of them to use already. For example, LDC has been more fully assisting executive staff in the challenging task of awarding study scholarships and other grants. The Committee also started engaging directly with those leaders in training hosted in the UK and Ireland this year, organizing a reception for them. The usefulness of the *Guidelines* will increase, in the near future, as individuals and mini-teams from within LDC begin to support executive staff in scheduled partner consultations where leadership development policy is to be discussed and projects are to be implemented.

38. The BMO review identified leadership development as one strategic aspect of mission today. Clearly, God is calling Christian people into various forms of leadership, and this requires a strategy for developing genuine leaders and training appropriate leader trainers, in Ireland and in our overseas partners' situations. LDC is committed to encouraging partner Churches and institutions to share with LDC their own vision for the development of committed and mission-minded leaders for Christ's Church throughout the world. With LDC's new *Guidelines* as a basis, it is also intended to articulate for partners the missional convictions which PCI holds in respect of leadership development. This dialogue will enable PCI and her partners to establish common agendas and to work towards agreed goals.

39. In its work LDC shares important interfaces with the work of sister Assembly Committees. LDC relies on them to keep its perspective holistic – for

example, helping recognize that theological education, though a priority, is not to be the exclusive focus but that the Church also needs gifted and committed leaders for medical or educational mission. They, in turn, benefit from the distinctive contribution that LDC's focus on leadership brings to the principles, practices and responsibilities of mission generally. By autumn 2008, therefore, it is hoped to provide simplified and user-friendly Guidelines on leadership development for all members of BMO.

40. Subsequently, material on leadership development will also be made available to Congregations seeking to develop their direct involvement in mission in the global context. LDC hopes this will be of practical help as PCI, as a whole denomination, gets to grips with partnership in mission. Two practical ways Congregations will be able to get involved, in liaison with the Mission Overseas Office, are worth mentioning here: 'Adopting' a leader in training, as a focus for congregational interest and support; and 'extra mile' giving, over and above the United Appeal target, to fund a particular leadership development project involving one of PCI's partners.

41. It can also be reported, from a leadership development perspective, on a valuable country-by-country audit which at the time of writing has almost been completed by executive staff, using criteria supplied by several Assembly Committees. PCI's partnership relations with Churches, agencies and institutions in 25 countries around the world have been examined one by one. From the information gathered in each case, some of which LDC has already been considering, good practice is emerging – to be emulated in the future work of the Committee – while there are also valuable lessons to be learnt from past and present leadership development projects.

42. As was the case last year, the current LDC budget is still largely characterised by the provision of multiple modest grants. The following are examples of projects to which we are committed in 2008-09, in Africa, Asia and Europe. They give the General Assembly a flavour of LDC's work: Helping prepare students for ministry in Aix-en-Provence or Madrid, Bethlehem or Beirut, Gujarat or Pakistan; supporting the discipling of Church members and elders in Kenya; funding a Malawian educator in part-time PhD study in the African context; grant-aiding the people-focused projects of partner Churches in Sumba or Halmahera (Indonesia); hosting two leaders in training from the Czech Republic and Hungary for study at Union College, who will focus on ministry and on research respectively.

43. This is only a snapshot of LDC's work. Yet it reflects well enough both the privilege and the responsibility which the members of LDC know to be theirs. The Committee is conscious of both as it works, together with PCI's partners, for the benefit of those God, in Jesus Christ, is calling and equipping for vital leadership roles in the Church and the world.

GORDON CAMPBELL, Convener

WORLD DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

44. **World Development Appeal:** This was the second of a three year series of appeals under the general title '**Whose Earth?**' The strap-line for the

appeal this year was **Seeds For Change**. The heart of the appeal over the three-year period consists of drawing attention to the interface of authentic, sustainable development and sound ecological stewardship. The issue of climate change/environmental awareness is particularly pressing given the emerging consensus that even if the targets set by governments for the reduction of CO₂/greenhouse gas emissions are met they will be insufficient to forestall significant climate chaos. It is by no means assured that these inadequate targets will be met.

45. The projects highlighted in Advent and Christmas were in Zimbabwe (Christian Aid), Zambia (Tearfund), India (Christian Aid) and Mexico (Tearfund). The story lines from the Southern African countries of Zimbabwe and Zambia were particularly strong and compelling, particularly as they were focused on the benefits of the moringa (or miracle) tree in a development perspective and the advantages to small-scale, marginalized farmers of adopting a conservation model of farming. In the midst of challenging circumstances seeds for change are being sown.

46. Placing the appeal in the context of Scripture, Amos 9:13 pictures a dimension of fullness of life as an abundantly fertile creation. Conservation farming takes a step towards bringing this imagery alive and making it a reality in the lives of some of the poorest people on earth. Revelation 22:1-2 picks up on the theme of super abundance, but poetically adds that the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. In a wonderfully resonant analogy of this, the moringa tree brings hope and healing to people, communities and nations that are hurting from poverty, exploitation and disease.

47. Taken together, the projects highlighted in the appeal demonstrate that in an era of climate change and more frequent natural disasters it is possible and indeed vital to do authentic grassroots development in ecologically attuned ways that resonate with important aspects of faith. The impact in the lives of the poor is life enhancing and dignity affirming.

48. The second year of the **'Whose Earth?'** Appeal has been well supported to date. By mid-February 2008, the World Development account stood at £625,000, of which £300,000 has been disbursed to Tearfund and £300,000 to Christian Aid.

49. **Special Moderator Supported Darfur Appeal:** In mid-2007, Darfur was once again in the news headlines. The fragile peace that had been negotiated for other parts of Sudan did not hold in Darfur and what was described as the biggest humanitarian crisis in the history of the United Nations engulfed the region.

50. On account of the gravity of the situation, the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) of the leading relief and development agencies, including Christian Aid and Tearfund, launched a special appeal for the region. This was followed by a Special Moderator supported Crisis Appeal across the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

51. In total £361,000 was contributed to the Special Moderator Supported Appeal and divided equally between Christian Aid and Tearfund. This enabled Christian Aid and Tearfund partners such as Action for Churches Together (ACT), the Sudan Council of Churches, and Fellowship of African Relief (FAR) to come alongside people to provide shelter, clean water and sanitation,

emergency food, primary health care and vital items such as water buckets, blankets and soap. PCI's efforts have brought essential help and hope to people who lost virtually everything.

52. In a world of great suffering, PCI showed that she would not forget the people of Darfur. Christian Aid and Tearfund report that in the wider society the Darfur appeal was not well supported and that this contrasts with the generosity of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

53. **Board of Mission Overseas:** In 2007 the Board of Mission Overseas' allocation of the World Development Appeal was £31,000. Of this, £15,500 was used to support the work of the Church of North India in Orissa, and £15,500 to support the work of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa in Kenya. Both cases represent rapid response initiatives of partner Churches to situations of violence and social upheaval.

54. **World Development and the Modern World Order:** In 2000, the power of the world, in the form of the G8, committed themselves to Millennium Development Goals intended to *half* the number of people living in absolute poverty by 2015. The Micah Challenge, as reported last year, has been set up to hold the G8 to account. This is good, but when the human family has the capacity to free *everyone* from absolute poverty, why settle for halving it by 2015?

55. There are, though, major obstacles to be overcome. Analysis of current trends indicates that the Millennium Development Goals as set are unlikely to be met. Their attainment will be rendered more distant as the effects of climate change contribute to an even harsher environment for genuine development. A more radical reordering of the present global system is needed to end the scandal of poverty.

56. Central to this there must be a major reduction in CO₂ emissions to avert global warming. To a large extent, the modern world is premised on and facilitated by the burning of fossil fuels, which in turn have precipitated climate change. It is estimated that, between 1800 and 1988, rich countries, located primarily in North America and Europe, emitted 83.7 per cent of global CO₂ emissions, while poorer countries contributed only 16.3 per cent. Yet it is the poor, who contributed least to global warming, that will suffer most. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu notes, "The world's wealthiest countries have emitted more than their fair share of greenhouse gasses. Resultant floods, droughts and other climate change impacts continue to fall disproportionately on the world's poorest people and countries."

57. The way people in the West live in the world is unsustainable and must be changed in the interests of both the poor and those who are the beneficiaries of the present global order. In the period from 1880 to 1988, China contributed 5.5% of the world's CO₂ emissions. This has grown enormously since; estimates suggest that by 2025 China will have overtaken the US as the top emitter of greenhouse gasses if current trends continue. This underlines that if the rest of the world adopts the model of economic growth, which has predominated in the western world in the modern era, the earth will be irreparably damaged.

58. Experts calculate that the human family has perhaps 20 years to make the changes necessary to avoid the tipping point that will lead to climate chaos.

Justice requires that the nations most responsible for the impending crisis take significant steps to address it. But changing—and seeing the need to change—systems in which there is such heavy investment is a massive challenge.

59. In the interests of global justice and planetary survival the challenge is to identify where people in the West are beneficiaries of an unjust global order, especially when climate change is such a large part of the outworking of that order. The challenge, therefore, is to a radically counter cultural pattern of Christian discipleship and life style choices, as acts of solidarity with those whose hope for well-being will be destroyed by global warming.

MARK GRAY, Convener

MISSION INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE

60. That mission is at the very heart of the Church is beyond question. Biblically, it can be seen that as Jesus calls people to come to Him so He then sends them out. The disciples' experience of this has provided a description of this principle in one sentence, *Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men*. Historically, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland recognised this when, in 1840, the General Assembly of the newly united Presbyterian Church in Ireland decided to begin mission in India.

61. In more recent times, this has been reaffirmed by the Coleraine declaration, *"In spite of all this, we thankfully acknowledge God's mercy in calling us, unworthy as we are, to be His people, chosen and redeemed in Christ. It is our vision that through the power of the Holy Spirit, we will be transformed, so that we may ... be committed to mission, not only in our own country, but in all the world; - be responsive to the needs of the world Christ came to save; - be present as Christ's love, Christ's justice, and Christ's hope in the world's darkness and decay; - be concerned to proclaim with new confidence and joy the saving name of Jesus, both by word and action;"*

62. Throughout PCI there has been a gathering momentum in the direction of mission overseas, not only in an evangelistic sense (Acts 1.8) but also in a supportive role, as partners sharing in the ministry of Christ (Philippians 1.5). The Church demonstrates this by its 'involvement' in mission through teams, partnerships and sponsorships. Through the ongoing work of the Mission Involvement Committee (MIC) we have been seeking to address this area of growing interest at congregational level.

63. The Board will again send a team to the Ukraine in the summer of 2008 under the leadership of Fiona Lawther from Waringstown congregation. In addition to helping congregational teams maximise the potential of their trips, an **Overseas Teams Training Day** has again been organised which was held in late March this year. This provides the opportunity to pool resources, experience and expertise. The BMO has also been invited to run a short series of evening seminars at UTC to be held towards the end of 2008.

64. The Mission Involvement Committee (MIC) continues to oversee planning and running of the **Celebration of Global Mission** evenings and Residential Conference. After much consideration, it was decided in the past

year to take the Celebration evening out on the road and bring it closer to local congregations who are some distance from Belfast. In the autumn of 2007 there were two evenings, one in Carrmonee and the other one in First Armagh. These trialled the idea and good feedback was received from many who attended, which MIC intends to reflect on and respond to in the coming year. Such was the success of those two evenings that the Committee are extending the trial in 2008 to include four locations: Downshire Road, Newry and Ballywillan, Portrush in early April; and Church House and First Cookstown in late October.

65. The annual Residential Conference has been re-branded as the **Connect4Mission Conference**. The Committee is keen to emphasise that this conference is not for BMO members per se, though they are welcome to (and do) attend. Rather, its primary aim is to inform, envision, challenge and encourage those in leadership roles, along with 'involved' mission enthusiasts, as they seek to help members of their Congregations to engage more widely in God's mission to the world.

66. In the report to the General Assembly in 2007, MIC committed itself to work on the **way forward for BMO in Deputation**. It is grateful to the members of the committee who put in a lot of thought and hard work to this area. One of the frustrations of this growing interest in the work of the Christian Church around the world is that whilst the demand for "speakers" to go to local Congregations has been rising, the number of "speakers" and in particular the number of PCI BMO mission personnel has not. However, it would be wrong to think that this brings a crisis. Rather, it brings a great opportunity.

67. **The Tours & Deputations Review Working Group** has been thinking about how information and inspiration are brought into Congregations through face to face contact. Declining numbers of personnel serving overseas has highlighted the need to consider how (other than through deputation by returning missionaries) the needs, opportunities and challenges of global mission can be both shared and, more importantly, brought into sharp focus at congregational level. There is a wealth of experience within PCI of involvement in mission overseas, i.e. congregational teams, people who have served on Board Teams, individuals who have visited missionaries and the work of other mission agencies. The concept, therefore, of a *mission mobiliser* is being considered – someone who can visit a Congregation or group within a Congregation who has had experience or exposure to a particular kind of work, or worked in a specific region or country, or been involved in a particular kind of venture. Another new concept being developed is that of *home partners* – a broader, more comprehensive definition than mere supporters. What is the relationship between the Church, in its various groupings, and mission? How does BMO connect with them? What pattern of engagement should BMO adopt? Once again the thinking is that of best practice. The Board wants to try to maximise the impact a mission mobiliser can have with a Congregation or group, and hopes to try to develop profiles of interests and needs of these home partners (local Congregations and groups), so that they can be best matched with individuals who, through common interests, could develop longer term partnerships, thus really encouraging their involvement in mission. This also requires training for the mobilisers in cross-cultural communication and orientation to the context of BMO and PCI.

68. It is planned to take the following steps to help facilitate this:
- To proceed with the piloting of a Cross-Cultural Training Seminar to help individuals prepare for service in a different culture.
 - To run a pilot seminar on Training About Mission to help those involved with BMO have a basic understanding of mission and how they fit in with BMO's involvement in mission.
 - To continue with the existing Deputation Training Programme which seeks to help those who take on deputation engagements to understand their responsibilities, what the BMO expects, and to ensure that they are adequately prepared and equipped for the task.
 - To review and set out the role of the Presbytery Mission Agent (PMA)
 - To take forward a step-by-step testing of proposed changes to deputation, both with existing mission personnel and potential mission mobilisers.
 - To continue consultation with the Board of Mission in Ireland regarding the General Assembly's requirement that all Presbyteries (by 2009) and all Congregations (by 2010) should have developed a *Mission Plan*, ensuring that at every level these plans contain a *global dimension* to mission.

PETER LYLE, Convener

Personnel, Visits and Visitors

69. Echoing the Apostle Paul's words "*We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints – the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth*", BMO gives thanks and praise for all BMO mission personnel who during the past year have undertaken their calling to serve in different parts of the world – see Appendix A. The Board stands with them, rejoicing for the times when they see fruitfulness and as they persevere in the midst of injustice, insecurity, persecution and opposition to the outworking of the gospel.

70. During the last year memorial minutes were recorded and sympathies expressed in respect of Mrs Dorothy (Dot) Jackson who passed away on 3 May, 2007 having served in Malawi from 1958 to 1970, and of Mr William H Rutherford FRCS, OBE, who passed away on 22 December, 2007 having served in India from 1947 to 1967.

71. Appreciation is recorded of the 13 missionaries who resigned from the service of the Board during the past year. David Conkey (China 1998 to 2007), Richard Lynas (Romania 2002 to 2007), Alistair McCracken (Malawi 2004 to 2007), Clare McIntyre (Malawi 1997 to 2007), Gordon and Sandra Campbell (France 1989 to 2007), Shirley Strong (Malawi 2002 to 2007), John

and Rosemary Hanson (Malawi 1999 to 2007), Stephen and Ruth McCracken, (Malawi 1999 to 2007), Norman and Pauline Kennedy (Kenya 2000 to 2007).

72. A comprehensive review of the categories of service for BMO Mission Personnel was carried out. The recommendation to reduce the existing six categories to three was approved by the Board during its meeting in March 2008. The three categories are: *Ignite* – service of up to one year, *Involve* – service of up to two years and *Integrate* – service of two or more years.

73. During the year a total of five adults were accepted for service overseas - three to serve in Malawi under the Ignite category, with two beginning service in Pakistan in January 2008 under the Involve category. Though the Board has been in partnership with the Presbyterian Church in Pakistan (PCP) for many years it has, until now, not been possible to find personnel to go to Pakistan, so it is particularly encouraging to be able to support and send this couple to serve in Forman Christian College (FCC) in Lahore, where senior leaders in the PCP serve on the College's governing and management Boards.

74. At the time of writing the Board was preparing to interview nine adults with a view to them becoming candidates for future missionary service. Together with their children (10 in total) they hope to commence service during the incoming year of 2008/09 with partners in Malawi, Nepal, Portugal and Spain.

75. Continuing to be aware of the need to equip and offer adequate pastoral care for BMO mission personnel, further development of support for the children of mission personnel has been undertaken during the past year. Mrs Sandra Campbell has received training and attended a number of Conferences organised by Global Connections on 'Third Culture Kids' (TCK's). In cooperation with Mission Agencies Partnership (MAP), she has been able to offer information, support and advice to families on issues such as schooling and re-entry to Ireland. We are grateful for Sandra's enthusiasm and her willingness to share her experience and pastoral skills in this growing and important area of support. Involvement in MAP has aided continued care of returning missionaries in a number of areas. One example is a 'Rediscover Ireland' day to help inform and encourage them as they begin the journey of re-entry to life and ministry in Ireland.

76. In July 2007, a BMO Team made up of 12 Presbyterians, all from different Congregations, partnered with Csaba and Ilona Veres in running an English Language Teaching Camp for young people in Transcarpathia, Ukraine.

77. Over the past year, the following members of partner churches and missions have been training and studying in Edinburgh and Belfast.

- Mr Samuel Mayuni from the Student Christian Organisation of Malawi, commenced his 2nd year at Belfast Bible College studying for a Diploma in Biblical Studies.
- Miss Viktoria Kaso from the Reformed Church in Hungary, is undertaking one year of research at Union Theological College, Belfast.
- The Rev Prof Lehel Leszai from the Transylvanian District of the Reformed Church in Romania, is undertaking a year of research

at Union Theological College, Belfast in preparation for writing a commentary on St Mark's Gospel.

- Mr Austin Chirwa from the Student Christian Organisation of Malawi, is studying for a Certificate in Biblical Studies at Belfast Bible College.
- The Rev Cogitator Mapala from the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Synod of Livingstonia, Malawi, is studying for a Masters degree in Theology at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland.
- The Rev Dr Winston Kawale and his wife, Sneria, on sabbatical from the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Synod of Nkhoma, Malawi from February to April 2008.

78. In the past year the following visits were made to attend Consultations and Conferences called by partner Churches and Missions and to offer pastoral support and encouragement to BMO missionary personnel:-

- The Rev John Hanna attended the Global Connections 'Passion for mission – beyond partnership' Conference, held in June 2007.
- The Very Rev Dr John Dixon and the Rev Stephen Richmond visited China and Joint Christian Services (JCS), Mongolia, on behalf of the Board from 17 September to 4 October, 2007.
- Prof Bill and Dr Ruth Addley represented the Board at the ordination of Jackie Hartsmith-Foy, which took place on 20 October, 2007 at the Los Rubios Centre near Torre Del Mar, Spain.
- The Rev John Hanna, Mrs Joan Hanna and Miss Helen Johnston visited three partner churches in Indonesia from 29 October to 16 November, 2007.
- The Rev Peter McDowell represented the Board at the Global Connections Annual Conference: 'Moving forward with confidence in the eye of the storm', which was held from 28 to 30 November, 2007.
- Mr Nigel Eves and the Rev Peter Lyle visited Thailand from 15 to 27 February, 2008, attending a Conference on the future of mission in a country in Central Asia; offering pastoral support to BMO mission personnel; visiting the Lamp of Thailand and the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT).
- The Rev Rodney Cameron represented the Board at a 'Mission in Europe' Conference, Redcliffe College, held from 2 to 4 January, 2008.
- The Moderator, the Rt Rev Dr John Finlay, and his wife, Christine, visited Nepal from 4 to 16 April, 2008, meeting with BMO mission personnel and representatives of UMN.

79. During the past year BMO was delighted to receive the following visitors from partner churches and mission organisations:

- The Rev Stephen and Mrs Linda Bota, from the CCAP Livingstonia Synod, Lay Training Department, visited Ireland from 18 to 30 October, 2007, speaking at 'Celebration of Global

Mission' evenings in Carnmoney and Armagh and meeting with representatives of the Board.

- The Rev Didier Crouzet, International Relations Officer of the French Reformed Church (ERF) visited Ireland from 4 to 7 March, 2008, meeting with representatives of the Board.
- The Rev Dr Winston Kawale, former General Secretary of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod, together with his wife, Sneria, were on sabbatical in Ireland from mid-February to the end of April 2008.
- The Rev Edwin Kibathi and Mrs Ann Kibathi, together with their children, Ben, Sam and Joy. Edwin is minister of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa's (PCEA) UK Outreach in East London, and was speaking about his work amongst East African Expatriates at the 'Celebration of Global Mission' in Portrush on 8 April, 2008.

THE HOME BASE

80. BMO is once again very grateful to its fulltime staff who in handling a heavy workload, have carried out their work with great efficiency and enthusiasm. The executive staff team is currently the Overseas Secretary; Mission Education Officer/Asia Secretary and Personnel Officer (Overseas). Over the past year they have been ably supported by an administrative staff team which has included a Senior Administrative Officer; Dep Senior Administrative Officer with special responsibilities for finance; two Senior Secretaries with special responsibilities for mission education and mission personnel respectively; a part time Secretary and a Secretary/Receptionist. We also extend appreciation to those who, from time to time, help out in the office on a voluntary basis. The Board was informed in March 2008 that sadly Mrs Paula Cooper, Senior Administrative Officer/Personal Secretary (part-time) would not be able to return to work on the grounds of ill health. At the time of writing, details regarding the conclusion of Paula's work were still being finalised. The Board has resolved that, at the appropriate time, warm appreciation and prayerful good wishes should be conveyed to Paula.

81. Aside from the full-time staff in the Mission Overseas Office, many members of the Board willingly sacrifice of their time, energy, gifts and experience to serve on the BMO's Assembly and Board Committees. Gratitude is extended to all who, on behalf of the Board over the past year, have attended Consultations with partner Churches, visited Missionaries in their country of service and spoken in PCI Congregations about the work overseas.

82. BMO is also grateful for the ongoing services of the pastoral adviser team of Dr Moreen Gordon, Miss Dobbie McCaughan and the Rev Brian Hughes.

83. The ongoing commitment by PCI members to support the work of mission in a wide variety of ways brings ongoing encouragement. Thanks is recorded to individuals and Congregations who year after year have provided financial support through the United Appeal, and for all that the **United Appeal Board** does to ensure that the target of honour for the total appeal is reached each year.

84. Once again the Board of Mission Overseas is very grateful for the ongoing support of the **Presbyterian Women's Association (PWA)** whose office bearers, Executive Committee and members continue to contribute faithfully to the work of the Board. In 2007, the Annual Grant made by PWA to the work of the Board was £210,000. BMO commends the PWA for their enthusiasm and commitment to the work of PCI in mission beyond the shores of Ireland, and thanks the members of the Association for the way in which they prayerfully and practically support BMO mission personnel.

85. The Board is glad to help individuals, Congregations and other Mission Boards and organisations to identify **special projects** from a wide range of partner Church activities. On the understanding that United Appeal targets have been met, the Board continues to offer the service of channelling funds from 'extra mile' giving, ensuring that, where appropriate, a refund of tax paid by the donor is received under the Gift Aid scheme. Once again, appreciation is expressed to those who organised and contributed to:

86. **The Presbyterian Women's Association's Birthday Thank Offering 2006/2007** which raised £28,000 for the work of the 'Proclamation & Action' Project of Casa Caiada Presbyterian Church in Olinda, NE Brazil.

87. **The Young Women's Group's (YWG) Project** in 2006/2007 which raised £6,000 for the refurbishment and equipping of the kitchen of the 'Halfway House' project (Caleb House) of the Aksza Mission House of the Hungarian Reformed Church in Transylvania. The 2007/2008 project has to date raised £6,000 for the Viara Vocational Bible School in Gujarat, India.

88. It is anticipated that this is the last year we will bring separate reports on the fundraising activities of PWA and YWG as, at the time of writing, it was anticipated that the two would come together under the new title of Presbyterian Women. The Board of Mission Overseas gives thanks to God for the generous support of PWA and YWG over many years, and will be especially prayerful as the transition is made to Presbyterian Women (PW).

89. **The Youth and Children's Project** in 2006/2007 was entitled 'Wings' and has raised £114,862 in support of the work of the Aksza Mission House of the Hungarian Reformed Church in Transylvania by helping to provide a 'Half-way House' (Caleb House) for older street children in Cluj.

90. **The Junior Boys' Brigade Appeal** for 2006/2007 working in conjunction with the Church of North India, Gujarat Diocese, has raised £15,000 to purchase a hostel for street children in Ahmedabad, with a further donation going of £7,000 to the international work of Boys' Brigade.

91. BMO is once again indebted to the Board's Finance Officer (Overseas), Mr Mervyn Whittle, for his ongoing commitment to monitoring income and expenditure, and finalising budgets and accounts. We also express thanks to the staff of the Finance Office for their support and guidance.

92. BMO's membership of Global Connections enables it to keep up to date with new thinking and initiatives in world mission, and the opportunity of working alongside other agencies and societies in the local context through the Mission Agencies Partnership (MAP) is valued. In the past year BMO have been represented at a number of Forums and Conferences, examining a broad range of mission related issues. Additionally BMO representatives continue to attend as observers at the China forum of the Global Mission Network, and the

Churches Commission on International Students (CCIS). As a member of the British and Irish Association of Mission Studies (BIAMS), BMO is provided with further opportunities to reflect upon mission.

93. The Board continues to give all praise and thanks to God for His guidance and sustaining grace over this past year, ever seeking to bring glory to His Name.

APPENDIX A

In the main report most of the names of missionaries have not been mentioned but their names, spheres and category of service are listed below and are to be taken together with this report.

INTEGRATE CATEGORY – *Service of two or more years*

BRAZIL

Naomi Keefe	2000/2004	Outreach programme, IPB, Casa Caiada
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CENTRAL ASIA

Graham & Pat Connor	2006	Pastoral Care
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GREAT BRITAIN

Christopher & Nivedita Macwan	1989	Ministry among Asians in Wembley, London
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INDIA

Linda Jackson	1996	Teacher, Woodstock School, Mussoorie
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INDONESIA

Mervyn & Raing McCullagh	1998	Consultant - GKS
	2007	Co-ordinator - KOPPESTA, Sumba
Barry McCroskery	2004	International Partner Relations & Youth Ministry, GMTI, Timor

JAMAICA

Heather Lennox	2002	Children's Ministry Co-ordinator, United Church in Jamaica & the Cayman Islands
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KENYA

Stephen & Angelina Cowan	1985/9	Outreach & Development Work, PCEA Tuam
Naomi Leremore	1991	Co-ordinator of the District Centre for Early Childhood Education, PCEA, Nairobi

Derek & Linda Roulston	1998	Outreach & Development work, PCEA, Galana
Gary & Mary Reid	2000	Outreach & Development Work, PCEA, Narok

MALAWI

Margaret Young	1995	Midwifery, Daeyang Luke Hospital, Lilongwe
Diane Cusick	1995	Pre-school teacher training, CCAP Livingstonia Synod, Mzuzu
David & Maggie Steele	2002	Livingstonia Theological College Scholarship Administration, CCAP Livingstonia Synod, Mzuzu
Robin & Helen Quinn	2004	Lay Training Centre, CCAP Livingstonia Synod, Ekwendeni
Una Brownlie	2007	Nursing, David Gordon Memorial Hospital, CCAP Livingstonia

NEPAL

Joe & Janet Campbell	2006	Lead Advisor in Conflict Transformation Pastoral Care with United Mission to Nepal
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PAKISTAN

Ron & Hilary McCartney	2007	Teaching, Forman Christian College, Lahore
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ROMANIA

Csaba &	2001	International Relations, IKE & Caleb House
Ilona Veres	1993	Aksza Mission House, Cluj
Darren & Nicola Aitcheson	2007	House Parents, Caleb House, Cluj

SPAIN

Derek & Jane French	2000	Student outreach with GBU, Bilbao
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IGNITE CATEGORY – Service of up to one year**MALAWI**

Sarah Hughes	2007	Livingstonia Synod AIDS Programme, Ekwendeni
Maurice & Helen Kennedy	2007	Blantyre Synod Schools Renovation and Refurbishment Programme

APPENDIX B**PARTNERS**

We work together with the following partner Churches, United Missions and Institutions. Listed below are those in leadership with their respective positions:

BRAZIL

Rev A Pereira	President, Independent Presbyterian Church in Brazil (IPIB)
Rev G de Lacerda	Executive Secretary, IPIB
Rev R Brasileiro	President, Presbyterian Church in Brazil (IPB)
Rev LB Morias	Executive Secretary, IPB

CHINA

Rev SJ Cao	President & General Secretary (Acting), China Christian Council
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CZECH REPUBLIC

Rev P Cerny	President, Church of the Brethren
Mr K Fojtik	General Secretary, Church of the Brethren
Rev P Smetana	Moderator, Synodical Council of the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren

FRANCE

Pasteur M Manoel	President, Eglise Réformée de France (ERF)
Pasteur B de Cazenove	General Secretary, ERF
Prof Michel Johner	Principal, Faculté Libre de Théologie Réformée (FLTR)
Prof Pierre Berthoud	Dean, FLTR

HUNGARY & ROMANIA

Bishop G Bolskei	Presiding Bishop, Synod of the Reformed Church of Hungary
Rev B Odor	International & Inter-Church Relations, Synod of the Reformed Church of Hungary
Bishop G Pap	Transylvanian District of the Reformed Church of Romania
Bishop L Tokes	Kiralyhagomellek District of the Reformed Church of Romania

INDIA

Most Rev JV Mal	Moderator of the Church of North India (CNI) Synod
Rev Enos das Pradhan	General Secretary of the CNI Synod
Rt Rev VM Malaviya	Bishop of the Gujarat Diocese CNI

Rt Rev SR Cutting Bishop of the Agra Diocese, CNI
Dr David Laurenson Principal, Woodstock School

INDONESIA

Rev Dr Eben Timo Moderator, Evangelical Christian Church in Timor (GMIT)
Rev MD Beeh General Secretary, GMIT
Rev A Piga Moderator, Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera (GMIH)
Rev I Sumtaki General Secretary, GMIH
Rev D Umbu Dingu General Chairman, Christian Church in Sumba (GKS)
Rev N Djoru General Secretary, GKS

JAMAICA

Rt Rev Dr R Hewitt Moderator, United Church in Jamaica & the Cayman Islands (UCJCI)
Rev C Cowan General Secretary, UCJCI

KENYA

Rt Rev Dr D Githii Moderator, Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA)
Rev S Muriguh Secretary General, PCEA

MALAWI

Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP)

V Rev Dr SM Nyirenda Acting Moderator, CCAP General Assembly
Rev YA Chienda Secretary General, CCAP General Assembly
Rt Rev LN Nyondo Moderator, Synod of Livingstonia
Rev HM Nkhoma General Secretary, Synod of Livingstonia
Rev R Bona Moderator, Synod of Blantyre
Rev M Kadawati General Secretary, Synod of Blantyre
Rt Rev C Msangaambe Moderator, Synod of Nkhoma
Rev D Chifundo General Secretary, Synod of Nkhoma

MYANMAR (BURMA)

Rev Dr Demgthuama General Secretary, Presbyterian Church in Myanmar (PCM)
Rev Ralkunga Moderator, PCM

NEPAL

Ms J Collins Executive Director, United Mission to Nepal (UMN)
Mr G Hafvenstein President, Board of Directors, UMN

PAKISTAN

Rev Prof A James Moderator, Presbyterian Church of Pakistan (PCP)

Rev Dr M Kamil Executive Secretary, PCP

POLAND

Bishop Marek Izdebski Evangelical Reformed Church in Poland

PORTUGAL

Rev Jose Salvador President, Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Portugal

Dr David Valente General Secretary, Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Portugal

SPAIN

Mr J Cortés President, Permanent Commission, Spanish Evangelical Church (IEE)

Rev A Abad First Secretary, Permanent Commission, IEE

SUDAN

Rev JK Dung Moderator, Presbyterian Church of Sudan, (PCOS/Malakal)

Rev PM Nyak Moderator, Presbyterian Church of Sudan, (PCOS/Akobo)

Rev JL Chan General Secretary, PCOS/Akobo

THAILAND

Rev A Virat Moderator, Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT)

Rev Sayam Muangsak General Secretary, CCT

Rev P Juanchaipoom Director, Lamp of Thailand (LOT)

ZAMBIA

Rev LR Mbewe General Secretary, CCAP Synod of Zambia

Rev L Nyirenda Moderator, CCAP Synod of Zambia

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the Report be received.
2. That the General Assembly give thanks to God for PCI's partnering with Churches, United Missions and Institutions beyond the shores of Ireland and requests that the ongoing work on mission and partnership in mission should be continued and findings brought to the General Assembly.
3. That the General Assembly rejoice in the faithful service and witness of BMO's missionary personnel and their families serving overseas; pray for their spiritual encouragement and physical protection in many challenging and sometimes dangerous situations; give thanks for the witness of all who come from partner Churches to study and serve in Ireland.

Outreach Ministries Committee

4. That the General Assembly affirm its desire to work with partner Churches, United Missions and Institutions to witness to Jesus Christ through a broad spectrum of involvement in hospital and community based healthcare mission as set out in the report.

5. That the General Assembly ask the Board in the coming year to give prayerful consideration, in consultation with partners, to the future role of PCI in evangelism and church planting and also in Scripture distribution and translation, literacy and other specialist service ministries.

Leadership Development Committee

6. That the General Assembly welcome the provision of Guidelines for good missional practice in leadership development, in the global context, and encourage the Committee to develop a further resource that will be helpful to Congregations in their mission involvement.

7. That the General Assembly encourage members of the Leadership Development Committee to use their growing knowledge and expertise to support executive staff in the implementation of the Board's policy of working with partner Churches and Institutions to develop Christ-like and mission-minded leaders for the Church around the world.

World Development Committee

8. That the General Assembly give thanks for the support of the second year of the Whose Earth? World Development Appeal and the witness it bears to the possibility of doing genuine development in an era of climate change.

9. That the General Assembly give thanks that through the Moderator Supported Special Crisis Appeal for Darfur, PCI demonstrated its Christian concern in seeking to maintain life for those in dire humanitarian need.

10. That the General Assembly encourage the whole Church - Christian persons, Congregations, Presbyteries, Church House, and General Assembly Boards and Committees - to identify means by which they can reduce their carbon emissions and implement them.

Mission Involvement Committee

11. That the General Assembly encourage BMO, in consultation with BMI, to support Presbyteries and Congregations in developing Mission Plans, which should contain a global dimension.

12. That the General Assembly endorse the Board's outline plans for the way forward in deputation and encourage their further development and implementation.

13. That the General Assembly encourage the Board to take forward the new training initiatives as outlined in the Report.

14. That the General Assembly give thanks for the support raised by PCI's Boards and Organisations for the mission of partners in Brazil, India and

Eastern Europe; for every expression of 'extra mile' giving by the wider Church; and recognise especially the very generous grant received from PWA in 2007.

15. That the Board of Mission Overseas, with its associated working committees, be appointed for the ensuing year in accordance with Par 279 of the Code as follows:

BOARD OF MISSION IN IRELAND

Convener: Rev RA PATTON

Secretary: Rev DJ BRUCE

1. The results of a recent religious knowledge survey conducted in Northern Ireland were released during this past year. (*“Survey of Religious Knowledge in Northern Ireland”* The Evangelical Alliance in Northern Ireland and the Iona Institute). This survey was a follow up to a similar poll carried out in the Republic of Ireland, both revealing low levels of basic religious knowledge in the population. The results make for sober reading. For example, in Northern Ireland, nearly two out of every three Protestants were unable to say how many gospels there are. There was also evidence of considerable difference between the generations, indicating that the Christian faith is continuing to play a less significant part in the lives of young people. As one commentator observed *“...this poll again shows that the notion of Ireland, both North and South, being a Christian culture is becoming a thing of the past. The notion that Christianity can be transmitted through the culture from one generation to the next is clearly no longer valid. These findings present a challenge to all those who believe that the message of Jesus Christ needs to be heard in Irish society. Communicating that message is not primarily the job of schools or state institutions; it is the job of those who still believe the message.”* Sean Mullan. EA Ireland

2. It is in this context that the Board of Mission in Ireland seeks to do its work. While the landscape of religious commitment and belief is rapidly changing, we do not believe the cause of the gospel is in question. Our methodology will evolve and improve. As the 21st century unfolds the way we “do” church will change as new churches are planted and others grow. But the story we tell, of Jesus who loves, forgives, restores and renews will remain the heartbeat of our work.

The work of the Board

3. During the year the Board has sought to clarify its Purpose, Vision and Strategy. The outcomes of this reflection are:

BMI Purpose: Serving the Church; enabling mission

BMI Vision: To create vibrant communities of Christ serving and transforming Ireland.

BMI Key Strategies:

- (i) **Strategy for Mission** – pushing the boundaries of mission in Ireland
- (ii) **Development** – building the possibility for mission in Ireland
- (iii) **Communication** – narrating the story of mission in Ireland
- (iv) **Support** – enabling the delivery of mission in Ireland

4. To implement these Key Strategies, we employ a number of staff and mobilise a very large number of volunteers, all operating within a structure of committees, panels and working groups. Resolutions to the General Assembly

regarding a revised committee structure are appended. In summary, the proposed revised structure is as follows:

Assembly Committees:

- Strategy for Mission Committee
 - Panel on Missional Plans
 - Panel on Mission Development
 - Panel on Church Planting
 - Urban Mission Unit
 - Nightlight Panel
 - Shankill Road Mission Panel
 - May Street Advisory Panel
- Research and Resources Committee
 - Panel on Worship
 - Ad Hoc working groups on different research topics
- Communications Committee
 - Editorial Panel

Board Committees

- Standing Committee
- Personnel Committee
 - Reviews Panel
 - Staffing Panel
- Finance and Property Committee
 - Grants Panel

5. The executive staff posts within the Board are as follows:

Executive Secretary: The Rev David Bruce, serves all areas of the Board's work and supervises all Key Strategy areas with a specific responsibility for personnel and Strategy for Mission.

Mission Development Officer: The Rev David Thompson, services the delivery of Key Strategy 1, Strategy for Mission, specifically the production of missional plans at Presbytery and Congregational level between 2009 and 2010 with some delegated responsibility for Key Strategy 2, Development.

Communications Officer: Mr Robin Fairbairn, services the delivery of Key Strategy 3 ensuring that news of the work of Mission in Ireland is spread effectively throughout the Church through such means as our new website (www.missionireland.org), ReachOut Magazine, Conferences and staff deputation.

Support Officer: When appointed, this person will service the delivering of Key Strategy 4 including the management of BMI grants and all aspects of our property portfolio.

Finance Manager: Mr Nehru Dass, is responsible for the operational management of finances of the BMI.

6. In 2005, an agreement was entered into between the BMI and the PWA concerning the future management of Deaconesses. It was agreed that the PWA would pay an annual grant to the BMI and that BMI would take responsibility for the operational management of the project. In the last year, further discussions have taken place to clarify the details of this arrangement. It is agreed that BMI is now responsible for the recruitment, training, deployment and review of Deaconesses. There are 27 Deaconesses with a further three in

training. For the short term, the Board has made administrative provision for the management of deaconesses within the BMI office. We will use the time to explore longer-term solutions to the issues of Deaconess management and funding.

7. The Board thanks all those who are working in the field in its name or indirectly through its grants. This includes Deaconesses, Home and Urban Mission Ministers, Irish Mission Workers, Urban Mission Workers and others. We ask the Assembly to continue to pray for all those who are in the front line of mission. We are greatly indebted also to our executive and administrative staff as well as the various Conveners for all their work in supporting and providing resources for the Board's activities. We are also greatly indebted to members of other Church House departments and Boards who help facilitate the work of BMI.

8. Our special thanks is extended to the Rev David Bruce for his leadership and wholehearted commitment to the work as Executive Secretary since taking up the post in August 2007. On 1 April 2008 we welcomed the Rev David Thompson to the staff team as Mission Development Officer and commend him to the prayers and support of the General Assembly.

9. We place on record our thanks to the Rev David Montgomery for his committed and dedicated work as Director for Congregational Life. Monty's passion for the mission of the church was evident in the enthusiasm that he brought to encouraging Congregations to develop their corporate life and reach out to their communities. We pray God's blessing on him and his wife Gwen in the new situation in which God has placed them in Greystones.

10. We thank the Rev Harold Boyce for his careful and effective work as Convener of the Assembly Committee on Congregational Life. Under Harold's guidance and wise leadership this Committee has helped many Congregations towards vibrancy in witness and work. Our prayer is that when his successor is appointed the production of mission resources for the Church will continue with the same energy and vision. Under the Board restructuring, the Committee will be re-named the "Research and Resources Committee" and a resolution to this effect is appended.

11. Above all, we give thanks to God for sustaining us through another year of significant challenges as far as the life of our Board is concerned. We pray that, under God, we may serve the Church and enable mission in Ireland. It is our earnest desire that in this coming year, we may see an outpouring of God's Spirit once again upon our land.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE COMMITTEE

1. We thank God for a year's work. We were saddened by the departure of the Director for Congregational Life, the Rev David Montgomery, in September 2007, but delighted to learn of his appointment under the Home Mission to the Congregation of Greystones.

2. The Committee has worked on the Assembly remit from 2007, which followed the Memorial of the Presbytery of Dublin and Munster on the proposed

change to the Code in relation to the use of Communion Tokens. The response of the Committee to the Memorial is as follows:

**REPORT TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY FROM COMMITTEE ON
CONGREGATIONAL LIFE IN RELATION TO THE MEMORIAL OF
THE PRESBYTERY OF DUBLIN AND MUNSTER**

In 2007 a Memorial was brought to the General Assembly containing the following paragraph upon which the Congregational Life Committee was invited to comment:

“That a proposed change to Code Par 40(4) could read as follows: ‘The Session shall record attendance of communicants at the Lord’s Supper and may do so by the use of tokens or some other appropriate method.’”

The use of Communion Tokens in Reformed Churches dates from 1560 when John Calvin advised the Genevan Council to use lead tokens “to prevent the profanation of the Table”. This was not a complete innovation as tokens were often used in society as “counters, permits or IOUs”. In some Church circles they were issued to the clergy for services rendered and could then be redeemed for currency.

When introduced in Geneva they were used as a means to show that the possessor should be admitted to the sacrament. Calvin’s advice to the Council was that, “Each person should receive tokens of lead for those of his household who were instructed; and the strangers who might come, on giving testimony of their faith, should also receive tokens and those who had none should not be admitted to the tables.”

The use of tokens took its usual path, for us, from Geneva to Scotland and from Scotland to Ireland. We may presume that for some time the same care was taken here over instructing and hearing testimonies. However, viewed from the standpoint of our own day we can see that, however slowly, things have greatly changed.

Metal tokens have been replaced by small printed cards. The reason for using tokens has also changed. Instead of being “tickets of admission” they are now merely a means of recording attendance.

The present Code does not directly state the purpose of tokens but simply says, “The Session shall distribute tokens of membership to communicants in the congregation previous to the administration of the Lord’s Supper” (Par 40(4)). There is however the strong implication that they are a means of recording attendance for the Code goes on to say, “The Kirk Session shall keep a roll of members of the congregation in full communion” (Par 41(1)) and “The Session shall not remove the name of a communicant from the roll... unless he has been continuously absent from the Lord’s Table for two years” (Par 41(2)).

The instruction and pastoral visitation previously associated with the distribution of the tokens has virtually disappeared, with the obvious exception of new communicants. No longer does the minister give a token to each communicant personally at the pre-communion service. Instead they are variously distributed; personally by elders or dropped through the letterbox of the communicant, or given out at the front door of the church on communion Sunday, or even by the announcement that they may be lifted from the vestibule table on the previous Sunday.

In short, the nature and use of tokens has changed and continues to change within our denomination. When the Dublin and Munster Presbytery ask for further change they are simply aiding this evolution.

It seems to the Committee that what is being asked would make our practise a little more flexible and help those coming into membership from other traditions or from a non-church background, for whom the practice may seem to smack of legalism and bureaucracy. It might be wise however to add a few words to any proposed change e.g. “or some other appropriate method *approved by Presbytery*”. Until other methods have proven themselves Presbyteries ought to ensure that they are working properly.

It is important too that continued use of the communion roll for pastoral and electoral purposes should continue. Absence from communion can often be an indicator of a spiritual problem which can be addressed proactively.

The Committee offers the following suggestions:

- There is no insurmountable problem to the proposed change.
- An annually updated communion roll should be retained for pastoral and electoral purposes.
- Presbytery permission should be sought by any Congregation wanting to use an alternative to tokens.
- Presbytery should maintain a supervisory role until satisfied that any alternative system is working adequately.

An appropriate overture will be brought to the General Assembly.

Congregational Life Panels

3. It is proposed as part of the Board re-structuring that the Panels on Mission (Rev John Parkes), Ministry (Rev Denis Bannerman), Fellowship (Rev Ivan Patterson) and Discipleship (Rev Dr Brian Savage) be thanked and discharged. These Conveners and Panels have served faithfully and are thanked most warmly for the valuable contribution they have made to the enhancement of congregational life across the Church. The work covered by these Panels will continue as part of the new BMI Assembly Committee on Research and Resources. The Panel on Worship, under the convenership of the Rev Gordon Best, will continue its valuable work under this Committee.

A Booklet on Membership will shortly be published for general use across the Church.

In the future, many of our resources will be made available as downloads from the BMI website www.missionireland.org, in addition to be being produced as printed booklets.

Prayer for Ireland

4. During the incoming year it is our intention to produce a resource to help the Church pray for Ireland. It is hoped to include some material for home group study, sermon ideas, a DVD with information about specific projects and people and suggestions for special events. Details of this resource will be made known when it is ready for distribution.

HAROLD BOYCE, Convener

HOME AND IRISH MISSION COMMITTEE

1. The Home and Irish Mission Committee is grateful to God for the 34 ministers who currently serve in Home Mission Congregations and also to the 13 Irish Mission Workers, 27 Deaconesses and various other workers who diligently and passionately labour for the gospel in a wide variety of settings. The prayer support and general interest in this work from Church members is of inestimable value.

2. Change continues to be the most appropriate word to sum up what is happening in modern Ireland. In our changing society the call to Mission is a call to change the wineskins while preserving the new wine of the gospel. The Home and Irish Mission Committee has a clear focus on strategy for mission. The vision of the Board: *'Towards Vibrant Communities of Christ, Serving and Transforming Ireland'* is succinct and states very clearly the route we are taking. We remain convinced that mission must be at the heart of our Church's life, embedded within our structures and that each local Congregation needs to be encouraged and resourced to engage in mission.

3. Following the resolution of the 2007 Assembly that each Presbytery and each Congregation, or Charge, produce a mission strategy plan by March 2009 and 2010 respectively, the Committee is pleased to welcome the Rev David Thompson as Mission Development Officer within the Board. In comedy the question is asked: "how do you eat an elephant?" – to which the answer is: "one bite at a time..." Similarly the task of formulating missional strategy plans could be viewed as a mammoth job, but the way to progress is one bite at a time. It does call for commitment and vision from those who will be practically responsible on the ground for their preparation; but with training, learning to ask the right questions and with reflection, the end result will be of immense benefit to the denomination as it exists to witness to the saving power of Jesus Christ. If everything is a priority, then nothing is a priority, so identification of situations where need and opportunity are greatest must be made. The end result need not be a large document, but one created with local insight.

4. Opportunities for gospel ministry abound and accordingly the Committee seeks to keep the all-Ireland dimension in mind as well as ministry in specific local settings e.g. ministry in rural Ireland (North or South) is very different from urbanised areas (North or South). Accordingly it is not easy to split the work of the Committee up to simply North or South and much thought has been given to enabling the work of the Committee to progress effectively. There are new areas of opportunity among Migrant Communities –the new people of Ireland and generally within the shifting population centres. It is important that the Church is able to respond to new opportunities. For example:

5. PCI's newest Congregation, Maynooth, has been established and has called their first Minister, the Rev Dr Keith McCrory and continue to enjoy the blessings of God upon their efforts. Such has been the growth in the Congregation in Drogheda, which has outgrown their tired building, that a new site has been designated and procured in an expanding area on the southern outskirts of the town.

6. A decision was made to encourage the Congregations of Greystones and Arklow by severing the link, enabling them to call new Ministers to each

Church. We are pleased to note that the Revs David Montgomery and Michael Anderson were appointed since the last Assembly, and ministry is progressing well.

7. Change and movement is inevitable in modern Ireland. The Congregation in Ballyshannon decided to close and the people have begun worshipping and using their talents in neighbouring Congregations. The struggles of our Presbyterian people in small rural settings is deeply felt in the Committee; fact finding deputations in conjunction with the Union Commission have been conducted in Donegal and Monaghan Presbyteries with a view to encouraging ongoing ministry.

8. With our Methodist colleagues, the Mission Partnership Forum has been looking at the future of the small isolated Church in Shannon, but also in North Connaught with a view to encouraging new growth. In Lisburn agreement has been reached to enable St Columba's to become a single Presbyterian charge, as the numbers of Methodists in membership has declined. The following statement concerning St Columba's was jointly agreed by the Mission Partnership Forum:

St. Columba's Church, Lisburn

"In 1967 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland entered into an agreement to develop a Church on the Moira Road, Lisburn, to be known as St. Columba's Church, Lisburn. Under the terms of the agreement the Presbyterian Church was responsible for building the church and ancillary buildings while the Methodist Church was given the opportunity to share in the furnishing of the buildings and in any other appropriate way. The congregation was to be Presbyterian in organisation but Methodists were permitted to sit and deliberate with the Kirk Session. Methodist forms of service were to be used on occasion and there were periodic pulpit exchanges.

Over the past forty years relationships between the two denominations have been positive but the natural development of the Congregation in St. Columba's has been Presbyterian in form. The arrangements which were put in place in 1967 do not reflect the situation which now pertains. It is therefore proposed to the relevant authorities of the Methodist Church in Ireland and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland that the scheme drawn up in 1967 be concluded and that, in the interests of church order and mission, St Columba's, Lisburn be recognised and named as a Presbyterian Church employing the normal form of Presbyterian governance."

It is understood that in concluding this agreement neither denomination has any outstanding liability to the other, and that the Methodist Church in Ireland wishes St Columba's Church well in its ongoing work and witness.

A resolution on this issue is appended.

9. With the demise of the Church Extension Committee it could be thought that church planting has become less important within our Church. The Committee believes it is essential that we maintain a church planting ethos. At the time of writing a conference for those within our church with experience and interest has been organised and it is hoped this will help set the agenda for our

future work in church planting. Again one Congregation may cease (Oldpark) but we are greatly encouraged by the vision and sentiment of the Presbytery of North Belfast to see a potential new cause started on the Cliftonville Road.

10. Congregations in urban centres face different but equally trying circumstances to those faced by remote isolated Congregations. It is perhaps easier to attend a larger Church but the needs and ministry opportunities of smaller inner city Congregations should not be forgotten. The Committee has sought to encourage such Congregations as Strand, Ballysally, Westbourne, May Street, Taughmonagh and others through Urban Ministry Support grants. Overtures are brought to the Assembly to enable some Congregations to be recognised as Urban Mission Congregations under the Home Mission.

11. Under the restructuring of the Board, the Home and Irish Mission Committee will be re-named the Strategy for Mission Committee, and its remit will be broadened to include the implementation of mission plans by Presbyteries and Congregations across the Church.

WILLIAM HENRY, Convener

EDUCATION & PROMOTION COMMITTEE

1. During the past year the Committee has been continuing to develop its existing ways of communicating information about the Board's work to PCI members.

2. As the limitations of the Board's website had become apparent, a new website (www.missionireland.org) was launched in March. It is not an evangelistic site, but rather a tool for keeping PCI members up to date about the many aspects of the Board's work. The site contains resources for prayer, missional plans, and reports and information about individual workers and situations around the island.

3. 'Reachout', the Board's magazine, is now being produced in full colour throughout and also contains a pull-out section, 'Reachout Connect', which can be folded into a small booklet to keep with one's Bible. This pullout contains a monthly prayer diary, as well as information about field-workers and particular mission situations. The magazine also carries contributions relating to the mission work of the Boards of Social Witness and of Youth and Children's Ministry.

4. "Mission in Ireland" evenings were held in sixteen venues across the north of Ireland in March. Similar events are being planned for the rest of the island later in the year. These "Mission in Ireland" events replaced the deputation which used to take place in only three of the twenty-one Presbyteries each year.

5. Work on promotional DVDs has continued during the year. A full-length DVD on the work of Nightlife was completed and a short DVD to promote "Reachout" in Congregations was sent to all Ministers for use in their Congregations.

6. Last year's pilot scheme for Working Groups has been developed further this year. This involves a small group from a large Congregation

travelling to assist a small Congregation with a specific outreach task. So far Drogheda, Mullingar and Kells, Co Meath have all benefited from this scheme.

7. Under the restructuring of the Board, the Education and Promotion Committee will be renamed the Communications Committee. A resolution to this effect is appended.

CHERRY POYNTON, Convener

SHANKILL ROAD MISSION COMMITTEE

1. The Rev Bill Campbell continues to head up the work of the Mission in an area with more than its fair share of the common problems of the inner-city: the malign influence of the paramilitary organisations, drug and alcohol abuse, one-parent families, teenage pregnancies, high unemployment.

2. The main issue for the Committee continues to be the medium and long-term future of the Mission. The Committee is in favour of the demolition of the present building and its replacement with a modern outreach centre, in the context of the four Congregations on the Road streamlining into one, using the West Kirk venue. The Rev David Bruce is engaged in discussions with the North Belfast Presbytery and the other Congregations, to see if there is sufficient support for this plan for it to proceed.

3. Otherwise the work of the Mission continues. The café, with a new cook and some reorganisation, has seen a dramatic increase in business, almost a 50% increase over the previous year, with something like 3,000 customers over the Christmas period. The Men's and Women's second-hand clothing shops continue to have a substantial turnover and provide a useful service to the people of the area.

4. Under the Board restructuring, the Shankill Road Mission Committee will become a Panel under the Strategy for Mission Committee, as part of its Urban Mission Unit.

IAN HART, Convener

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Mrs Irene Young reports:

1. The Committee has been acting on behalf of the Board on personnel matters relating to the Board staff, including Deaconesses, Home and Urban Mission Ministers, Tentmakers and Irish and Urban Mission Workers.

(i) Home Mission Ministers:

The Rev Michael Anderson was ordained and inducted into the Home Mission Congregation of Arklow on 1 September, 2007.

The Rev Katherine Meyer was inducted into the Home Mission Congregation of Sandymount on 28 September, 2007.

The Rev Dr Keith McCrory was inducted into the Home Mission Congregation of Maynooth Community Church on 25 November, 2007.

The Rev John Rushton was inducted into the Home Mission Congregations of Drum, Coothill and Kilmount on 11 April, 2008.

The Rev David Montgomery was inducted into the Home Mission Congregation of Greystones on 12 April, 2008.

(ii) Urban Mission Minister:

The Rev Mervyn Gibson was inducted into the Urban Mission Congregation of Westbourne on 10 January, 2008.

(iii) Irish Mission Workers:

Mr Kevin Hargaden was commissioned on 25 November, 2007 and is serving in Maynooth Community Church.

Mr Eamon Doyle completed training and is serving in the Drogheda area with the Rev John Woodside and Mr Billy Patterson.

(iv) Pastoral Care:

The Executive Secretary, the Rev David Bruce, in his pastoral role, has been meeting with Home and Urban Mission Ministers, Deaconesses and Irish and Urban Mission personnel.

(v) Deaconesses:

Miss Sheila Sutter was inducted into the Congregation of Kells, Ballymena on 9 September, 2007.

Miss Sonya McCullough completed her training in June and was commissioned to serve in Shore Street Donaghadee alongside the Rev Alvin Little, on 23 September, 2007.

Miss Rosemary Spiers and Mrs Elizabeth Warnock commenced second year of a two-year course at Union Theological College in September 2007.

Mrs Lynda McFaul commenced a two-year training course at Union Theological College.

Congregation Applications for a deaconess:

Three applications were circulated with no response, and remain on file until the end of June 2008.

Education, Development and Conferencing:

2. A two-day residential conference for Irish Mission Workers was held on 23 & 24 January, 2008, in Glenada Conference Centre, Newcastle. Patrick Mitchell - Irish Bible Institute, the Rev David Montgomery and Robin Fairbairn led seminars. The Board Convener and Home and Irish Mission Convener led devotions. Feedback from participants was very positive.

A similar conference will be held for deaconesses in October 2008.

We give praise and thanks to God for the faithful witness and service of Deaconesses, Home and Urban Mission Ministers, Irish Mission Workers, Tentmakers and Urban Mission personnel.

We thank them for their commitment and service in Congregations, Hospitals and other placements.

NIGHTLIGHT PANEL

The Rev Alistair Bill reports:

1. The street outreach work of Nightlight is continuing in the entertainment areas of Belfast with Mr John Luke as Director. Teams of volunteers, working on rota, take Christ onto the streets in the Golden Mile on Thursday night from 8pm, and Friday and Saturday nights from 11pm and on Friday and Saturday nights in the Odyssey Complex from 10pm.

2. Mrs Linzie Cobain is the Development Officer and has concentrated on team development and contact follow-up with the volunteer teams in the Golden Mile area. Linzie's teams, as well as covering the area in twos or threes, staff a "tea table" outside the Kinghan Church in Botanic Avenue.

3. Mr Brian Simons was appointed in September 2005 to develop a team working in the Odyssey Complex. Brian works with a smaller team in a smaller area and uses a more direct contact with people. A lot of regular connections are made, especially with those who work in the complex, i.e. security personnel, door staff etc.

4. Since September 2007 John has been developing a pilot outreach in the Cathedral Quarter, an area which has seen major expansion since the summer of 2006. This will place PCI Nightlight teams in each of the three Belfast Presbyteries and the Nightlight Panel would encourage these Presbyteries to endorse and support these teams in whatever ways are possible.

5. The volunteer teams are committed Christians of all ages and from a wide range of backgrounds who have a burden for the work of Nightlight and who have experienced clear direction from God to become actively involved. New team members go through an application, vetting and interview process and then receive "on the job" training. The team is constantly changing as individuals' personal circumstances alter and it is always encouraging to welcome new people on board.

6. Mrs Catherine Dalzell continues as Part-time Resource Officer and in that role she has been able to produce Nightline's Prayer Letters, Information Packs, leaflets and other resource material, as well as coordinating deputation. Catherine is the first point of contact that most Congregations have with Nightlight and continues to be a most helpful and valuable representative for Nightlight.

7. The Nightlight office is at the Kinghan Church in Botanic Avenue, where Golden Mile team members can also meet for prayer before and after the work on the streets. It also provides somewhere to bring anyone in need of help and counselling.

8. John continues to receive numerous invitations to speak to Congregations and this reflects on the high level of support and interest shown by the Church in general. He also tries to maintain a network contact with the many Nightlight-type teams that have been set up locally throughout Ireland and is always willing to speak to groups thinking of establishing outreaches in their areas.

9. The Nightlight Panel of the Board of Mission in Ireland, in consultation with John, oversees the work of Nightlight. Under the restructuring

of the Board, the Panel will report to the Strategy for Mission Committee as part of its Urban Mission Unit.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Mr Douglas Cowan reports:

1. During the year the Committee has continued to review the format of its accounts and each quarter it compares the actual income and expenditure with the budget projections. The Committee is grateful for the work of the BMI Finance Manager, Mr Nehru Dass, who is now operating from the Financial Secretary's Office.

2. As the work of BMI expands, the Committee is able to monitor changes in costs and seek to finance these within available resources. However, the Committee regularly faces pressure to meet all the needs of the Board.

3. A major financial concern for the Committee is the shortfall in income from PWA grants and contributions from Congregations with Deaconesses, against the salary cost of Deaconesses, who are now paid by BMI. There are ongoing discussions with the PWA Executive about this.

4. The Grants Committee has been pleased to support some exciting mission development proposals from Congregations in different parts of Ireland and will try to make more finance available in future for this purpose. However, there are very limited resources and the challenge is to use funds available in the best possible way for outreach throughout Ireland.

5. The Board is having to finance some new Church building projects and are seeking to do so with capital funds raised from the sale of surplus land. This is an ongoing process in consultation with the United Appeal Board, which has been very supportive of our work.

PROPERTY COMMITTEE

Mr Brian Knox reports:

1. In addition to the stated meetings of the Property Committee, Representative Sub-groups, using the varying expertise of its members, have visited numerous Church properties, meeting with many congregational representatives, and thereafter reporting to the Board as appropriate. The following is a brief summary of the work of the Committee, since reporting to the 2007 General Assembly.

2. Taughmonagh

The Church building was officially opened and dedicated in September 2007 by the Moderator of the General Assembly. The construction of the new building was made possible by using the proceeds of the estates of Federata Anna Harpur and Ella Louise Frank. In accordance with the terms of the bequest, the new Church has been officially named, "The Arnold Frank Memorial Church".

3. Ballysally

Tenders have been obtained and statutory approvals granted in respect of agreed work to upgrade the Church building. It is intended that building works should proceed over the summer months, providing additional storage areas, more appropriate toilet facilities and a more welcoming entrance area.

4. Irvinestown

Planning permission has been granted for a replacement Church building, and tenders are being sought for the work.

5. Mullingar

A Planning application to provide additional accommodation, linked to the existing listed Church building, has unexpectedly been refused. In addition, the Congregation are fast outgrowing the physical building which they presently occupy in the vibrant centre of Mullingar. The issues facing the Congregation are such that an alternative location for worship is being sought.

6. Waterford

While some roof repair works have been carried out to this listed Church building, other essential repair and upgrading works are required. Over the past year, discussions have been held with Methodist colleagues, and with Waterford Area Partnership, and the General Assembly Solicitors, in order to decide a way forward. These negotiations are ongoing.

7. Mountmellick

Following lengthy deliberation regarding the way forward for this deteriorating listed Church building and adjoining Manse, it has been agreed to sell the buildings. Discussions are ongoing regarding this sale, and the future missional activity in the town. Proposals are under consideration by the Board, Presbytery and local Congregations, regarding a possible amalgamation with Tullamore. A resolution to this effect is appended.

8. Drogheda

Following numerous discussions to assess the overall strategy for Drogheda, meetings and inspections were carried out at the existing listed Church building in the centre of Drogheda, and at a proposed new building site at Bettystown – South Drogheda. A decision was taken to proceed with the sale of the existing buildings and the purchase of two and a half acres of land, and to the construction on the new site of an appropriately designed suite of buildings – subject to approval by the Appraisals Committee. Drogheda has paid a deposit for the land and is presently seeking design ideas from local architects, with a view to seeking planning permission. The marketing of the present Church, together with the former Manse which adjoins it, is being explored.

9. Arklow

Property Committee representatives have met with Arklow Committee regarding proposals to provide additional worship space, together with some break-out rooms and minor hall, and intend to develop these discussions together, upon receipt of further information from the Congregation.

10. Ballyshannon

Arrangements are being put in place for the sale of the Ballyshannon Church building and surrounding land.

11. Howth & Malahide

Following preparation of a structural report on the condition of the Howth Manse, the decision was taken to sell and to acquire a suitable Manse dwelling in Malahide. This matter is ongoing, and a suitable replacement Manse has been identified.

12. General

The Committee strives to be supportive in respect of property issues throughout the work of the Board. Over the past year numerous matters have been under discussion in addition to those already referred to. These include: Sligo; Boyle; Enniscorthy; Rathmullan; Merville; Tullamore; Kells; Strand; Cork; Greystones and Galway. In many of these cases, responses are awaited from the respective Churches or advisors, in order to enable the Property Committee to give ongoing assistance to the Board.

PRESBYTERIAN MUTUAL SOCIETY

The Rev Sidlow McFarland reports:

1. The Directors are pleased to report another very satisfactory year's progress in the work of the Society. The number of new members has increased to over ten thousand and with a further new investment during the year the total assets now exceed £300 million.

2. An increase in the volume of lending, together with a strong rental income from our commercial property investments, enabled the Society to produce a gross profit of £20 million. This enabled a dividend of 6.6% to have been declared on all shareholdings for the financial year ended 31 March 2008.

3. Congregations and individuals continue to make use of the very competitive borrowing facilities available for a wide range of purposes from car, house and land purchase to business expansion and bridging finance.

4. In conclusion, the Directors offer thanks to God for all that he has enabled the Presbyterian Mutual Society to achieve over the past year and pray for his continued blessing in the future.

APPENDIX A

HOME MISSION MINISTERS

Congregations in (brackets) are not in the Home Mission.

Rev M Anderson – Arklow
 Rev S Ankatell – 1st Bailieborough, Corranearry, (Trinity Bailieborough)
 Rev D Campbell – (Blackrock) & Bray
 Rev CFD Clements - Irvinestown, Pettigo & Tempo
 Rev C Dickson (Cavanaleck) & Aughtentaine
 Rev JG Faris - Cork & Aghada
 Rev J Fell - (Ebrington) and Inch
 Rev CJ Gamble - Athy & Naas
 Rev TD Hagan - Carndonagh & Malin
 Rev WJ Hayes – Tullamore & Mountmellick
 Rev K Henderson – (Aughnacloy) & Ballymagrane
 Rev J Honeyford (2nd Castledearg) & Alt
 Rev KA Jones - (Waterside) & Fahan
 Rev J Lamont - Carrigart & Dunfanaghy
 Rev SJ Lockington - Corboy & Mullingar
 Rev R Love - Taughmonagh [Church Extension]
 Rev Dr DK McCrory - Maynooth
 Rev PG McDowell - Limerick
 Rev GJ Mackarel - Drumkeeran, Killeshandra, Cavan, Bellasis
 Rev D Montgomery - Greystones
 Rev K Meyer - Sandymount
 Rev Dr JG Millar - Howth & Malahide
 Rev NS Millen – (Dundalk, Castlebellingham) & Carlingford
 Rev GA Mitchell - Sligo & Boyle
 Rev DT Moore - Kilkenny
 Rev J Parkin [Methodist] - Waterford
 Rev S Rea – Enniscorthy and Wexford
 Rev DW Reid - (Ardstraw) & Douglas
 Rev SJ Richmond - Donegal
 Rev John Rushton - Drum, Coothill and Kilmount
 Rev Dr RB Savage - Kells & Ervey
 Rev RB Thompson - (Badoney, Corrick), Glenelly
 Rev DJ Woodside - Drogheda
 Rev GP Young - Merville & Greenbank
 Rev S Yamsu [Methodist] - Galway

Vacant - Ballina, Killala, Ballymote
 Vacant - Clones, Newbliss, Stonebridge Ballyhobridge
 Vacant - Fermoy & Cahir
 Vacant - Maguiresbridge, Lisbellaw, Newtownbutler, Lisnaskea;
 Vacant - Carlow
 Vacant - (Frankford, Castleblayney) & Corvalley
 Vacant - (1st Monaghan) & Smithborough
 Vacant - (Kerrykeel, Milford) & Rathmullan

URBAN MISSION MINISTER

Rev M Gibson – Westbourne

DEACONESES

Jenny Clegg - Ballycrochan, Bangor
 Amanda Cooper - New Row, Coleraine
 Muriel Cromie - Belfast City Hospital
 Doreen Draffin - Whitehouse
 Eleanor Drysdale - Wellington Street, Ballymena
 Lynda Gibson - NI Prison Service
 Jean Gwyn - Royal Victoria Hospital
 Sharon Heron - Strand
 Roberta Irvine - First Comber
 Christine Kyle - Ulster Hospital
 Phyllis Linton - West Church Ballymena
 Michelle McCauley - Ballygowan
 Heather McCracken - Alexandra and locum Royal Victoria Hospital
 Sadie McCullough - Whiteabbey
 Sonya McCullough - Shore Street, Donaghadee
 Carol McRoberts - Tullycarnet
 Gillian Martin - Woodvale
 Elizabeth Matthews - Hill Street, Lurgan and Craigavon Hospital
 Carol O'Hara - Antrim Area Hospital & Musgrave Park Hospital
 Jackie O'Neill - Joymount, Carrickfergus
 Julie Peake - Portrush
 Margaret Robertson - Gardenmore, Larne
 Jenny Robinson - South Belfast Friendship House
 Pat Shirley - Greystone Road, Antrim
 Kathleen Spence - Leave of absence to serve on OM Logos 2
 Sheila Sutter - Kells Ballymena
 Evelyn White - First Lisburn

Deaconesses in Training

Second Year:	Rosemary Spiers Liz Warnock
First Year:	Lynda McFaul

IRISH MISSION WORKERS

Jonathan Reid - Glens of Antrim, Newtowncrommelin
 David Boyd - Adelaide Road, Dublin
 Tom Dowling - Kilkenny
 Eamon Doyle - Drogheda
 Kevin Hargaden - Maynooth
 Jim Laverty - Letterkenny
 Peter Maitland - Cahir
 Harry Moreland - Cork and Fermoy
 Billy Patterson - Drogheda

Keith Preston - Mid Ulster Presbytery
 Stephen Wilson - Mullingar
 William Workman - Athy and Naas
 Philip Whelton – Arklow

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the Report be received.
2. That the Congregational Life Committee be renamed the Research and Resources Committee and that _____ be appointed its Convener.
3. That the Home and Irish Mission Committee be renamed the Strategy for Mission Committee.
4. That the Education and Promotion Committee be renamed the Communications Committee.
5. That the Shankill Road Mission Committee be made a Panel of the Strategy for Mission Committee.
6. That the Assembly commend the vision and work of Nightlight to the wider Church and that the Nightlight Panel be made a Panel of the Strategy for Mission Committee.
7. That from this date, St Columba’s Church, Lisburn be recognised as a Congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and that the formal links with the Methodist Church in Ireland pertaining to St Columba’s be ended.
8. That the Congregation of Mountmellick be amalgamated with the Congregation of Tullamore under terms determined by the Union Commission.
9. That the General Assembly congratulate the Directors of the Presbyterian Mutual Society on its continuing success and encourage Congregations and individuals to avail themselves of its services.
10. That the Board of Mission in Ireland, with its associated working Committees for the ensuing year, be appointed in accordance with Par 280 of the Code as follows:

OVERTURES TRANSMITTED

Anent Par 300(1) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 300(1)(a) of the Code the word “and” be deleted;

the following sub-Par 300(1)(c) be added: “(c) congregations in urban situations which, in the opinion of the Board by reason of their locality and/or membership require grants or loans from Home Mission funds. Such a congregation may be designated as an ‘Urban Mission Congregation under the Home Mission Development Scheme.’”;

the following sub-Par 300(1)(d) be also added:

“(d) new congregations or development congregations which, in the opinion of the Board require grants or loans from Home Mission funds towards the establishment of the cause.”

RA PATTON

Anent Par 300(2) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 300(2) of the Code the words “Home Mission congregations” be deleted and the words “a Home Mission or Urban Mission congregation” substituted in their place and the following sentence added: “Presbytery approval shall be sought before a new church plant is commenced within its bounds, and the Presbytery shall apply to the Board for appropriate status.”

RA PATTON

Anent Par 300 (3) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 300(3) of the Code after the words “A Home Mission congregation” the words “or Urban Mission congregation” be inserted and after the words “the Home Mission” the words “so long as systems of governance are in place that are in conformity with the Presbyterian form of Church government as defined in the Code and that Presbytery approves the proposed change of status.” be inserted.

RA PATTON

Anent Par 300(5) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 300(5) of the Code after the word “prevailing” the word “basic” be added; and after the words “a Home Mission congregation” the words “or an Urban Mission congregation” be inserted.

RA PATTON

Anent Par 302 (1)(b) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 302(1)(b) of the Code the words “the Irish Mission Committee” be deleted and the words “the Board of Mission in Ireland” substituted in their place.

RA PATTON

Anent Par 302(1)(c) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 302(1)(c) of the Code the words “Superintendent of the Irish Mission” be deleted and the words “Executive Secretary of the Board of Mission in Ireland” substituted in their place.

RA PATTON

Anent Par 302(3)(a) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 302(3)(a) of the Code the word “Superintendent” be deleted and the words “Executive Secretary of the Board of Mission in Ireland” substituted in its place.

RA PATTON

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Central President: Mrs JOAN HANNA
General Secretary: Mrs CAROLINE HAWTHORNE

Theme for the year: COME AND SEE

(This report should be read in conjunction with the reports of the Board of Mission in Ireland, Board of Mission Overseas and Board of Social Witness).

1. The theme for this past year has been **Come and See**. People are often invited to “come and see...” and it’s usually something exciting which has been bought. Psalm 66:5 invites us to, “*Come and see what God has done, how awesome His works on man’s behalf*”. This theme has challenged and encouraged members to see what a wonderful God we have – everything which God has done is indeed ‘awesome’. Mrs Angela Mills invited members at the Annual Meeting last year to come and see the place where Jesus lived, died and lay. She also invited members to come and see this Man who broke through barriers to speak to one woman and how this act gave her hope, self-worth, dignity, purpose and a change of priorities.

2. The PWA office continues to be staffed by Mrs Caroline Hawthorne, General Secretary; Miss Fiona Bingham, Senior Secretary and Miss Naomi Campbell, Receptionist/Secretary. Mrs Charlotte Stevenson has been working as part-time Development Officer for the past two years. PWA is very grateful for the staff team it has and records sincere thanks to them for their efforts over the past year.

3. The Programme Planning Committee continues to be commended by members for the production of the resource pack. Branches are offered this pack each year to help with their programme – it is full of useful ideas relating to the theme for the year. PWA records sincere thanks to Miss Elizabeth Smyth for convening this Committee and for the valuable contribution she and the other Committee members have made. Last year a DVD was produced, allowing members to “come and see” some of the projects that PWA has been involved in through the Birthday Thank Offering. The DVD also includes something of the work in the PWA office, South Belfast Friendship House and the work of Deaconesses.

4. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2007/8

Office Bearers:

Central President:	Mrs Joan Hanna (Foyle)
Home Vice President:	Mrs Valerie Stewart (Donegal)
Overseas Vice President:	Mrs Dorothy Marshall (North Belfast)
Treasurer:	Miss Zena McAllister (Down)

Committee Members:

Mrs Margaret Stevenson (Ards)	Mrs Violet Miller (Foyle)
Mrs Edna McIlwaine (Armagh)	Mrs Elizabeth Moffett (Iveagh)
Mrs Lynn Murray (Ballymena)	Mrs Nan Bradford (Monaghan)
Mrs Dorothy Marshall (North Belfast)	Mrs Jean Donald (Omagh)
Mrs Jean Clarke (South Belfast)	Mrs Barbara Thompson (Route)
Mrs Winnie Moffett (East Belfast)	Mrs Sandra Fleck (Tyrone)
Mrs Janice Paul (Carrickfergus)	Mrs Valerie Tweedie (YWG)
Miss Elizabeth Smyth (Coleraine)	Mrs Anthea Harrison (Ex Officio)
Mrs Glynis Hutchinson (Derry/Strabane)	Mrs Christine Finlay (Ex Officio)
Mrs Georgina Hunter (Donegal)	Mrs Charlotte Stevenson (Ex Officio)
Mrs Phyllis Spence (Dromore)	Mrs Caroline Hawthorne

5. New Members of Executive Committee 2008/9

Mrs Hazel Clarke (Coleraine)
 Mrs Gwen Carson (Route)
 Mrs Anne Thompson (Tyrone)

6. Office Bearers to be installed at Annual Meeting on 1 May, 2008

President: Mrs Valerie Stewart (Donegal)
 Home Vice President: Mrs Phyllis Spence (Dromore)

7. The Executive Committee met eight times during the year. As well as carrying the responsibility of steering the work of the Association, the Executive Committee continues to provide representatives to several Committees in PCI and various other organisations and bodies.

8. Mrs Winnie Moffett represents PWA at Women's Link.

9. Mrs Maureen Weir represents PWA at Women's Forum and The Olive Branch.

10. Mrs Joan Hanna has served as Central President 2007/8. During this year she has given generously of her time in attendance at meetings of Boards and Committees and has travelled extensively throughout Ireland to fulfil her many speaking engagements. Joan travelled to Indonesia from 29 October – 16 November, 2007 where she visited Mervyn and Raing McCullagh in Sumba and was welcomed by the Moderator of the Gereja Kristen Sumba (GKS); she also met with Barry and Elsy McCroskery in Kupang, Timor and the new leadership team of GMIT. The Birthday Project for 2008/9 was identified in Lelogama – PWA hopes to provide a truck to help transport produce to the market in Kupang.

11. PWA Executive Committee continues to appreciate the support and advice given by the Clerk of the General Assembly, the Rev Dr DJ Watts.

12. The Committee also records its thanks to the Rev D Bruce, Secretary to the Board of Mission in Ireland; the Rev WS Marrs, Secretary to the Board of Mission Overseas; Mr L Conway, Secretary to the Board of Social Witness; and Mr S Lynas, Secretary to the Board of Communications, for their help and expertise.

Way Ahead

13. Society has greatly changed since the formation of the Presbyterian Women's Association in 1971, including the role of women. It's also recognised that while members had been diligent in supporting mission overseas and in Ireland, some were in danger of ignoring the needs of women in their own area. It was imperative that the organisation prayerfully sought God's guidance for the future of women's ministry and mission.

14. Many women can thank God for the influence PWA and YWG has had on their lives, but now a new chapter begins in the story of women's work within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

15. On 1 May, 2008 a new women's organisation will be launched within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The name of this organisation will be *Presbyterian Women* (PW), incorporating the existing Presbyterian Women's Association and Young Women's Groups.

16. This marks the end of a seven year process, during which the leadership of the PWA and YWG have prayerfully reassessed the work, outreach and role of the organisation. The purpose of this process has been to discern God's will for the future.

17. The mission statement of the organisation is: ***Presbyterian Women encourages women to become disciples of Christ.***

18. *Presbyterian Women* will continue to contribute much to the Church's Mission at Home and Overseas through encouragement, prayer and financial support. We give thanks to God for all that He has enabled us to do over the past year and pray for His guidance and direction for the future.

19. Events 2007/8

- The Annual Prayer Meeting was held on 5 April, 2007, in the Chapel, Church House. Prayers were led by Mrs Sandra Fleck.
- The Annual Meetings were held on 3 May, 2007, in the Assembly Hall. The guest speaker was Mrs Angela Mills, Capernwray Christian Conference Centre.
- Prior to Executive Committee in September 2007. Rev John Hanna conducted a Communion Service.
- General Committee held a conference on 8 September, 2007, in Stormont Presbyterian Church, Belfast. The speakers were Mrs Valerie Tweedie, Mrs Lynda Gibson, Mrs Lynn Murray and Mrs Charlotte Stevenson. Worship was led by Mr Graham Hawthorne from Woodlands Presbyterian Church.
- General Committee met on 7 February, 2008, in the Minor Hall, Church House.
- To celebrate the centenary of Deaconess work within the life of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Jim Rodgers, kindly invited all those who were involved in this valuable ministry to a reception he hosted on 26 February, 2008.
- The Central President, Home Vice-President and General Secretary visited some of the Church's Board of Social Witness

Centres in Belfast on Thursday, 24 January, 2008. Over the years PWA members have supported The Vine, Corkey House and other Board of Social Witness Centres through their special projects. The Office Bearers welcomed the opportunity to visit The Vine, Corkey House and Thompson House to see how the work has developed.

South Belfast Friendship House

20. The South Belfast Friendship House Management Committee met on four occasions during the year.

21. The House continues to be a place of Christian Witness for this area of South Belfast.

22. Mrs Jenny Robinson was inducted on 12 June, 2007 to serve as Deaconess in South Belfast Friendship House. The Management Committee is delighted with this appointment and wishes to record its thanks to Jenny for the work she undertakes on their behalf.

23. PWA records grateful thanks to Mrs Eunice Moore and Mrs Menita Cheesman for their continued faithful service and commitment to the work of South Belfast Friendship House.

24. PWA members give faithfully to the Christmas Appeal each year. This helps to buy gifts for the children and others associated with the House.

25. Mrs Lynne Guiney, Assistant Chaplain of Derryvolgie Hall, and a group of volunteers have continued their involvement with the After School Club. The Committee appreciates all that they have given of their time and talents.

26. Plans have been submitted to extend the premises of Friendship House. It is hoped that work will take place within the next year.

27. PWA Executive Committee values the partnership with the Board of Social Witness and records its thanks to them for their support during the past year.

Finance

28. PWA Executive Committee is very grateful for the ongoing support of PWA members which enables PWA to contribute to the mission of the Church at home and overseas.

29. PWA gave a grant of £310,000 in 2008 to the Board of Mission in Ireland to support in part 27 Deaconesses serving in Congregations, the Community, the Hospitals and the Prison Service. In addition, PWA will further support three Deaconesses who are being trained at Union Theological College.

30. PWA gave a grant of £210,000 in 2008 to the Board of Mission Overseas.

Birthday Thank Offering

31. This runs from 1 May until 30 April in each ensuing year and from 1 May, 2008 will be referred to as the Birthday Project.

32. The total amount received for the 2006/7 Birthday Thank Offering was £36,077. £8,000 has been given to South Belfast Friendship House and the

balance of £28,077 has been given to help provide health care facilities for families living on rubbish tips in Brazil.

33. At the time of writing the Birthday Thank Offering (2007/8), for supporting Deaconess Training, was approximately £38,803.82.

Bequests

34. PWA Executive Committee acknowledges with thanks the following bequests:

Isobel Dixon	£584.10
Henrietta McMillan	£1,000.00
Winifred Shaw	£1,000.00

Wider World

35. PWA Executive Committee records sincere thanks to the Editor, Mrs Anthea Harrison, Mrs Sheena Mulholland who compiles the children's page, the Editorial Committee and all who contributed to the magazine and its promotion.

36. PWA Executive Committee records thanks to Mrs Valerie Stewart, whose contribution as Editor of the Children's Page over a number of years has been greatly appreciated.

37. In January 2008 subscription to the magazine was increased to £4 per year.

38. The Family Focus section, which covers issues on grief, abuse, addictions, childlessness, retirement and marriage etc, continues to receive positive feedback.

39. Wider World maintains its readership of around 22,000. The Committee continues to promote Wider World amongst the members of our Church and would encourage more members to subscribe to this excellent magazine.

40. Selected extracts from Wider World continue to be available on audio tape for those who are blind or partially sighted.

YOUNG WOMEN'S GROUPS

41. Young Women's Groups Central Committee 2007/8

Office Bearers:

Chairperson:	Mrs Valerie Tweedie (East Belfast)
Secretary:	Mrs Anna Morison (Ballymena)
Treasurer:	Mrs Deborah Hyland (Newry)
Newsletter Editor:	Mrs Vera McLean (Carrickfergus)

Committee Members:

Mrs Joanne McKee (Newry)
 Mrs Phyllis Spence (PWA)
 Mrs Caroline Hawthorne (PWA)
 Mrs Charlotte Stevenson (PWA)

42. The 2007/8 theme, **Come and See**, was shared by YWG and PWA.

43. YWG held a Conference on Saturday, 8 March, 2008, in Stormont Presbyterian Church. The theme for the day was, *Beauty with Him* and the main speaker was Linda Keys, who is in her third year of Ministerial Training at Union Theological College. Linda, through testimony and teaching, showed how God can take lives that are broken, transform them and use them to impact others for His Kingdom. Charlotte Stevenson, Development Officer, gave a presentation on *Presbyterian Women* and Victoria Gordon, Manager of Temple Spa NI, led a relaxation and pamper time. Valerie Tweedie, Chairperson of YWG and Joan Hanna, PWA Central President, were interviewed on their backgrounds and the future of women's ministry in PCI. They both agreed that this was an exciting time for Churches and that if women in congregations united and embraced the purpose and aims of *Presbyterian Women* they could impact many women's lives.

44. The 2007/08 Overseas Project is to assist essential work at the Vocational Bible School in Vyara, India. The 2007/08 Home Project, in conjunction with PWA, is to support Deaconess training.

45. The YWG Newsletter was produced in September 2007 and January 2008 for all members. YWG Central Committee records sincere thanks to the Editor, Vera McLean.

46. Over the past year YWG has continued to work closely with PWA in preparing for the launch of *Presbyterian Women* (PW). Groups were informed of the central amalgamation of YWG and PWA and were encouraged to seek a way to integrate with the PWA in their local Congregation, following the guidelines that have been produced. YWG looks forward to the launch of PW on 1 May, 2008 at the PWA Annual Meeting. YWG Central Committee has appreciated and benefited greatly from the PWA representatives, Caroline Hawthorne and Phyllis Spence, who serve on this Committee. They appreciate the time and commitment given by Charlotte Stevenson in assisting groups to unite with PWA as they make the transition to PW.

RESOLUTION

1. That the Report be received.

OVERTURES TRANSMITTED

Anent Par 114(2); 114(2)(a); 114(3) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that:

in Par 114(2) of the Code the words "The Presbyterian Women's Association Home Department, developing the work of the former Women's Home Mission" be deleted and the words "*Presbyterian Women*, developing the work of the former Presbyterian Women's Association Home Department" substituted in their place.

in Par 114(2)(a) of the Code the words "provide for the recruitment, training, organisation and support of deaconesses and women workers" be deleted and the words "support deaconesses" substituted in their place.

in Par 114(3) of the Code the words “**The Church Extension agency**” be deleted and the words “**The Board of Mission in Ireland**” substituted in their place.

DJ BRUCE

Anent Par 115(2) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 115(2) of the Code the words “The PWA Overseas Department, developing the work of the former Women’s Missionary Association and Zenana Mission” be deleted and the words “*Presbyterian Women* developing the work of the former Presbyterian Women’s Association Overseas Department” substituted in their place.

DJ BRUCE

Anent Pars 279(1); 279(3)(b); 279(3)(c) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that:

in Par 279(1) of the Code the words “four Presbyterian Women’s Association Office Bearers” be deleted and the words “the President, Overseas Vice-President and General Secretary of *Presbyterian Women*” substituted in their place; the words “one Young Women’s Group representative” be deleted; and the words “seven representative members of the PWA Executive Committee” be deleted and the words “five representative members of the Central Committee of *Presbyterian Women*” substituted in their place;

in Par 279(3)(b) of the Code the words “Finance Committee of the P.W.A.” be deleted and the words “Finance Committee of *Presbyterian Women*” substituted in their place;

in Par 279(3)(c) of the Code the words “the Presbyterian Women’s Association” be deleted and the words “*Presbyterian Women*” substituted in their place.

DJ BRUCE

Anent Pars 280(1); 280(2)(a); 280(3)(b); 280(3)(c) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that:

in Par 280(1) of the Code the words “the President, one Vice-President and Secretary of the Presbyterian Women’s Association” be deleted and the words “the President, Home Vice-President and General Secretary of *Presbyterian Women*” substituted in their place; the words “two Young Women’s Group representatives” be deleted and the words “seven representative members of the PWA Executive Committee” be deleted and the words “five representative members of the Central Committee of *Presbyterian Women*” substituted in their place;

in Par 280(2)(a) of the Code the words “PWA Home Department and Church Extension” be deleted.

in Par 280(3)(b) of the Code the words “Finance Committee of the PWA” be deleted and the words “Finance Committee of *Presbyterian Women*” substituted in their place;

in Par 280(3)(c) of the Code the words “the Presbyterians Women’s Association” be deleted and the words “*Presbyterian Women*” substituted in their place.

DJ BRUCE

Anent Par 281(1) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 281(1) of the Code the words “and seven representative members of the PWA Executive Committee and two Young Women’s Group representatives” be deleted and the words “the President, Home Vice-President and General Secretary of *Presbyterian Women* and five representative members of the Central Committee of *Presbyterian Women*” substituted in their place.

DJ BRUCE

Anent Pars 304(1); 304(3) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that:

in Par 304(1) of the Code the words “to the Secretary, Presbyterian Women’s Association” be deleted and the words “to the Executive Secretary of the Board of Mission in Ireland” substituted in their place;

in Par 304(3) of the Code the words “The PWA” be deleted and the words “*Presbyterian Women*” substituted in their place.

DJ BRUCE

Anent Pars 305(1); 305(2); 305(8); 305(11) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that:

in Par 305(1) of the Code the words “PWA Secretary” be deleted and the words “Executive Secretary of the Board of Mission in Ireland” substituted in their place;

in Par 305(2) of the Code the words “the PWA” be deleted and the words “*Presbyterian Women*” substituted in their place;

in Par 305(8) of the Code the words “PWA/Board of Mission in Ireland Personnel Committee” be deleted and the words “Board of Mission in Ireland Personnel Committee” substituted in their place;

in Par 305(11) of the Code the words “PWA/Board of Mission in Ireland Personnel Committee” be deleted and the words “Board of Mission in Ireland Personnel Committee” substituted in their place.

DJ BRUCE

Anent Par 306(2) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 306(2) of the Code the words “the PWA” be deleted and the words “*Presbyterian Women*” substituted in their place.

DJ BRUCE

Anent Pars 307(1); 307(5) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that:

in Par 307(1) of the Code the words “the PWA” be deleted and the words “*Presbyterian Women*” substituted in their place;

in Par 307(5) of the Code the words “the PWA” be deleted and the words “the Board of Mission in Ireland” substituted in their place.

DJ BRUCE

Anent Par 308 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that Par 308 of the Code be deleted and the following substituted:

“SECTION III – PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

CONSTITUTION

1. Name: The name of the organisation shall be *Presbyterian Women*, incorporating the former *Presbyterian Women's Association* and the former *Young Women's Groups*, and hereinafter referred to as PW.

2. Motto: The motto of PW shall be: Living for Jesus.

3. Mission Statement and Aims:

Presbyterian Women encourages women to become disciples of Christ.

Presbyterian Women aims to highlight the need for-

- (i) Love and unity
- (ii) Obedience to God
- (iii) Christian living and spiritual maturity
- (iv) Service using gifts, time and money
- (v) Local and global mission

4. PW Groups:

Where possible a group shall be formed in each congregation to bring together women at a congregational level, encourage them to become disciples of Jesus Christ and work to fulfil the aims of PW. Each group shall operate under the authority of the Kirk Session. Stated meetings shall be held and membership shall be open to all women who accept the aims of PW.

5. PW LINK (Living, Inspiring and Nurturing for the Kingdom):

There shall be in each Presbytery a PW Committee known as the PW LINK to bring together members of PW.

Constituent members:

Three members from each PW Group, at least one of whom should be an Office Bearer. Each member to serve for three years, unless:

- (i) elected to serve on the PW Central Committee, the PW Forum or the PW LINK Planning Committee, or
- (ii) appointed to represent PW at the General Assembly, Boards or Presbytery.

In these circumstances membership of the PW LINK shall be extended until the additional responsibilities end.

6. PW Forum:

There shall be a PW Forum to bring together PW LINK representatives at a central level.

The PW Forum shall be made up of:

- (a) members of the PW Central Committee and its Subcommittees;
- (b) five representatives from each PW LINK:
 - (i) the three serving PW LINK Office Bearers i.e. Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer; and
 - (ii) two others from each PW LINK, appointed to attend for 3 years.

The following may also be invited to attend: four members of the Deaconess Association; missionaries on home assignment and others, as appropriate.

7. PW Central Committee:

There shall be a Central Committee of PW which shall be the decision making body of the organisation.

Constituent members:

- (a) one representative elected from each PW LINK for a period of seven years;
- (b) the President, the Home Vice-President, the Overseas Vice-President and the General Secretary of PW.

The Editor of "Wider World" and, where appropriate, the wife of the Moderator of the General Assembly shall be invited to sit and deliberate. In exceptional circumstances the PW Central Committee reserves the right to co-opt additional members to meet specific needs for a period of 1-2 years.

8. Finance: The financial year of PW shall end on 31st December. A statement of income and expenditure shall be submitted to the PW Annual Meeting. A report and statement of annual accounts shall be submitted to the PW Central Committee, the General Assembly and, if appropriate, the relevant Boards. Each PW Group will receive a copy of an Annual Report including a Financial Supplement."

DJ BRUCE

BOARD OF SOCIAL WITNESS

Convener: Rev R VALLELY

Secretary: Mr L CONWAY, OBE

1. The Board of Social Witness has developed a Strategic Plan for its work over the next five-year period. The Board's Vision Statement is, "People Matter to God", and aim, "To live out the Love of Christ through a Caring Church within our Communities". Throughout history the Church has always sought to declare and demonstrate the Gospel of God's Grace and Love to the marginalised and vulnerable. In this, the 21st Century, the Board continues to live out Christ's love in its care and concern for children and young people, students, the disabled, the offenders, the addicted, the sick and the elderly. The remit is wide, resources are stretched, but the Board's response is always that people matter to God. The Strategic Plan clearly plots plans under the following Strategic Objectives. These detail the overall objective of the Board, each Assembly Committee and the support services of Finance, Personnel and Property.

Strategic Objective 1

"The Board shall deliver an effective service to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the wider community."

Strategic Objective 2

"Specialist Ministries shall promote and support the work of Chaplains and the Church's ministry to the Deaf Community."

Strategic Objective 3

"Older People Services will deliver a high standard of social and nursing care to all our residents and campaign on behalf of older people."

Strategic Objective 4

"Family Services will promote family life and the general wellbeing of our members; continue to develop services for the disabled within the Church; support the work of the Taking Care Office, PCI Counselling, Presbyterian Family Holiday and South Belfast Friendship House."

Strategic Objective 5

"Adult Services shall manage the work of Thompson House, Carlisle House and Gray's Court and promote an addiction-free society through our Addiction Services Committee."

Strategic Objective 6

“The Financial Management of the Board shall follow the financial procedures as agreed by the Board and in line with funding bodies’ requirements.

Strategic Objective 7

“The Personnel Functions of the Board shall be carried out by the Board of Finance and Personnel.”

Strategic Objective 8

“All property and equipment shall be maintained to an acceptable standard.”

2. As the Board embarked on this exercise it consulted widely; all Conveners and Key Staff contributed to the process. The Strategic Tasks are 65 in total. The Board also took stock of achievements over the past five years.

- Opened two new homes, Corkey and Sunnyside.
- Totally restructured the Board and Committees.
- Opened and refurbished the Chaplaincy at Queen’s.
- Expanded the work at Willow Brook.
- Five major conferences on Community Development, Disability, Trauma, Taking Care 2005 & 2007.
- Embarked on a partnership with the Currie Community & Aaron House.
- Launched Taking Care – WE CARE 4 U & WE CARE 4 YOU TOO.
- Re- launched the Counselling Service as “PCI COUNSELLING.”

3. Society in the 21st Century is a mad mix of the good and the bad, the positive and the negative. Each generation makes comparisons with the previous, extolling its virtues and condemning the present. In many ways we have never had it as good, in others aspects it is totally unacceptable. The protection of one section of society can easily offend or even violate another individual or group. We can at the same time celebrate the advances in technology, but quickly balk at how we have polluted and destroyed our environment. The great advances of the World Wide Web are very much outbalanced by the dangers to our children being groomed on the internet or being sent undesirable images.

4. It is difficult to describe a typical day in the life of the Board. The work is so diverse, and is spread out over so many locations. At one level advising Congregations on the staffing levels for their crèche; at the other celebrating a 100th birthday of a resident in one of the Board’s Homes. It may be treating someone experiencing drug addiction; accommodating a former prisoner; providing accommodation and support for students or supporting those with a learning disability to live independently.

5. Romans 15 ,verse 1 (The Message) says “Strength is for service not for status!”

“When the Rev Bonnie Lomen arrived in Walnut Grove, Minnesota, in 2003 to pastor two small Lutheran Churches, she found a community in muted grief, struggling to cope both with deep loss and unexpected, dramatic change. Like most small farming towns throughout the Mid-West it was a struggling community. Walnut Grove was the childhood home of Laura Ingalls Wilder, author of the Little House Series. It was a community that had seen better days, a dying community. Young People grew up, went to college and never came home. It had become a community of fourth and fifth generation descendants of the original Norwegians, Swedes and Germans. Then in 2001 new immigrants moved into the area and all the Churches in the area grew. A community that didn’t question how big God was but encouraged people to tell God how big their problem was. There was a purpose, but they did not recognise it. We are called off God, we can articulate the issues, we can list the problems. We must step out in faith, safe in the knowledge that our work is God given” and WHY? – because that’s what Jesus did, “He didn’t make it easy for himself by avoiding people troubles”.

6. Those who hear of the work of the Board of Social Witness often remark, “We never knew that our Church was so involved in so many issues.” The Board’s story has not been fully told and yet that is the way it should be as individuals are given the opportunity to witness quietly for Christ in practical and prayerful ways. The Church is indebted to all who use their skills in paid and voluntary capacities to oversee the Board’s units, to discuss the work and to encourage and support witness in the name of Christ and this branch of His Church.

7. The Board gives thanks for all who represent the Church, its policies and Christian values in the public place, meeting with Government Ministers and Officials in the North and South, responding to discussion documents, seeking the support and funding of various Trusts. The Board is well led by a dedicated Director of Social Service, Mr Lindsay Conway, OBE, who gives of himself beyond the call of duty. The Social Witness Team and Family are too many to mention by name but each one has been of invaluable encouragement and support, both to the present Convener of the Board during his seven-year term of Office and to the Church. This has been a demanding year for the Board’s staff team in Church House and the Board thanks them for their dedication and focus.

8. NEW DEVELOPMENTS

- Continued work with the Board of Youth and Children’s Ministry with regards to the development of the Lucan site.
- A Pastoral Care Centre is planned for Denegarth House.
- A site has been identified in the Monaghan Presbytery area for development as a residential care centre.
- There are ongoing discussions with Congregations and groups on a variety of issues and potential developments.
- Comprehensive Child Protection Programme for our Ministers.
- The launch of Care Call within PCI.

THANKS

9. The Rev Roy Vallely comes to the end of his time as Convener. Roy has been supportive and a constant encourager, he was realistic and empathetic to the work of the Board. No words can adequately describe the work, time and energy that Roy has put into the work of the Board over the past seven years. The endless meetings and visits to all our facilities, being there at both celebrations and sad times. We record the Board's deepest thanks for his dedicated work, thanking God for his leadership and insight, and praying that God will bless Roy and Zoe as they are able to spend more time together.

10. The Board is indebted to all Conveners, Board and Committee members who give time to oversee its work. The Board's staff work at the 'coal face' of human problems and issues and the Christian love which they demonstrate in the units and other areas of the work is greatly appreciated. The administrators in Church House and in the Units are a special team who hold the work together. The Board thanks Jennifer Graham for nearly ten years of service and welcomes Jenny Lendrum to the Board Office.

11. The work of the Board has greatly developed over the past few years. We are grateful to funding and support that is given by so many bodies. Thanks are extended to the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety, Health and Social Boards and Trusts. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (Supporting People), Probation Board, Children in Need, Royal and Sun Alliance, Bartholomew and James and Lloyds TSB Trust. The United Appeal Board of the Church continues to support and encourage the Board's development. The Orphan and Children's Society continues to support and fund the Taking Care Programme.

12. Thanks are expressed to Mrs Lynda Graham as she resigns from the Family Services Committee. Lynda brought a depth of experience to the work of this new Committee. Her specialist knowledge in the whole area of child care and local Social Service was used to the full. The Board wishes her well in her ongoing work, especially in the whole area of Adoption.

FUNDING

13. Total income for the year 2007 was derived from the following sources (£000's):

Income from Services	5,867
United Appeal	353
Donations and Bequests	473
Grants	54
Other	418
Total Income	7,165

This enables expenditure across the following areas (£000's):

Older People	4,465
Addiction and Education Services	537
Ex-prisoners	338
Student Accommodation	308
Unemployed People	4
Deaf People	93
Learning Disabled	160
Relationship Counselling	22
Publications	2
Chaplains	163
Management Costs	293
Total Expenditure	6,385

SOCIAL ISSUES AND RESOURCES PANEL

The Rev Bobby Liddle reports:

1. The Business Committee is considering the implementation of the recommendations of the 'Guidelines on the Pastoral Care of Homosexuals'. This is being considered alongside broader Board services. It is hoped these will tie in with the potential development of the Denegarth facility. The 1979 Report is to be published on the Board web-site and the Guidelines distributed to all Ministers.

2. The Panel continues to work on the next "Challenging Issues" Bible Study that will look at aspects of a Biblical approach to various media.

In recent years more and more attention has been given to the issue of 'self harm'.

3. Although it is discussed openly amongst youth workers, youth fellowships, parents and wider circles, not much is actually known about self harm. The Panel is working on a leaflet geared towards the practical help of those involved in direct caring. It is hoped it will also give direction towards available resources. A second follow-up leaflet is also under consideration looking at possible reasons for the development of this problem in contemporary society.

4. The Panel has had some initial discussions regarding some of the complex pastoral issues Ministers and Elders have to handle, particularly in relation to marriage and the sacraments. The concern of the Panel is that there should be some discussion on these matters so that there might be some Biblical consistency throughout the PCI. The Strategic Issues and Resources Panel may, or may not, be the context for such discussion but the Panel believes that, for the sake of Ministers and Elders, it should take place.

5. After discussion the Board has agreed to recommend that Strategic Issues and Resources becomes a Committee of the BSW with the Convener sitting on the Business Committee. This would allow flexibility in terms of personnel but also give the Panel greater stability within the Board.

SPECIALIST MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

1. As the Board demonstrates Christ's love to individuals in the Services, the Student World and in special situations, Chaplaincy has become the remit of Specialist Ministries. This year the General Assembly is called to give thanks for those who serve and have served in the Territorial Army, while being also mindful of all our serving Chaplains and their families, especially those for whom duty takes them overseas to Iraq and Afghanistan.

2. The Rev Dr Derek Poots, OBE, was welcomed as Convener of our Chaplain's Committee. Dr Poots brings experience and pastoral concern to this role as he supports the hospital and prison chaplains.

3. The Church's ministry to the Deaf Community through the Kinghan Church benefits from the dedicated gifts of the Rev Dr George Grindle and Mrs Anne Rodgers. We give thanks for the ministry of the Rev Simon Henning and pray God's blessing on him for the future.

4. Chaplaincy in our Universities is a challenging role but the Church is blessed with dedicated Chaplain ministry teams in the North and in the South.

5. The Committee gives thanks for those who quietly and efficiently "live out the love of Christ" in special situations.

The following Panels report:

CHAPLAINS

The Rev Dr RFS Poots, OBE, reports:

1. The Chaplains Panel acts, under the Board of Social Witness, to supervise and encourage those involved in hospital and prison chaplaincies and to nominate persons recommended by Presbyteries for appointment as part-time chaplains.

2. Ninety-nine hospitals or hospices throughout Ireland receive the pastoral care of fifty-six Presbyterian Chaplains. These vary in size from the large Trusts to small hospitals in areas where Presbyterian numbers are small, yet it is right that there is a designated Chaplain to build rapport with staff and to provide care and support as needs arise.

3. In Northern Ireland there are four prison chaplaincies, one full-time temporary. One Minister is responsible for prison chaplaincy services in the Dublin area.

4. During the year a number of Ministers have been nominated to hospital chaplaincies: St Mary's Hospital, Castleblaney, the Rev David Nesbitt; Monaghan and St Davnet's Hospitals, Monaghan, the Rev Christy Irwin; Mid Ulster Hospital, Magherafelt, the Rev Jonathan Sloan. The Rev ES McDowell

has been nominated to substitute for the Rev Dr WD Patton in Antrim Area Hospital during his Moderatorial year.

5 The Panel acknowledges the invaluable work of chaplains in both the hospital and prison sectors. They have won the respect of staff, and their support of prisoners, patients and their families, particularly at times of acute trauma, cannot be too highly praised. The Panel is indebted to God for the chaplaincy services and commends them to the support and prayers of the whole Church.

6. The Chaplains Conference in May dealt with the continuing problem of suicide and the Church.

FORCES

The Rev Purvis Campbell reports:

1. For a number of years it could have been assumed that service chaplains were unlikely to be on operational duty. However, that situation has changed and it is now almost certain that chaplains will be deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan. In the past year the Rev Stephan van Os has served in Iraq and the Rev David Edgar who is responsible for oversight of the chaplains who are deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan, has visited the two countries. In addition, it was improbable that the Territorial Army would be deployed, but now, under the 'one army' concept, they frequently see active service alongside regular soldiers. The Forces' Panel draws attention to the courage and dedication of all the members of the armed forces, including the chaplains, and to their families who feel the strain of long periods of separation.

2. The following Ministers of the PCI have served as regular chaplains during the past year:

- Rev David Edgar (Royal Air Force)
- Rev Jonny Wylie (Royal Air Force)
- Rev Norman McDowell (Army)
- Rev Philip Patterson (Army, until recently)
- Rev Dr Paul Swinn (Army)
- Rev Stephan van Os (Army)
- Rev Mark Henderson (Army)

3. The TA Chaplains and Officiating Chaplains are as follows:

- Rev Prof Patton Taylor
- Rev David Latimer
- Rev Joseph Andrews (until the recent closure of St Patrick's barracks)
- Rev Derek Weir
- Rev Kenneth Crowe

4. We are grateful to those organisations which support the Christian witness of the chaplains: The Sandes Homes; the Officers' Christian Union; the Soldiers' and Airmen's Scripture Readers Association; the Naval, Military and Air Force Bible Society. Members of these organisations are available to speak at midweek meetings.

5. Each year the support of the Church is sought for The Royal British Legion, The Royal Air Force 'Wings Appeal', and the Royal Irish/UDR

Benevolent Fund. In the past Congregations have supported these with generosity, and we trust that this will continue.

KINGHAN MISSION

The Rev Maynard Cathcart reports:

1. In 2007 the Kinghan Mission celebrated 150 years of serving the deaf community. During that time there have been many ups and downs. In 1888 a group of Church of Ireland folk broke away from the Mission in Sandy Row and formed the Ulster Institute for the Deaf. When the Rev RW Dodds came to the new Church in Botanic Avenue there were few deaf people attending. After a year Mr Dodds contemplated returning to Scotland but was persuaded to stay on. Shortly afterwards a group of deaf people returned to the Kinghan and it went from strength to strength. The Rev Dr Allen took over from Mr Dodds in 1938. During Dr Allen's term of office another group broke away from the Kinghan to form the Deaf Christian Fellowship. Again Kinghan lost many members. Towards the end of his ministry, Dr Allen became ill and the Kinghan struggled until the Rev Dr George Grindle came in 1967.

2. In 2001 the Rev Simon Henning became the Rev George Grindle's assistant, until George retired in 2003. Sadly at the end of October 2007 he left the Kinghan Church. Once again the Kinghan was in a difficult place. The Rev George Grindle has returned part-time to help the Lay Assistant, Anne Rodgers, who carried the responsibility for the Church during Simon's illness.

3. It would be easy for members of the Kinghan to feel that God has let them down, but they believe God's promise to them: "Do not cling to events of the past or dwell on what happened long ago. Watch for the new thing I am going to do. It is happening already – you can see it now! I will make a road through the wilderness and give you streams of water there." (Isaiah 43:18 & 19). There may be difficult times ahead but in those difficult times they believe God will build a road and give streams of water in their wilderness period. The members of the Kinghan look to God and to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to help them. It is their prayer that "the new thing" will soon become obvious.

4. The Board is indebted to the Rev Dr George Grindle and Mrs Anne Rodgers for their sense of call and dedication to this specialist ministry. Dr Grindle has come out of retirement and Mrs Rodgers has taken on more responsibility during the current vacancy.

STUDENT SERVICES PANEL (incorporating War Memorial Hostel)

The Rev Dr Robert Buick reports:

1. The Student Services Panel exists within PCI to promote the cause of Christ in institutions of third level education throughout Ireland, through provision of University Chaplains and chaplaincy facilities. Included elsewhere in this report are the reports of the individual University Chaplains.

2. This has been a challenging year for the Committee: The Rev Cheryl Meban was appointed Chaplain to the University of Ulster (Jordanstown and Belfast campuses) following a long vacancy and the Committee wishes her well

in her new position. This means that all our University Chaplaincy posts in Northern Ireland are filled.

3. Two full-time chaplains also resigned, the Rev Katherine Meyer (Trinity College Dublin) and the Rev William McLaren (Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, Dublin). Both of these had been serving as Chaplain in their respective institutions since 2001. They had made significant witness to Christ in the life of the institutions and had been an influence upon the lives of many staff and students. The Committee prays God's blessing upon their new pastoral ministries, Katherine in Sandymount in Dublin and William in Dundee. Unfortunately this means that PCI has no full-time Presbyterian Chaplains in the Dublin area.

4. PCI's cooperation with other mainstream Protestant denominations in the Dublin area has resulted in the appointment of the Rev Neil Phair (a Church of Ireland Minister) as Protestant Chaplain at Dublin Institute of Technology. This is a significant development in University Chaplaincy in the Republic of Ireland, and it will be interesting to see how well this arrangement serves the interests of students, staff, institution and the participating Churches. The position of Chaplain at Trinity and other institutions within the Dublin area is currently under discussion with the Methodist Church, with which there has been a working agreement since 2001.

5. The operation of the new Presbyterian University Chaplaincy facilities at Elmwood Avenue, serving Queen's and Stranmillis, continues to provide challenges. It has proved difficult to find a suitable tenant for the café, which the Committee recognises as being fundamental to the chaplaincy effort by encouraging students, staff and others to frequent the chaplaincy. A temporary arrangement whereby the Intern for the year assisted by students ran a light meals service worked well but a more permanent arrangement is sought. Perhaps as a result, usage of the available facilities is not as great as was expected, though during term time around lunch time each day the chaplaincy is buzzing. The Presbyterian residence at Derryvolgie Avenue continues, under the Rev Steve Stockman (Chaplain in Residence), Lynn Guiney (Assistant Chaplain) and their team, to provide not only excellent accommodation but a strong, vibrant, Christian Community and centre for Christian life and service for those students living there. We would request Ministers and parents to encourage those young people going to live and study in Belfast to consider applying for one of the 88 places available in the Halls.

6. The Committee thanks all the part-time and many "unofficial" Chaplains who serve our Church in the many Universities and Colleges throughout our island.

7. Please pray for all our Chaplains, that they be able to provide a strong Christian witness to both staff and students in the various colleges, and for the Committee, that it may be enabled to encourage them in this very important work.

University Chaplains' Reports

Queen's University

The Rev Steve Stockman reports:

1. In June and July the staff will take over 50 students to South Africa in their bi-annual Capetownship project, studying the Scriptures while building houses in Cape Town as well as experiencing reconciliation, Fair Trade and HIV Aids projects. There will also be football played against boys on the townships. Fund raising and orientation has added to the busy schedule of chaplaincy life this year and John Martin's internship has really helped Steve and Lynn in this regard.

2. This year has been as busy as ever with a full week's programming in both Derryvolgie and the Chaplaincy Centre – social, recreational, sporting and spiritual events are all built around the Bible Study on Sunday nights and Quiet Service on Wednesdays. Students are also involved in various outreach projects including Mornington on the Lower Ormeau Road and Friendship House on Sandy Row.

3. After two years experimenting with franchises in the Elmwood Cafe, those in the Chaplaincy took over the running of the cafe themselves this year. It has been a challenge met wonderfully by Lynn and Julie Anne. In terms of ministry this new drop-in cafe run by students for students has been very successful. It is called "Rumours..." as in "Rumours... of Glory" – not the gossipy kind!

University of Ulster, Jordanstown and Belfast Campuses

The Rev Cheryl Meban reports:

1. I was appointed as Chaplain to UUJ and UUB (Jordanstown and Belfast/Art College campuses) on 17 September, 2007.

2. My main objectives for the first year are to build relational and institutional foundations upon which a chaplaincy community is nurtured and equipped to serve the people on campus. It would be tedious to recount all the encounters and activities of a Chaplain, so I have limited myself to a few key aspects of the first six months of my tenure.

3. Chaplaincies differ with context and personalities. The University of Ulster policy on chaplaincy is to provide a room and a budget for use by the Chaplains, appointed by their respective denominations.

4. In his 2003 report, my predecessor William Crawley signalled the University's intention to make alterations which would necessitate the removal of the chaplaincy from its very accessible drop-in on the Mall. We were notified in December that this would take effect during the vacation and January exam period. The new chaplaincy room (5F01) is much larger, although somewhat less open and accessible. There remains plenty to do in optimising the facility available to us, but please, don't wait till it's finished before you visit us!

5. Very quickly we noticed the drop in numbers coming to the chaplaincy, although the quality of interaction has been augmented by the change in dynamic. Whilst the room is an important part of doing/being

chaplaincy, much of what we do is around formal and informal meetings in other places on and off campus.

6. We maintain good relationships with IFES (International Fellowship of Evangelical Students) and the Christian Unions in both campuses. Recently we have been working with a number of other groups whose presence on campus may enrich the faith experiences and expression of students and staff and inform their studies and life-choices: Churches Community Work Alliance, Community Work from a Faith Perspective, Tearfund, Habitat for Humanity, Friends International and YouthLink. Additionally, I am working ever more closely with Whiteabbey Presbyterian's Chinese Outreach Group (COG) and benefiting from their support for our work amongst international students.

7. One highlight of the year, apart from my own installation which took place on campus in November, was "The Heart of Christmas" – a hugely successful evening's interaction with students, and a great team-building experience with myself, the Methodist Chaplain and Whiteabbey Presbyterian COG (Catered for 60, and 60 turned up!) It gave international students and Halls students "Christmas dinner" together at the end of semester; to get to know them ourselves; to let them hear of Jesus' self-giving at the heart of Christmas.

8. Whilst about 50% of the UUJ population is of Roman Catholic origin, there was little sign of that within the Chaplaincy facilities in my early days in post. In the immediate absence of any RC Chaplain, I initiated & sustained **Celtic Daily Prayer** during the first semester, in an attempt to provide some spiritual presence that might be accessible to all. Its low take-up may have been affected by the time slot. Certainly for the few who came, and especially for myself, it was crucial to have this sacred space to pray and listen to God!

9. As Chaplains we are discussing whether to reinstate Celtic Prayer in September, on a weekly basis. Meanwhile, we invest in (protestant style, I'm told) **Staff Prayer** on Friday noon, and Alan McGuckian kindly facilitated this with a change of time.

10. In early March I was privileged to join a group of diverse clergy and community activists, as well as some DSD representatives to "Unlock the potential" of faith-based initiatives, in particular in relation to government, through our observation of organisations in Washington DC and Pittsburg. These encounters raised many questions for me around how we integrate our community and faith engagement with our Sunday practices. In addition, our visit to the American University modelled an interaction of chaplaincy and academia which I hope will enrich my vision for chaplaincy.

11. There was an expressed need for scholars and community activists to seek each other out, to inform and reflect together. In UUJ, we are well-placed to contribute to such interaction, given the vocational community and youth-work training on campus; the social justice concerns of the Transitional Justice Institute and the entrepreneurial and business interest in UU.

12. In January, I travelled with two other "northern" Chaplains to Cork for Ireland Chaplaincy Network conference. It was quite a cross-cultural experience, learning how chaplaincy works elsewhere, although there are inequalities between institutions in the Republic, similar to our own.

13. As I write, we are looking forward to a trip to Derry/Londonderry on 28-29 March with a random dozen students, entitled. "What's On the Other

Side?” The idea is to equip students with experience and vocabulary for engaging with others in the awkward discoveries about themselves and the “other side” they will find so hard to discuss and handle when added to the politics of a work environment later. For those following Christ, this should equip them in mission and evangelism. For those who are not, I pray it may serve to bring greater understanding of and interest in Jesus Christ. For all, it may equip us to listen to and love each other, as Christ commands us.

14. Such is the challenge and the thrill of interdenominational chaplaincy, and what a joy and privilege!

University of Ulster, Coleraine Campus

The Rev John Coulter reports:

1. My work in the Chaplaincy revolves around the same basic priorities each year:-

- Developing contacts with those students or staff members who might be interested in discovering more about the Christian faith.
- Encouraging students and staff who want to grow in the faith and who are looking for opportunities to serve the Lord and to develop their gifts for ministry.
- Joining with the other Chaplains to help provide a “drop in” service for students and staff.
- Representing the Presbyterian Chaplaincy at formal occasions in the life of the University such as Graduations and the University Court.

2. The Presbyterian Chaplaincy is a part-time work and I spend one day per week (Wednesday) on campus in and around the Chaplaincy Office. The “drop in” system brings me into contact with people from all kinds of backgrounds dealing with a whole variety of concerns such as grief, stress, relationship issues, spiritual questions, loneliness and many others. However, I also meet regularly with a number of students for prayer and bible study and just to “hang out” and talk.

3. We have continued the joint service project between the CU and my own Congregation in Ballysally this year with students doing an excellent job helping us to provide a Homework Club for children from Ballysally. This Project also helps me to develop the links which enable me to support and encourage those involved in the CU.

4. Despite a temporary move of office which has taken us well off the beaten track for a few months this has been another encouraging year’s work.

ZOE VALLELY, Convener

OLDER PEOPLE SERVICES COMMITTEE

1. The Committee welcomes the continuous and positive comments from the regulatory body for social care services, the Regulation & Quality Improvement Authority, regarding the high quality of care delivered to the residents we have been entrusted to care.

2. The ongoing development of the “Friends of” groups in the homes has proven to be beneficial as they assist with activities and entertainment for the residents and do so with enthusiasm. The Committee wishes to record its thanks and appreciation to the many volunteers involved in our area of work, whether at Local Support Committee level or in the “Friends of” groups.

3. The NISCC Northern Ireland Social Care Council who are the regulating body for all social care staff have recently introduced Induction Standards for new staff. The Committee looks forward to introducing these standards in its training programmes for staff as a means of ensuring high quality care.

4. The DHSSPS has produced Minimum Standards for Care Homes with which all in this area of work must comply. The Committee welcomes these long-awaited standards and will endeavour to not just meet these standards but to exceed them whenever possible. These standards cover every aspect of the care home from environment and management to training and procedures.

5. Staff sickness levels continue to be a concern and the Committee looks forward to the implementation of a new PCI policy on Sickness Absence which will assist in both dealing with staff absences whilst also supporting staff during long-term sickness. The past year has been fraught with lengthy delays in POCVA checks for new staff. Along with this issue there have been problems in recruiting staff. The Committee appreciates the support and guidance of PCI’s Personnel Department and ask for the Church’s prayers regarding this issue. The Committee also records thanks for the commitment of staff at all levels who work tirelessly to ensure residents’ needs are met.

6. The Committee welcomes the increase in residents’ fees rate awarded by the DHSSPS which, along with increased occupancy levels, resulted in a sizeable improvement in the finances of the Homes at the year end and gives thanks for this change in circumstances.

7. The Committee continues to look at the replacement/upgrading of Ard Cluan and York House and the use of Denegarth House as a Pastoral Care Centre.

8. A new initiative has been the “Unannounced Monthly Visits” to the homes carried out by senior staff and a representative from the Local Support Committee. This enables not only the monitoring of standards and quality of care but inspection of the environment. It has proven beneficial for audit and governance purposes.

9. The Committee welcomed and supported the Safer Community Initiative organised by the PSNI and local Councils for older people living alone in the community.

10. The Director and Committee wish to thank Mrs Linda Wray (Residential Services Manager) and Mrs May Gordon (Assistant Residential Services Manager) for their tireless work in the whole area of Older People Services. Social Care and Nursing are both highly regulated services, which places all staff under considerable pressure.

JA NOBLE, Convener

FAMILY SERVICES COMMITTEE

1. Recently a High Court Judge of the Family Division stated that “Family life in Britain is in “meltdown” on an epidemic scale. Traditional family life no longer exists.” Our Congregations are experiencing similar changes. A youth leader was told by a child “that she had given his note to the wrong Daddy” – stepdad had left him off at Church for a Friday night activity, his biological dad picked him up for the weekend, resulting in the note never being in the right place. This is the society in which we serve.

2. The Family Services Committee continues to place family issues on the agenda of the Church, although the Committee was disappointed at the response to its Family Seminars, all having to be cancelled as a result of low numbers registering. It is vital to seek ways of promoting good family life in a way that relates to modern living, showing that the Christian way is a model that can be adapted for all, and that Biblical teaching on family life is as relevant today as it was in bygone years.

TAKING CARE

Mr Ronnie Orr reports:

1. The General Assembly of 2007 agreed that by 30 June, 2008 Presbyteries will have been asked whether or not each Congregation has access to the support of a Designated Person and that training has taken place. It is appreciated that it can be a challenge for some Congregations to meet the demands such as appointing a Designated Person and undertaking the vetting procedures. Taking Care Staff are, therefore, willing to advise and support Congregations whenever possible. Already this year there have been a series of training sessions held in various Presbyteries for Designated Persons and these have been well received. 21 Taking Care Trainers have now been recruited and trained and are providing Congregational training throughout Ireland.

2. It is important that the Taking Care Guidelines are viewed as not just a moral compunction, but a spiritual imperative. In order to lead our children and young people to a love and knowledge of God we need to model that in our individual and corporate life and witness.

3. The Taking Care Office receives regular requests for advice and it was good to address many of these at the Taking Care Conference in May. There was a very encouraging turn-out of delegates who heard from a range of speakers and participated in a number of workshops. The event was opened by the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, Patricia Lewsley, who also launched a Guide for leaders which had been generously sponsored by Royal Sun Alliance.

4. During the main proceedings some taxing subjects were tackled, such as dealing with someone who has abused and wishes to be part of a Congregation and the exploitation and grooming of children on the internet. The quality of the illustrated lecture by CEOP (Child Exploitation On-Line Protection) at the Conference prompted the Taking Care Co-ordinator to invite them to come back at the end of January 2008 to run a training session for youth

workers and teachers who were willing to become trainers on behalf of CEOP. This is aimed at children and parents so that they are more aware of dangers and know how to get help urgently. This morning event was well attended whereas, despite comprehensive publicity, an awareness session for parents the same evening was sparsely attended. This poses a challenge for our denomination to try to overcome the inertia or perhaps the technophobic unease of parents, so that they know what their children can be exposed to and how to set limits and safeguards. Congregations are reminded of the availability of trainers who can run awareness sessions.

5. The Taking Care Committee, also this year, undertook an examination of two complex issues. One was a request from a group of Child Care organisations who asked our denomination to support the campaign to ban physical punishment of children, i.e. “Children are Unbeatable”. The conclusion was that even within our Committee there were a variety of views both for and against giving such support. Therefore, it was not possible to expect that the members of our Church would have given support. Nonetheless, the exercise underscored the importance of promoting “positive parenting” which has been published in pamphlet form by government and sets out a range of approaches to managing children’s behaviour. The second topic is the forthcoming Sexual Offences Order which will clarify and enable the prosecution of offences, particularly against children. This is largely a welcome improvement in protecting the public and specifically children. However, it includes changes in the age threshold for when a child is deemed able to consent to sexual relations. The age of consent will drop from 17 to 16 and will therefore be in line with the rest of the United Kingdom. While the Committee had some misgivings about this change and a few members of the Board for this reason appended their dissent to the submission to the NIO, the main concern was focussed on the age at which sexual abuse by one child on another would command an automatic investigation and prosecution. The draft legislation suggests this should be children under 13, i.e. age 12 and under, based on the argument that an abuser, whether child or adult could not claim that the child had appeared older and able to consent. Apart from the general moral point that sexual relations should be postponed to later in life and within marriage, our contention is that many 13 year olds are physically and emotionally immature and pre-pubescent compared to a child who is 14 or older. This point has been highlighted in the submission.

6. Once again this year the Board is indebted to the Orphan and Children’s Society for their financial support for the production of a resource guide that is also accessible “online”.

7. The Board is mindful of the unstinting help that is forthcoming week by week in so many organisations across our denomination and continues to thank God that so many children are nurtured, instructed and have fun in all the Congregations owing to this selfless commitment of volunteers and staff. It is the Board’s goal to facilitate them and the leadership in the Church to keep up the good practice in recruitment, vetting, training and valuing one another in fulfilling God’s command.

8. The support of Presbyteries is also appreciated in bringing together Designated Persons for training and mutual support. It is good that Presbyteries

can check that Congregations maintain their child protection arrangements under regular review.

9. As Convener, I wish to record my thanks to the Committee for their faithful input to the work of the Taking Care office and to Lindsay Conway and Deborah Webster as Taking Care Co-ordinator, without whose painstaking and good natured input the work could not have been progressed as it has. It has been good to have Gail Gamble now working full time assisting Deborah and thanks are also due to Julie Sykes in the main office for her support. There has been particular pressure on the Taking Care Office this year as the vetting arrangements come under the new administration of Access (NI) and also the collation of the POCVA checks on all Ministers. The staff deserve the Church's thanks for coping so well with the demands.

10. The Board is currently reviewing its reporting procedures and is now recommending that all concerns, complaints and disclosures in relation to Child Protection are reported to the Designated Person of the General Assembly and Clerks of Presbytery.

PCI COUNSELLING

Mrs Rosemary Simpson reports:

1. As part of the valuable work of the Board of Social Witness, PCI Counselling has continued its very important work throughout 2007. Client numbers have remained steady throughout the year and the team of twelve counsellors, though busy people with varied interests and involvements, are nevertheless, dedicated to the work of counselling. It is important that each counsellor's workload is kept at a level compatible with his or her home and working lives. In the main counselling is carried out in Belfast, but sometimes counsellors travel to meet with clients. Many Churches throughout Northern Ireland have opened their doors willingly to counsellors and clients alike and have been most diligent in keeping the identity of the client confidential. PCI Counselling is grateful to Ministers and Kirk Sessions for their co-operation in this service, without which it would be difficult to find suitable venues.

2. Counsellors realise how much their work is valued by the Church at large, and this in itself is a positive reaction on which the Service can continue to build. A growing number of clients are referred through their Minister or by word of mouth from friends and often through Yellow Pages.

3. Problems faced by our clients are varied and include the breakdown of marriage, relationship difficulties, step-parenting, sexual orientation, eating disorders, suicide, and, in growing numbers, the victims of abuse, mental, physical, emotional and sexual. It is good to know that the service is providing a safe environment for people to talk about, face and heal their scars. Counsellors receive continuous supervision and training throughout the year and we are grateful to our supervisors, Mrs Lynn Farr and Mrs Susan Giffen, for their efforts. It is important for clients and counsellors to receive and give the best service possible and to this end opportunities are provided to listen to experts and learn from their ability. The monthly supervision is beneficial to client and counsellor alike, but at all times the anonymity of the client remains paramount.

4. Pre-Counselling Assessment sessions have been of great value in defining the clients' problems and deciding which counsellor would be most suited to each case. This saves time and ensures that clients are seen as quickly as possible by the most suitable counsellor.

5. Last year clients were encouraged to make a financial contribution towards the service and undoubtedly this encourages the clients to value the Service.

6. During the year many Evaluation Forms have been circulated to clients and it is most encouraging to the Board and to the counselors to learn how highly their work is valued by the clients with whom they come in contact.

7. The work of the Re-Marriage Panel continues unabated as Ministers send couples, where either one or both of the people has been married before. These monthly Panels are a great support to Ministers and the demand for the service remains high. The Committee is grateful to all involved in this important and sensitive work.

8. The Service during the last year has been managed by Mrs Stephanie Windrum, who organises all the counselling sessions and Re-marriage Panel. To many she is the voice of PCI Counselling and her work is greatly appreciated.

9. Finally, a most sincere thank you to all the counsellors who give their time voluntarily and with total dedication to their clients. Without this devotion to the Service, PCI Counselling would cease to exist. This vital work, on behalf of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, is done by all to the Glory of God and in His Name.

PCI FAMILY HOLIDAY

The Rev Stuart Finlay reports:

1. The PCI Family Holiday takes place each year from Easter Monday through to Friday at the Share Centre, Lisnaskea. Around 190 people can be accommodated in the Guest House, chalets and caravans. Some of the families attending are sponsored by the Presbyterian Orphan and Children's Society. It gives everyone an opportunity for a Spring break away from home in a relaxed atmosphere.

2. The Share Centre offers a variety of activities and their staff are experienced in dealing both with able-bodied and special needs participants. The outdoor activities, for the more energetic and adventurous, include canoeing, sailing, windsurfing, banana skiing, climbing, archery, gorge walking and Laser Skirmishing (where the object is to shoot one another with laser guns). The indoor activities include leisurely pursuits like T-shirt printing, Mod Roc sculpture and a drama workshop. There is also an indoor leisure pool and fitness suite.

3. Also on offer are a shopping-trip to Enniskillen (ever popular with all ages) and a visit to the Marble Arch Caves. On top of all this, PCI's Youth Team organises games and activities for the children most mornings and afternoons. They do a wonderful job not only in providing entertainment throughout the week, but also in being good role-models for the young people.

4. Every morning begins with a short time of worship for all ages before the day's activities commence. In the evening there is a time of worship together

before the young people go off to their own time of Bible teaching with the Youth Team, leaving others to enjoy the “Adults Only” spot. Every year there is a visiting speaker (and family). This Easter it was good to welcome the Rev James Hyndman, Minister of 1st Saintfield Congregation.

5. After supper each day there is an “Evening Extra” for all ages. This year it included Icebreaker Games, a Table Quiz, a Concert and (on the last night) a Party. It’s always lovely to see all ages enjoying these times of fun together.

6. The week passes all too quickly. It’s the kind of mix of relaxation, activity, worship and learning together that seems to do down well with our Holiday families. Come and join us for Easter 2009!

LEARNING DISABILITY

The Rev Jim Waring reports:

1. The Committee on Learning Disability is committed to encouraging inclusiveness within the Church and helping Ministers and Church leaders to understand and provide support for people with learning disabilities and their carers.

2. The supported housing projects at **Willow Brook** and **Topley Terrace**, under the dedicated leadership of the Project Manager, Ann Campbell, continue to provide valuable accommodation and personal support for 12 tenants. The Friends of Willow Brook, drawn from members of local Churches, continue to exercise an important supportive ministry to both tenants and staff. The opening of an extension to the main building has greatly improved the accommodation and the Committee is grateful to all those who have contributed so generously towards this.

3. **Aaron House** in Dundonald has been providing residential and day-care facilities for those with more profound learning disabilities for some years. The Board is now on the verge of assuming full responsibility for this Project and would value prayer for this.

4. In **Lisburn** a group of Christians based at Harmony Hill Church has for many years exercised a ministry to the learning disabled. They have approached the Board to set up a supported housing project along the lines of Willow Brook and this has been agreed in principle. However, the development of this Project has been considerably delayed by the restructuring of the Health Boards/Trusts. It is hoped that progress on this scheme can be made when this matter is settled.

5. As a Committee we are deeply disappointed by the Government’s apparent unwillingness to provide funding, in their recently announced spending plans for the next three years, for services to those with learning disabilities and their carers. Especially needful is the provision of adequate respite care and day-care facilities for young people leaving school. In cooperation with other faith-based agencies in this field the Committee is seeking to find ways of making Government aware of the needs and the inadequacy of their response. In the absence of government action consideration is being given by the Committee to the possibility of promoting a respite facility which would be administered by the Church.

6. Once again the Committee is very encouraged by the prayerful and practical support of our work shown by so many individuals and Congregations throughout the Church. The Committee thanks everyone for this and asks for continuing prayers and support for this ministry.

7. The Board is ever conscious that it needs to develop a strategy to promote the whole area of physical disability and mental health. Both these issues are in the Strategic Plan for consideration.

SOUTH BELFAST FRIENDSHIP HOUSE

Mrs Caroline Hawthorne reports:

1. The PWA Executive Committee values the partnership with the Board of Social Witness in the management of South Belfast Friendship House and records its thanks to them for their support during the past year.

2. The South Belfast Friendship House Management Committee met on four occasions during the year.

3. Mrs Jenny Robinson was inducted on 12 June, 2007 to serve as Deaconess in South Belfast Friendship House. The Management Committee is delighted with this appointment and wishes to record its thanks to Jenny for the work she undertakes on their behalf.

4. The House continues to be a place of Christian Witness for this area of South Belfast. This is evident by the number of people who call to share their wide variety of news; for example, the news of a death, birth, community news or calling to show off a new school uniform! The staff visit those who are sick and housebound, as well as catching up with those they haven't seen in a while. There are a few regulars to the House who would be living a very lonely life if the hand of friendship was not being offered through the open door of Friendship House.

5. Current activities in Friendship House include three After School clubs on Mondays and Tuesdays; Men's Breakfast – this is run by "Highway to Health" to encourage the men from the homeless hostel to come and cook a brunch and eat together; Pensioners Group; and Parent and Toddlers. It is also hoped to develop an After School Homework club for Year 8/9 and possibly one for younger children.

6. The Management Committee are thankful to Eunice Moore and Menita Cheesman for their continued faithful service and commitment to the work of South Belfast Friendship House. Lynn Guiney, Assistant Chaplain of Derryvolgie Hall, and a group of volunteers have continued their involvement with the After School Club. Julie Gibson, Youth Worker at Great Victoria Street Presbyterian Church, continues to help with the After School Club and the Parent and Toddler group. She was also an invaluable help during the summer scheme last August. The Committee appreciates all who have given of their time and talents.

7. Plans have been submitted to extend the premises of Friendship House. It is hoped that work will take place within the next year.

8. The grant from Children in Need enabled Friendship House to run a four-week summer scheme in August 2007. There was an excellent leadership

team with a total of 61 children attending throughout the week, ranging from P1 to P7. The children were divided into two groups – 4-7 year olds in the morning and 8-11 year olds in the afternoon. They were provided with a wide variety of crafts and activities, including two cinema outings and a trip to Newcastle. The summer scheme was a huge success and it has helped to develop the work with Parent and Toddlers and the After School Club.

9. It also provided a safe and happy environment for the children during long school holidays. The summer scheme has had a positive impact on families, as well as children, and stronger relationships have been built.

Finance

10. PWA members give faithfully to the Christmas Appeal each year. This helps to buy gifts for the children and others associated with the House. In December 2007 approximately £800 was donated for this purpose. The PWA Birthday Project for 2006/07 donated £8,000 to the House. This will purchase much needed equipment, as well as toys and craft materials. The Board of Social Witness and Presbyterian Women's Association hope to source additional funding that will help with the running and development of the House.

LINDSAY CONWAY, Secretary

ADULT SERVICES COMMITTEE

1. This Committee is responsible for the work in Thompson House, Carlisle House, Gray's Court and Addiction Services. Committee members support and encourage the staff teams working in these Centres. The Local Support Committee for Thompson House has formed a sub-committee to take forward the refurbishment or replacement of the premises. Carlisle House has a vacancy for Chairperson; this is an important role in the overall support and development of the work. Addiction Services was transferred to Adult Services from Specialist Services, to enable a closer working relationship with Carlisle House.

CARLISLE HOUSE

2. Unfortunately the level of addiction continues to highlight very starkly the need for centres like Carlisle House. This residential facility offers a service to people who want to deal with their addiction problems. Residents encounter staff who combine Christian compassion with a high degree of professional competence. While the ethos of the Centre is one of genuine care, the programme itself is deeply challenging. The whole package has been developed and honed by the staff to make Carlisle House one of the most effective centres helping people with addictions.

3. Throughout 2007 Carlisle House continued to have a high referral rate, many of these being self-referrals. The work remains complex and demanding, requiring not only professional expertise from the staff, but also great resilience and stamina.

GRAY'S COURT

4. Gray's Court continues to provide a valuable move-on facility for those leaving Carlisle House. Support is given in this vulnerable, transition period to enable tenants to eventually find permanent accommodation and employment or training.

THOMPSON HOUSE

5. Thompson House had an inspection by the Criminal Justice Inspectorate and the report will be published in early March 2008. The report states that Thompson House had low occupancy at 66% from July 2006 to July 2007. During that period the hostel was short-staffed and was being asked to take higher risk offenders, so numbers had to be kept low. Due to an increase in staffing levels there are currently 13 residents (86%) in Thompson House, with one bed held over for a referral, leaving one bed vacant. The hostel has two members of staff on duty at any one time, however due to the higher risk residents this is being increased to three members of staff on duty. An increase in funding has been agreed. More Probation clients are having conditions to reside added to their Probation Orders, increasing pressure on Probation to find a placement in one of the six Probation Approved hostels.

6. There will be new legislation introduced in April to include violent offenders in the MASRAM process, this will also increase pressure to accommodate more high risk violent offenders. Within this legislation there is provision to enable judges to sentence people to indeterminate terms, allowing people to be kept in prison until they can prove they do not pose a risk to society. This will be enforced at a later date. It was introduced in England and Wales but has been challenged in the courts. The prisons in England and Wales are not able to provide the courses necessary for prisoners to attend, to prove their risk has decreased.

ADDICTION SERVICES

7. "Drinking, Smoking and illegal Drug use are linked to a huge amount of health, social and economic harm. Hope UK helps children and young people and their parents, carers, teachers, Church and voluntary leaders meet this challenge to their health and well-being." This quotation is from the Home Page of the Hope UK newly launched Web-site. The following is a quotation from the National Association of Chief Police Officers "Working with local communities is essential for gathering accurate information and insuring effective local action and ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers) supports the importance accorded to neighbourhood policing in tackling drugs. Communities must be engaged in the issue and be able to see the effects of that action, proving the point that there is no separation in the priorities of Church and state."

8. The Committee acknowledges that its role has greatly changed. The Presbyterian Church cannot compete with the quality of material being used by the Health Promotion Agency or Hope UK. A training day was held in October to introduce youth leaders to new material. The Committee plans to build on this and develop the Web-site to reflect the changing needs of young people. The Committee is also considering hosting a "Drug Proof Your Kids" Parents'

Course or sending someone on the “Life for the World” training course which equips individuals to help those people who are hurting in the community.

9. The renaming of the Committee was to clearly reflect the level of addictive behaviors being experienced by young and old alike. Alcohol Abuse continues to impact on the lives of individuals, families and communities. Millions of pounds are spent in treating the numerous associated medical conditions, paying for road accidents and lost time at work, separation and divorce, all as a result of the misuse of alcohol. Recent research has underlined the misuse of prescribed drugs and their effect on families.

10. Together with Hope UK the Committee needs to plan ahead, using the best of modern resources to get across the dangers of all forms of addiction – pornography, gambling, alcohol, drugs, TV, computers and the list goes on.

11. ICAP (Inter Church Addiction Project) has now attracted funding from the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety. This will enable ICAP to appoint a development worker.

COLIN MEGAW, Convener

OLD AGE FUND, WOMEN’S FUND AND INDIGENT LADIES’ FUND

The Rev WPH Erskine reports:

1. The Directors report that during the last financial year, which ended 31 December 2007, 94 beneficiaries (32 in the Old Age Fund, 44 in the Women’s Fund and 18 in the Indigent Ladies’ Fund) received grants.

2. The changes in beneficiaries during the year are as follows:

Beneficiaries	Old	Presbyterian	Indigent	TOTAL
Receiving Quarterly Grant	Age Fund	Women’s Fund	Ladies Fund	
At 1 January 2007	25	43	18	86
New Grants Provided	7	1	—	8
Deaths	(1)	(6)	—	(7)
Grants no longer required	—	—	—	—
As at 31 December 2007	31	38	18	87
Beneficiaries receiving one-off donations	—	—	—	—
Deaths and Grants no longer required (as above)	1	6	—	7
No of Beneficiaries receiving assistance during the year	32	44	18	94

3. The total distribution of the Funds in Grants, Donations and Gifts was £92,701 (£31,175 from the Old Age Fund, £42,590 from the Women’s Fund and £18,936 from the Indigent Ladies’ Fund).

4. An annual grant of £860, paid quarterly, was sent to beneficiaries during the year (2006: £780).

5. A 'Special Gift' of £215 (2006: £195) was sent to every beneficiary prior to Christmas.

6. During the year the Directors responded sympathetically to various problems which had been brought to their attention. They gave one-off donations, as needed, to assist in particular cases where immediate financial aid was more appropriate than annual grants. Ministers are asked to bear in mind the possibility of help from these funds in similar cases connected with their own Congregations.

7. The Directors assure the Church that all monies that come to the Funds are carefully and wisely spent.

8. The Directors of the Funds deeply appreciate the kindness and thoughtfulness of those who have remembered the work of the Funds either by gift or bequest, and hope that their example may encourage others to support this vital aspect of the Church's outreach.

9. The Directors of the Funds wish to thank the Staff for the sensitive and sympathetic way in which they carried out the efficient administration of the Funds during the year.

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the Report be received.

2. That on a Sunday close to the October anniversary, prayers of thanksgiving be offered for those who have served and those who are serving in the Territorial Army.

3. That the resignation of the Rev Roy Vallely as Convener of the Board of Social Witness be accepted, that he be thanked for his services and that the Rev RA Liddle be appointed in his place.

4. The Board calls upon the Northern Ireland Assembly to provide additional funds for the whole area of learning disability, their carers and respite care.

5. That the customary grants made by the Board of Social Witness, up to a total of £2,000, be met from the Incidental Fund.

6. That all concerns, complaints and disclosures in a Congregation, relating to Child Protection, shall be reported to the General Assembly Designated Person and the Clerk of Presbytery without delay.

7. That the resignation of Mrs Lynda Graham as Convener of the Family Services Committee be accepted, that she be thanked for her services and _____ appointed in her place.

8. That the Board of Social Witness, with its associated working committees for the ensuring year, be appointed in accordance with Par 281 of the Code as follows:-

BOARD OF YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Convener: Rev JONATHAN MOXEN

Director: Miss ROSALIND STIRLING

1. The Board of Youth and Children's Ministry continues to know God's blessing in its work to fulfil the remit handed to it through the General Assembly. With an age range of 0-25 the Board realises that the task to evangelise, disciple, serve and equip one of the largest group of people within the Presbyterian Church is an onerous one. The Board is encouraged to see priority given to both youth and children's ministry which it sees as essential to the Church in the years ahead.

2. The Board is seeking to clarify its vision for the future and will focus its purpose and aim on the biblical doctrine of covenant. As it seeks to implement how this manifests itself through the work of the Board we ask for prayer and discernment to bring before our Church the teaching of biblical covenant based family, across our denomination.

3. In response to the resolution from the 2007 General Assembly regarding a review of youth workers' salary scales and terms and conditions, the Board created a working group to progress this matter. A report outlining recommendations was approved by the Board for presentation at the 2008 Assembly. [See Appendix 1.]

4. The Board records its gratitude to the vast number of volunteer youth and children's leaders and to the growing numbers of youth workers and family workers in local congregations. The many hours of work carried out by these people who give sacrificially of their time and talents in the service of God is deeply appreciated. Many congregations could not provide for their youth and children's activities without the many volunteers who provide leadership and facilitate programmes that are relevant and meaningful to our young people and children.

5. The Board is deeply grateful to those employed to serve the Church though the Board of Youth and Children's Ministry. Miss Roz Stirling, (Director), Miss Barbara McDade (Director of Programmes), and the team of administrative staff, Miss Lois McIlrath (Senior Administrative Officer), Mrs Kathy Brown, Mrs Claire Child, Miss Liz Harrison, Mrs Janet Maxwell, Miss Pamela Patton and Mrs Donna Thompson. The Board is indebted to Mr David Pattison for his expertise in organising and compiling Board finances.

6. The Youth Development Officer, Mr Graeme Thompson continues to work alongside many congregations seeking to bring relevant and discerning advice on youth ministry.

7. The 'Preparing Youth to be Peacemakers' programme continues to work well alongside the adult 'Gospel in Conflict' programme. The Board records its thanks to Miss Deborah Erwin for her energetic work in this important area of ministry.

8. The Board is grateful for the work of Mrs Helen Bruce, currently on maternity leave, and for Miss Christine McClelland who is undertaking the work during this period of time.

9. The Board welcomes Miss Ruth Mitchell as Children's Development Officer and encourages Churches to make use of her services.

10. The Board thanks Miss Ruth Mitchell, Mrs Jill Condell, currently off on maternity leave, and Miss Emma Maxwell who is covering for Jill, for their work as Youth and Support workers for Donegal and Monaghan.

11. The Board has been greatly encouraged by the work of Rev Craig Mawhinney as Training Officer, and for what has been accomplished in bringing many training events to those involved in youth and children's ministry the length and breadth of our island.

12. The Board wishes to record its thanks to Mr Lawrence Walker for his work as Centres' Director and for all the work that was accomplished during his time with the Board. The Board wishes him God's blessing as he serves in pastures new. We extend our thanks and appreciation to Mrs Gillian Brownlow (Guysmere), Mrs Anne Hanna (Rostrevor), and Mr Kenny Morrison (Lucan) for their work in facilitating the ministry of the centres.

13. The Board wishes to thank all those who support the Youth and Children's (YAC) Projects. The incredible sum of £114,861.78 was raised for the 'Wings' YAC Project 2006-2007. The Board would wish to thank all the Sunday Schools and Youth Groups who worked so hard to raise the money. This was a wonderful effort that has helped many teenagers and young adults in Romania.

14. The Board is indebted to the Church for the finance received through the United Appeal allocation. The Board deeply appreciates the effort required by congregations to meet their targets, permitting its work to continue and seeks to use this financial assistance with great prudence.

RECOGNISED MINISTRIES

The Rev George McClelland, National Director of the Boys' Brigade, Northern Ireland, reports:

1. At the outset of this report I would like to thank the Presbyterian Church for the support of the work of the Boys' Brigade, Northern Ireland District. It is encouraging to know that the volunteer leaders who serve in Boys' Brigade companies continue to provide a weekly programme to help develop the spiritual, emotional and physical wellbeing of all our young people. Numbers within BB have increased slightly during the past year in all sections. In a time when moral standards are lacking and being challenged from all sides of society, the Boys' Brigade, alongside other organisations, is endeavouring to address many issues through its programmes. By 2008, the Brigade will have totally reviewed their programmes for each section and through them continues to provide variety and challenge to all our young people.

2. In 2008, the Boys' Brigade will celebrate 125 years of work nationally. Many boys have passed through the ranks and we praise God for the number of boys who were brought to faith and how He has enabled many

officers and leaders, who down through the years have 'advanced Christ's Kingdom among boys.' The Boys' Brigade remains committed to being a mission of the Church and we are always encouraged when we hear of young men coming to a personal faith in Christ.

The Rev John Peacock, Community Relations Manager for Youth Link: NI, reports:

1. Youth Link's vision is of Churches working together to develop excellence in youth work and ministry, enabling young people and youth practitioners to be agents of transformation in a divided society.

Youth Link does this by working with the Churches to:

- Encourage and equip young people to participate in Church and society and in the building of a shared future;
- Facilitate strategies for the development of youth ministry within Churches;
- Integrate equity, diversity and interdependence into all aspects of policy and practice in youth work and ministry;
- Build relationships that enable healing in the lives of individuals and communities within a diverse society.

2. As part of a highly skilled and dedicated staff team, I continue to enjoy the work at Youth Link. My particular role as Community Relations Manager involves me in the training of youth practitioners in youth work and ministry, peace building and reconciliation and the provision of active citizenship and peace building opportunities for young people. Some of the key elements of this role, heading up the Community Relations Department, over the past year have included:

- Running the 'Connection' venue for young people at Summer Madness in conjunction with CIYD and with the support of YWAM, followed by supporting young people demonstrating their active Christian citizenship by participating in the Streetreach project;
- As chairperson of the Board of Youth and Children's Ministry Reconciliation Working Group, supporting and working alongside Debs Erwin, the PYP Officer. It has also been rewarding to be involved in the running of 'the Gospel in Conflict', an exciting peace building programme for adults in PCI;
- Developing and delivering Open College Network courses for youth practitioners in Community Relations Work at levels 2 and 3;
- Working with others to develop a Cultural Diversity programme for young adults which we anticipate will equip young adults in Churches, particularly in Protestant working class areas, to welcome the increasing number of new neighbours from different ethnic backgrounds into our society;
- Delivering our Kairos programme, a 'journey of understanding in faith and culture' for 15-17 year old young people, in schools, Churches and community groups;

- Establishing a partnership with the Joseph Rank Trust to employ a trainee youth worker who will complete degree level training in informal and community education over a 5 year period. This programme will also provide the opportunities for young adults with leadership potential to participate in a Gap Year Scheme.

4. I wish to thank the Presbyterian representatives on the council of Youth Link for their encouragement and all who have supported the work through their prayers and practical action. Continue to pray for us during this incoming year as there will significant developments including a new building, a new degree programme, staff changes and new accredited training opportunities.

The Rev David Stanfield, Training and Development Coordinator for Youth link: NI, reports:

1. Youth Link exists to serve the four largest denominations in Ireland through supporting and encouraging the development of Youth Ministry and better community relations.

2. During the past 6 months my work has changed significantly because of an exciting new development in youth ministry training. Over the last few years I have been increasingly working in more academic contexts. This includes the delivery of Youth Ministry training for Church of Ireland ordinands at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute in Dublin, coordinating and delivering the Youth Ministry module to Diploma students at Belfast Bible College and coordinating and co-delivering with Craig Mawhinney the two modules in Youth Ministry offered through the Institute of Theology to students at Queens University.

3. In October 2007, after many years of unfulfilled hope on the part of the Youth Departments of our largest denominations, the 'Centre for Youth Ministry' (the largest provider of degree level Youth Ministry training in the UK) is able to partner with Youth Link and Belfast Bible College to establish the 'Centre for Youth Ministry Ireland'. This means that from September 2008, if all the validation and endorsement processes are completed as planned, there will be a degree course available in Ireland that is specifically tailored to respond to the growing numbers of adults following a sense of vocation into youth ministry. The degree is a BA in Youth and Community Work with Applied Theology and offers a professional qualification in Youth Work alongside theological training in youth ministry.

4. I have been tasked with role of Interim Centre Director to seek to ensure that the Centre is established, staff, tutors and placements are in place, the validation processes are completed and the first cohort of students are able to commence this September.

5. I also delivered 'Introduction to Youth Work' courses accredited by OCN to participants from the Church of Ireland Diocese of Derry and Raphoe and to a group of Interns from Presbyterian and Baptist churches in South Down. In addition to these courses almost 300 leaders achieved basic qualifications in Youth Work during the past year.

6. I wish to thank all who have supported the work through their prayers and encouragement and especially the staff of the Board of Youth and

Children's Ministry for their support over the past year. In particular Barbara McDade and Graeme Thompson for their encouragement through the Youth Link Council and Craig Mawhinney for his partnership on the Youth Ministry modules.

TRAINING COMMITTEE

1. The Committee thanks God for His guidance and blessing on the Committee and the Working Groups during the past year.

Certificates in Children's and Youth Ministry

2. The Certificate in Youth Ministry course has again been offered this year in Belfast and in Coleraine. The course has taken place on Monday and Thursday nights with over 30 in attendance. A residential weekend (at The Glenada Conference Centre, Newcastle) has again been central to the implementation of the course.

3. The Children's Ministry course did not run this year due to an insufficient number of applicants. Discussions are ongoing regarding potential changes in the course which will begin again in September 2008 at locations yet to be decided.

4. The Board of Youth and Children's Ministry has been working in partnership with Union Theological College to facilitate a Graduate Certificate and Diploma in Youth Ministry. We look forward to the potential development of these courses.

Delivery of Youth Ministry Modules as part of BTh Degree at Union College

5. Two modules have been facilitated this year at Union Theological College and Belfast Bible College. It is planned that these will once again be offered in the next academic year.

Development of Youth Ministry Degree through the University of Gloucester

6. Discussions regarding the implementation of a Youth Ministry degree continue. This will be a BA Honours degree in Youth and Community work and Applied Theology, professionally endorsed by JNC, validated and awarded by the University of Gloucester (previously Oxford Brookes University in earlier discussions) and run by the Centre for Youth Ministry under their Director, the Rev David Howell. It is expected that the degree will begin in September 2008 based at Belfast Bible College.

'Building Blocks' Conferences

7. The two conferences, held on Saturday 24 November, 2007 in Belfast and on Saturday 1 December, 2007 in Dublin, were once again very successful. Bob Hartman was the keynote speaker at both events. This year's conferences will take place on Saturday, 22 November, 2008 in Jordanstown and on

Saturday, 29 November, 2008 in Dublin. The keynote speaker will be Terry Clutterham, Publishing Director of Scripture Union.

Youth Ministry Summer School

8. From Thursday 30 August to Sunday 2 September, 2007 at Loughry College, Cookstown, the Committee facilitated the second Youth Ministry Summer School in partnership with the Methodist Church in Ireland and the Church of Ireland. A number of excellent youth ministry specialists, including Professors Duffy Robbins and Chap Clark, provided a stimulating four days of teaching, reflection and nurture. It was greatly encouraging to experience the continued excellence of the school and the Committee plan to run the third school between 28 - 30 August, 2008, at Greenmount College. We look forward to the input of Professors Kenda Creasy Dean (USA) and Marv Penner (Canada), together with the expertise of local practitioners.

Road Trip Training

9. From October 2007 - February 2008 the 'Road Trip' venture continued with training seminars in both youth and children's ministry, being facilitated in 6 different venues around Ireland. Over 200 people attended these training events and have responded positively to them.

Youth Link: NI

10. Youth Link continues to support and complement the work of our Board and we are grateful to its representatives for their input into our Working Groups and Committee.

CRAIG MAWHINNEY, Convener

RESEARCH AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1. The Research and Education Committee have taken some time this year to clear a vision and define their work. The Committee is grateful to those who have helped to shape this vision, along with their commitment to seeing it implemented.

2. Under the auspices of the Committee, Mr Graeme Thompson, Youth Development Officer, continues his research into the effective discipleship of teenagers within the PCI context at King's College in London.

3. One aspect of the Committee's research will be to investigate the current values and beliefs that drive the thinking and behaviour of children and young people in the 21st century within Ireland, north and south, and to assess the impact of those belief systems on our children and young people within PCI. Into such a context of contemporary issues, the Committee aims to bring education that will aid both biblical teaching within the Church and mission outside of it.

4. The Committee is keen to develop effective ways to educate the wider Church. It is planned to create a webpage on which theological papers will

be published along with other educational resources such as reviews of books and movies.

5. An annual 'think-tank' day is planned for field workers through which the Committee will continue to review its work.

6. The Committee has plans to produce existing research and theological thinking in booklet form for ministers, youth leaders, children's workers, parents and young people.

STEVE STOCKMAN, Convener

MINISTRY RESOURCES COMMITTEE

1. The Resources Committee is continuing to examine ways in which it can best help Congregations, parents and youth and children's leaders in the vital task of nurturing and discipling children and young people. A Working Group has been established to look at the production of materials covering a range of current discipleship issues and are also keen to develop a major event to help Christian parents pass on their faith to their children.

2. The various Working Groups have continued to meet to give support to those working with children and young people in our Church and the Committee gives thanks to God for much good work being done throughout PCI. The Committee is also very appreciative of the work done by all our full time staff. They carry a heavy workload but continue to provide an invaluable resource to the youth and children's ministry of our denomination. The appointment of a new Children's Development Officer is welcomed and we look forward to the children's work of our Board continuing to grow.

Website

3. The website is an important resource that continues to be of use to ministers, leaders and young people.

Youth and Children's Project

4. The 'Rhythm and Rhyme' project, supporting the development of church music and helping with literacy projects for girls in Pakistan, has been well supported by our Church. The Director and Convener have been invited to Romania to view the after care house supported by last year's 'Wings' project and to continue our link with that project in Cluj. The 2008-09 project is to develop the Sunday School work of the Presbyterian Church of Central Africa in the Livingstonia Synod in Malawi; this is currently being developed by the Director of Programmes and the Children's Development Officer.

Youth and Children's Workers

5. The Board provides support for those in full time children's and youth work within our Congregations by arranging training days and retreats throughout the year. We are very grateful to Graeme Thompson and Barbara McDade, for the vital support they provide to our full time workers. Graeme Thompson has been responsible for overseeing the work remitted to the Board

by last year's General Assembly concerning the contracts for Youth and Children's workers. He, along with the Board's Training Officer, the Rev Craig Mawhinney, have been appointed to the General Board's Panel on Ministry which is concerned with the development of Additional Pastoral Personnel within Congregations.

Youth Centres

6. The Youth Centres' Review Panel, under the auspices of the General Board, has continued its work this year. Rostrevor has entered its three year handover period from the Board to the local Congregation and the money raised by the 'Moving On' project has now been used to refurbish the Centre. Discussion continues with various parties about the future of the Lucan site. Guysmere Centre is well used throughout the year and the Committee wishes to thank Gillian Brownlow, who has been managing the centre, for the hard work she has done. The refurbishment of the Guysmere site continues to be a priority for this Committee.

Preparing Youth to be Peacemakers

7. The work of PYP continues to be a great encouragement as more facilitators are trained to run the course with their youth group. This continues to build up the team of trained facilitators who are then available to the wider Church. The Working Group is keen to develop the impact of PYP by examining areas such as community development, social justice and the environment, without losing the foundation of building peace. Deborah Erwin, PYP Programme Officer, has recently completed a Masters in Youth Work and Community Development with a discussion paper on how the Board of Youth and Children's Ministry can help Churches in interface areas to meaningfully engage with the young people around them.

Discipleship Resources

8. A Working Group has been established to look at the production of resources to help young people work through a Christian response to current issues such as the environment, poverty, consumerism, globalisation and self worth. The Committee also plans to re-examine the issue of helping young people understand what it means to be a Presbyterian, with the expectation of producing a new resource in this area. The Committee is very much aware of the need to help Congregations and leaders who are ministering to children and young people with special educational needs. This area continues to be under review with the expectation that a resource can be produced which will be both informative and practically useful.

GRAEME KENNEDY, Convener

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

1. This Committee continues to seek out opportunities for young people and families to effectively share their faith while growing in their knowledge of

God and his purposes for them. This work continues to provide scope for development in discipleship and new avenues of service.

Camps

2. The camps that are running in 2008 again provide a broad range of activities. From the adventurous to the technical and anything on the spectrum in between, there are many opportunities for fun and growth in closeness to God and others. The Guysmere Youth Centre is the venue for Boys' Sport and Adventure, Girls' and Surf the Rock camps. Rostrevor has provided the venue for the Creative Arts camp over many years and the Board have been pleased with the facilities of Greenhill YMCA for the Adventure camp and Derryvolgie Hall for the Tech camp.

Summer Outreach Teams

3. The venues for the 2008 teams range from Letterkenny to Lucan in the Republic of Ireland and Faughanvale to Newry within Northern Ireland. The aim, to provide opportunities for team members to share their faith and in so doing to grow in their likeness to their Lord, continues to be the focus of the summer outreach work. This work is of great benefit to team members and to the Congregations with whom they work; our prayer is that God will continue to be gracious and use these groups to draw many more people to Jesus.

Overseas Teams

4. In 2008, teams will visit Ukraine and Cameroon. There have been fewer applicants than in previous years. The Committee however recognise the benefits that come from a smaller unified team. The Board has agreed to develop opportunities for families to participate in mission trips. In 2008, the partnership with a Presbyterian Church in New Providence (USA) will continue as a family from PCI join them on the family mission trip to Mexico, building affordable homes for a local community.

SWIM Team and SWIM Volunteers

5. It is anticipated that the revised SWIM (Servants Working in Mission) team will commence in the autumn of 2008. The ambition of this team is the development of a servant heart and growth in likeness to Christ for those who take up membership of it. The Board looks forward to continuing to provide opportunities for young people and involvement with local Congregations through this area of ministry. The SWIM volunteers continue to serve in local Congregations throughout the island and are providing very effective ministry support within these locations.

Concorde Fund

6. This fund provides small travel grants to Presbyterians engaged in short term mission service and is of great benefit to many volunteers.

Thank you

7. All of this work could not go on without the willing help of those who staff the office and the many volunteers who spend countless hours planning and preparing for all these opportunities to become a reality. The Committee expresses its thanks for all their hard work, long hours and spiritual dedication, knowing that their service in Christ's name will bring forth great fruit.

JOHN FLAHERTY, Convener

MINISTRY EVENTS COMMITTEE

1. The Ministry Events Committee of the Board of Youth and Children's Ministry is actively engaged in organising and promoting a series of events which are relevant to the needs of children and young people across our denomination. Dedicated Working Groups have been putting preparations in place for our various events in 2008. In General Assembly week we look forward to our long established Youth Night and, for the second year, the Kids' Praise Party. Two other events will celebrate their tenth anniversary this year – in August the Route 66 Bible conference is planned for Belfast and over seven hundred young people will descend on the University of Ulster in Coleraine for the MAD weekend in October. The Committee is grateful to God for all that He has done through these events in the past and we wait in eager and prayerful anticipation to see how He will bless us this year. We commend all of our events to the prayers and support of the Church.

Kids' Praise Party

2. Following on from last year's inaugural event for children of primary school age, a second Kids' Praise Party has been planned for the afternoon of Saturday 7 June, 2008 in Carnmoney Presbyterian Church. Taking the theme 'Made by God', the event will be a celebration of the truth that each of us is "fearfully and wonderfully made". The lively programme of praise and interactive discovery will culminate in a short talk by the Rev James Rogers, Associate Minister in Whiteabbey Presbyterian Church. The Committee looks forward to this event becoming firmly established in years to come.

Youth Night

3. Youth Night is planned for Church House on the evening of Saturday 7 June, 2008. It is again hoped that there will be a tremendous turnout of young people from all parts of our island, gathering for praise led by Alastair Bennett and his band. This year the speaker will be the Rev Craig Mawhinney, Training Officer for the Board of Youth and Children's Ministry.

Route 66

4. The Route 66 Bible conference celebrates its tenth anniversary from 22-25 August, 2008. Due to changes in accommodation provision at Loughry College, it is planned to stage this year's event in Belfast, using Derryvolgie Hall

for accommodation and the facilities at Union Theological College for the teaching. The remit of Route 66 remains unchanged – to help young people (aged 17+) in their Biblical understanding through the provision of high quality and relevant teaching. A passionate and experienced team of contributors will seek to fulfil that remit again this August, headed up by the two keynote speakers, the Rev Ed Vaughan (Crinken Church of Ireland, Co Dublin) and the Rev Dr Rodger Crooks (Belvoir Presbyterian Church). The Committee has been excited by the work that has been done through Route 66 over the past decade and we give thanks to God, as well as paying tribute to the dynamism and vision of the Working Group over that period. However there is a sense that we need to evaluate this event under a wider ongoing review of Board strategy. To that end, we have decided that it will not take place in 2009 and discussions continue about the re-launch of this event, or a similar alternative, in 2010.

MAD Weekend

5. Plans are well advanced for 'MAD 10' in Coleraine later this year. The whole Church has reason to be thankful to God in looking back on ten years of this event. Many young people have come to faith or re-committed their lives to Christ during previous MAD weekends – indeed many of those same young people are now part of the MAD crew who help run the weekend or are even serving as members of the Working Group. The theme for this year is, appropriately, '10:10', based on the life-changing words of Jesus which are recorded in John 10:10. The speaker will be Michael Wylie, who is the Youth Worker in Carnmoney Presbyterian Church, and a varied programme of seminars, celebration and fun has been arranged. The dates for MAD are 24-26 October, 2008.

Fun Day

6. The Committee is in the early stages of planning for the Fun Day event in 2009. We look forward greatly to building on the wonderful success of this event in the past.

Future Events

7. While remaining committed to delivering the present schedule of events, the Committee is constantly exploring new opportunities which will best serve the Board and our Church in fulfilling our remit to reach and nurture our children and young people.

ANDREW THOMPSON, Convener

APPENDIX 1

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING EMPLOYMENT OF YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S WORKERS IN PCI

Background

The landscape in our denomination and others has changed dramatically in the past 10 years or so due to the changing nature of ministry with young people

in particular, and the changing demands on serving members of our Congregations. Once only a "privileged few" employed any kind of additional pastoral personnel (APP); now over 70 different Presbyterian Churches have various youth and children's workers, in addition to family workers and other posts, representing over 15% of those employed in our Congregations. Several youth workers in particular have worked in this capacity for over 10 years, permanent contracts are not unusual and Church based work is now seen as a realistic and respected career. This has presented challenges to employers and employees alike and, although much has been learned, there are still too many situations of poor practice. Congregations can also find it difficult to negotiate the maze of legislation and procedures.

The 2007 General Assembly requested that the Board of Youth and Children's Ministry brings to the 2008 Assembly its recommendations on the terms and conditions for youth and children's workers employed in Congregations. The Board make the following recommendations based on thorough experience of this growing and significant area of Church life at a very important time.

Posts

It is recommended that jobs are designed in such a way to achieve a clear shared understanding of why someone has been employed and therefore that:

1. A job title should be chosen to broadly describe the nature of the post (worker, director etc).
2. Job descriptions should be written carefully in response to the aim and vision of the post, preferably in line with a strategic plan for youth and children's work in the Congregation, and must explicitly state the spiritual nature of the post.
3. The employee should be connected to the Board of Youth and Children's Ministry, who offer appropriate support and training.
4. Congregations are strongly encouraged to avail of support from the Board of Youth and Children's Ministry and any other appropriate Board, ideally at an early stage, as they engage in the employment process, from designing job descriptions to interview and appointment.

Requirements of workers

In order to seek to employ the most suitable people, it is recommended that:

1. Applicants should be given sufficient opportunity to "demonstrate an active Christian faith".
2. An information pack should be provided to job applicants containing clear information on the distinctive ethos and environment of the Congregation and the doctrine and practice of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. As employer, it is the responsibility of the Kirk Session to ensure the preferred candidate makes an informed commitment "to working within the aims and ethos of PCI and the specific Congregation".
3. The following minimum levels of training/qualification should normally be achieved by applicants for youth and children's posts, or obtained within 18 months of commencement of employment:

- PCI Youth Ministry Course or Children's Ministry Course
 - OCN Training for Youthwork, levels 2 and 3
4. Thereafter, Congregations should follow the Guidelines on theological training for Additional Pastoral Personnel which will be supplied by the General Board in due course.
 5. Congregations should have a policy for the ongoing training and personal and professional development of employees; this should include a budget and appropriate study leave, as well as time for personal spiritual renewal and development. Staff should also be encouraged to avail of opportunities for regular times of fellowship with colleagues.
 6. Annual appraisals should identify skills gaps and training needs of employees.
 7. Congregations should normally support the employee by funding the full cost of such training.

Needs of workers

It is essential that Congregations protect their investment and ensure the right environment exists for longevity and realistic employment conditions. Therefore it is recommended:

1. Job descriptions are sufficiently clear and unambiguous, with a realistic workload so that the employee has clarity in role and boundaries.
2. Effective line management is provided on a weekly or at least fortnightly basis where the employee's workload is agreed in a way which reflects their experience and skills; the line manager should be someone who has the skills and time to do this effectively - this may not necessarily be the Minister but, for example, could be an elder with the appropriate skills. However, youth and children's workers should be a full member of the ministry team.
3. Management should ensure that the worker takes sufficient complete days off, annual leave and appropriate time off in lieu, especially after seasonal periods of heavy workload.
4. Consideration is given to a small management group to help to steer the broader priorities of the work according to the job description, on an ongoing supportive basis.
5. The employee receives suitable pastoral support.
6. Consideration is given to the employee meeting regularly with a supervisor, separate from the line manager, to help with practice issues and personal development.
7. Congregations should facilitate access to necessary practical and theological training, as detailed above, for ongoing personal and professional development.
8. It is expected that congregations give consideration to the most up to date JNC Youth and Community pay scales and set the salary, having considered the salary level of their other Ministry staff.
9. Expenses should be paid monthly using expense claim sheets; there should be clarity about mileage rates, what can be claimed as out of pocket expenses and to what maximum value.

10. Salary, where possible, should be paid directly into the employees bank account on the same stated day each month and expenses also if appropriate.

11. There should be a defined budget for programme expenses, distinct from personal expenses.

12. The employee should have an annual appraisal of the post using a structured scheme which allows both the employee and employer to review progress in different areas of the job; this should use an appraisal form completed by both parties prior to a review meeting which, although structured, should be as informal as possible.

13. An annual salary increment should be awarded to each year's appraisal if the worker is agreed to have reached the objective and measurable outcomes set the previous year, up to the maximum salary scale set within the contract of employment.

14. Employees should be encouraged to access a suitable pension scheme and, if possible, Congregations should consider employer contributions.

15. It is good practice for employees to be invited by Kirk Sessions to sit and deliberate in Session meetings when matters relating to their area of work are discussed, except if business relates to their employment; they should also be asked to report in person to Kirk Session on at least an annual basis.

16. There must be clear disciplinary and grievance procedures according to Peninsula guidelines.

17. There must be suitable policies on health and safety, maternity and paternity, sick leave etc according to the Peninsula guidelines.

18. Congregations must act according to legislation on renewal of fixed-term contracts and seek advice from Peninsula when renewing or terminating any contract, even a fixed-term contact.

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the Report be received.

2. That the General Assembly accept the recommendations outlined in the report on youth and children's workers' terms and conditions and ask that these be merged into one comprehensive set of Guidelines.

3. That a grant of £9,085 be paid from the Incidental Fund to Youth Link: NI.

4. That the General Assembly approve the Youth and Children's Project 2008-09, to support the development of Sunday School work of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian in the Livingstonia Synod in Malawi.

5. That the Board of Youth and Children's Ministry, with its associated working committees for the ensuing year, be appointed in accordance with Par 283 of the Code as follows:

BOARD OF CHRISTIAN TRAINING

Convener: Rev GEORGE MOORE

Secretary: Rev TREVOR GRIBBEN

1. The Board of Christian Training has had a busy but interesting year as the process has begun to fulfil the wider remit given to the Board by the General Assembly of 2007.

2. In March the Rev Trevor Gribben (Deputy Clerk of the General Assembly) joined the Board as Executive Secretary and already he has begun to make a considerable contribution to the Board's work.

3. As instructed by last year's General Assembly, and in agreement with the United Appeal Board, the Board of Christian Training are moving towards a consolidated budget and welcomes Mr William Cairns who has agreed to convene the Board's new Finance Committee.

4. The Board agreed that the Students' Bursary Fund Committee should be thanked and discharged and that the Students' Bursary Fund Convener should be a member of the new Finance Committee. (A report of the work of the Fund can be found below.)

5. After much discussion the Board has established a Training Co-ordination Panel with representation from all the training agencies in the denomination. (See Appendix 1)

6. The Board remains encouraged by the number of candidates seeking to explore God's will in regard to ordination and realises that a steady supply of Ministers is essential for the Church's wellbeing. Believing that a sense of call usually emerges within the context of the local Christian fellowship, the Board would urge Ministers and Kirk Sessions to keep this issue before their Congregations as a matter for prayer, and would encourage those members who have the appropriate gifts to listen for God's call.

7. The Board is indebted to those Ministers who so readily agree to facilitate applicants and candidates required to undertake Congregational placements. The provision of such opportunities remains a vital component in the initial selection and training process.

8. The Board is happy to report again this year that there has been yet another significant increase in the number of undergraduates who choose Union Theological College for their course in theology. The Board believes that this is a most valuable opportunity to teach the Christian faith at this level, and feels that it will prove a wise investment in helping to train future teachers, and Church leaders, and hopefully in helping some to hear God's call to the ordained ministry.

9. The Institute of Christian Training has had another busy year running a range of courses which appeal to a wide variety of Church members.

Review

10. Over the past decade or more, Union Theological College has gone through a period of remarkable growth and development. The increase in student numbers, the ongoing improvement and expansion of the courses delivered, and the renewal of the physical environs, have all led to a College which has evolved in a positive and creative way in seeking to meet the needs of the Church in this 21st century.

11. Much of what has been achieved has only been possible through the ready co-operation of the staff, both academic and support, and through the willingness of key individuals to accept an evolving and often increasing workload. The pace of these developments, and the relatively short time-scale in which they have occurred, have however resulted in added strain, both on staff and on the management structures of the College.

12. The Board has set up a Panel to conduct a review aimed at improving and developing the management effectiveness of the College, including both the internal structures of the College itself and the structures within which the College operates.

Students' Bursary Fund

The Convener, the Rev Stewart Mackay reports :

13. The Students' Bursary Fund exists to make financial provision for students for the Ordained Ministry and their families.

14. In the year Sept 2007 - June 2008 there were a total 42 students for the Ministry and the cost of grants, fees, and other expenses for this period was over £465,000. This is met through offerings at Services of licensing, ordination and installation of Ministers and Elders, personal and congregational donations, and the United Appeal Fund.

15. The Bursary Fund continues to be thankful for the generosity of the members of our Church, who support the Fund in these ways. Those involved in planning services of licensing, ordination and installation, are asked to ensure that full use is made of the literature available at Reception in Church House - the bookmark and especially the Gift Aid envelope. It is suggested that these should be given out at the previous Service to enable members to come with the information already written on the envelope. The more support the Fund is given through these Services, the less we will need to request from the United Appeal Fund, leaving more money available for other agencies.

ASSIGNMENT COMMITTEE

The Convener, the Rev Dr DJ Watts, reports:

1. This year the Committee has been able to assign eleven students and is grateful to those Congregations and Ministers who accept the mentoring of student assistants as an important contribution to the life of the Church.

COLLEGE AND MAGEE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

1. At the time of writing this report the Committee is in that pressurised and tense time of putting out to tender for our new building project including the refurbishment of the “Principal’s House.” This has been necessitated by pressure of numbers which has reached a level of consistency as indicated below:

College Student numbers 2007-08 (those in brackets are 2006/7)

Full-time undergraduates	120	[125]
Full-time postgraduates	47	[47]
Part-time undergraduates	48	[55]
Part-time postgraduates	57	[52]
Others (including A level)	28	[29]
Total	300	[308]

Included in the above:

Ministry	41	[44]	(Yr 1: 12; Yr 2: 10; Yr 3: 19)
Deaconess	3	[2]	
Overseas	3		

Institute for Christian Training 2007 (these figures do not include courses off campus)

Course participants	578
<i>Prepared to Serve</i> – participant’s guides	830
<i>Discover Jesus</i> – participant’s guides	155
<i>How People Change</i> – participant’s guides	45

2. Union Theological College works largely within the Institute of Theology at Queen’s University, which has recently become a member of the Russell Group (or top 20 UK universities). The College, therefore, maintains the highest of academic standards, as well as an ongoing commitment to the practical and pastoral training that is needed for ministry in the 21st Century. The Principal reports that the College is “in good heart” and that morale is high among both students and staff.

3. The Management Committee appreciates the dedication and Christian commitment of all those who work under its care. This year has seen a considerable amount of illness among staff. The Committee is thankful to God for the full recovery of the College Administrator, Sandra McKinney, after surgery and the Rev Ronnie Hetherington, Director of Ministerial Studies. The Principal, the Rev Prof Patton Taylor had a period of illness over the Christmas period and once again the demands of College life have interrupted his planned sabbatical. The Committee appreciates his untiring commitment to the work of the College. Mrs Renée McCracken, secretary to the Union Institute for Christian Training, remains in the prayers of everyone connected with the College as she recovers from treatment. The Committee especially wants to thank those staff who worked hard to “cover the gaps” during these unavoidable absences.

4. In September the College welcomed the Rev Professor Gordon Campbell to the Chair of New Testament. Professor Campbell has settled well into the life of the College and has already made an impact on the student body. The Committee wishes him well for many years of service in the College.

DW BRICE, Convener

MINISTERIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

1. In the past year 50 Ministers submitted claims for In-Service training as against 115 the previous year. 13 submitted claims for Sabbatical Leave compared with 16 in 2006. However, the Committee found it impossible to respond positively to a few claims since they fell outside the criteria laid down when the scheme was set up. The Committee are undertaking a review of these criteria and hope to bring recommendations to the Assembly next year.

2. The Committee has received suggestions from several sources within the Church that an obligatory element should be incorporated into the scheme for future ministers. It is recognised that such a change would be a significant development in the scheme, with major implications for Presbyteries and indeed for future Ministers. Accordingly, it is the Committee's intention to bring to the Assembly, through Daily Minutes, more details of possible changes to the scheme, that would be the basis for discussion and reflection during the year at Presbytery level, with a view to coming to a decision at the Assembly in 2009.

3. It is proposed that the levy for the incoming year upon Congregations and participating Boards and Agencies remains at 0.25p per £ of stipend. A resolution is presented to that effect.

WP ADDLEY, Convener

COMMITTEE ON MINISTERIAL STUDIES

1. The Director of Ministerial Studies (DMS), the Rev Ronnie Hetherington continues to advise prospective candidates and carries out his duties in relation to students according to the Regulations of the General Assembly. He acts as Secretary to the Committee which recognizes the efficient and sagacious work carried out and his pastoral encouragement of the students in training.

2. In the academic year of 2007/2008 there were 42 students under the care of Presbyteries as listed in the appended Schedule (Appendix 2).

3. One student was granted permission to defer for a second year his commencement of studies and another student was permitted to postpone his starting of studies for one year. A third student was allowed to delay for up to two years, during which time he will undertake a congregational internship in London. The Committee also recorded with regret the withdrawal of 2 students.

4. The Committee arranged a meeting with representatives of the Union Commission to discuss a revised arrangement for remuneration which would be

appropriate to longer licentiate assistantships. The following scheme was agreed as from 2008:

Remuneration for Licentiate Assistant Ministers

Year 1

1-6 months	70% of minimum stipend
7-12 months	75% of minimum stipend

Year 2

13-24 months	80% of minimum stipend
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Year 3

25 plus months	85% of minimum stipend
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Congregation contributions:

30% of minister's stipend for licentiates paid 70% of minimum

30% of minister's stipend for licentiates paid 75% of minimum

32% of minister's stipend for licentiates paid 80% of minimum

32% of minister's stipend for licentiates paid 85% of minimum

Rebate of 5% for a Church with first assistant

5. The Panel to Review Ministerial Training continues to meet and has discussed a number of issues, including the customary 'trial pieces' presented by final year students to Presbyteries. It is proposed to consult with Presbyteries on the timing and content of the 'trial pieces' and consider a more universal approach to this requirement. The Panel is currently implementing a programme of consultation meetings with the College Faculty and students.

6. The Panel on Pastoral Care of Manse Families asked the Committee to consider a number of issues arising out of a survey the Panel had completed. The Committee endorsed the responses from the Professor of Practical Theology and the DMS and is confident that the concerns are being covered in the College curriculum and the Licentiate Course for Assistant Ministers.

7. The interviews of 24 candidates were held in Union College on 19 March, 2008. The Interviewing Panel comprised the Revs Robert Beggs, Gordon Best, Robin Brown, William Henry, Liz Hughes, John Hutchinson, David Knox, Philip McCrea, David McIlwrath, Adrian McLernon, Alastair McNeely, Brian McMillen, Ian McNie, Cheryl Meban, Adrian Moffett, Colin Morrison, Bill Parker, Ivan Patterson, Dr Brian Savage, David Thompson; Mr Mervyn Whittle; Dr Lena Morrow; Miss Ann Taylor; Mrs Mary Robinson & Mrs Jayne Wright, together with the Rev George Moore (Chairman), the Rev Noble McNeely (Secretary), the Rev Ronnie Hetherington (Coordinator), the Rev Trevor Gribben (Advisor) and Dr Joan McQuoid, BA, CPsychol (Vocational Consultant).

8. Having completed the interviewing process 17 are being recommended with 4 additional candidates who, being previously deferred, were re-interviewed and satisfied their respective interviewing panels.

JNI McNEELY, Convener

COMMITTEE FOR THE TRAINING OF CHURCH MEMBERS

1. The work of the Committee for the Training of Church Members has continued throughout the year on a number of fronts:

Prepared to Lead

2. Material for a new course for the training of elders has been prepared and tested by a number of Congregations and final changes are being made. The Committee has been trying to find the best way to provide some introductory material relating to the historical background and theology of the Westminster Standards. This would hopefully form part of training materials for two training sessions on the Westminster Standards. It is hoped that this course will be produced in a form similar to that used in the “Prepared to Serve” course. This work has taken longer than was originally anticipated but is now coming to a conclusion and should be ready for publication in the near future. The Committee recognises that in the future additional materials could be produced to supplement those being presently prepared.

Prepared to Serve

3. The uptake for *Prepared to Serve*, the course that helps Church members discover their gifts for Christian ministry, is encouraging. The Committee will continue to work in this area to encourage and train every member of our Congregations to be an active servant, rather than just a passive listener. So far 40 Congregations, and around 1400 members, have used this course.

Publications

4. The Committee has prepared a number of new leaflets for use by Ministers and Congregations. A new leaflet designed for parents who request baptism for their children has been written and is available to Ministers and Elders. The Committee has also produced new leaflets for distribution in Congregations preparing to elect new elders or preparing to choose a new Congregational Committee. It is hoped that these will be a useful resource. The Committee is also working on a new leaflet on Stewardship and Giving, as well as continuing to liaise with the Board of Mission in Ireland on the publication of other materials.

The Way Ahead

5. The Standing Committee of the Board has considered how the work of the Board and its Committees may be advanced, and has been working on a strategic plan for Christian training throughout the denomination. The Committee on Christian Training of Church Members recognises that its work needs to be part of this overall strategy so that Church members can be equipped and envisioned for mission and ministry.

6. The Committee would wish to express its thanks and appreciation to Dr Desi Alexander whose work in this area is invaluable.

JS CARSON, Convener

APPENDIX 1

Training Co-ordination Panel

Purpose

The Panel will coordinate the training opportunities provided by all the Boards and agencies of PCI. It will seek to ensure that all training is both accessible to Ministers, leaders and members and also will make a qualitative difference to the mission and ministry of local Congregations. In doing so, it will aim to ensure both the maximum involvement of Ministers, leaders and members and also the efficient use of human and financial resources.

Make-up

The Panel of the Board of Christian Training will be made up of the Moderator and Clerk of the General Assembly, Convener and Executive Secretary of the Board of Christian Training, the Convener of the Committee for the Training of Church Members and the Director of Christian Training, the Convener of the Committee on Ministerial Development and the Director of Ministerial Studies; plus two representative of the Board of Mission in Ireland, the Board of Mission Overseas, the Board of Social Witness and the Board of Youth & Children's Ministry and the Peace and Peacemaking Panel.

The Panel will be convened by the Executive Secretary of the Board of Christian Training and chaired by the Convener of the Board of Christian Training.

Actions

- (a) As an ongoing task, to assess the current provision of Christian Training throughout PCI and to consider the effectiveness of the overall programme. In doing so to identify new and existing areas that require to be developed and agree a strategy for so doing.
- (b) To agree and prepare an annual calendar of training events being provided at denominational, regional and Presbytery level. The Institute of Christian Training will publish this calendar to be circulated to all Ministers and Christian Training Agents at the time of the General Assembly each year.
- (c) To encourage the evaluation of each training event with a view to future provision.

APPENDIX II**Schedule of Students**

ARDS	Colin Anderson	Union
	Jonathan Boyd	Union
	William Harkness	Union
ARMAGH	Graeme McConville	Union
	Ronnie Agnew	Union
	David McCullagh	Union
	Roger McElnea	Union
	Robert Orr	Union
BALLYMENA	Mark Wilson	Union
	Thomas Bruce	Union
	Edwin Chestnutt	Union
	Colin Jones	Union
	Linda Keys	Union
NORTH BELFAST	Rodney Moody	Union
	Norman Smyth	Union
	Richard Houston	Union
SOUTH BELFAST	Jane Nelson	Union
	Jackie Spence	Union
	Graeme Fowles	Union
EAST BELFAST	Ivan Steen	Union
	Lesley-Ann Wilson	Union
	Andrew Boreland	-
CARRICKFERGUS	Peter Bovill	Union
	Janice Browne	Union
	Mark McKeown	Union
	Liam Rutherford	Union
	Nick Cooper	Union
COLERAINE	Grant Connor	Union
	Jonathan McKay	Union
	Mark Russell	Union
DONEGAL	John Stanbridge	Union
DOWN	Jonathan Cowan	Union
	Mark Catney	Union
DROMORE	Kathryn Viner	Union
	Colin McKibbin	Union
	Raymond McKibbin	Union
IVEAGH	Neil Bingham	Union
	Andrew Faulkner	Union
OMAGH	Daryl Edwards	Union
ROUTE	John McConaghie	-
	Andrew Mullan	Union
	John Mullan	Oakhill
TYRONE	Stewart Glendinning	Union
	Bryan Kee	-
	Noel Mulholland	Union

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the Report be received.
2. That the General Assembly note with gratitude to God the continued increase in numbers of those making application for ordained ministry, and encourage Ministers and Kirk Sessions to identify suitably-gifted members so that this increase may be sustained.
3. That the General Assembly take note of the proposal to introduce an obligatory element into the Ministerial Development Scheme and instruct Presbyteries to submit comments thereon to the Convener of the Ministerial Development Committee by 31 December, 2008.
4. That the assessment for the Ministerial Development Programme be 0.25p per £ of stipend.
5. That the General Assembly note the strategy of the Board for the co-ordination of Christian Training contained in Appendix 1.
6. That the General Assembly note the establishment of the Panel Reviewing the Management Effectiveness of Union College.
7. That the following candidates, their nomination having been sustained by the Board of Christian Training, be accepted as students for the Ordained Ministry, and placed under the care of their Presbyteries:

Name	Congregation	Presbytery
Damien Burke	Kilkenny	Dublin & Munster
Andrew Conway	St Andrews	Ards
Jonathan Doey	Ballysally	Coleraine
Peter Douglas	Hamilton Road	Ards
Jonathan Dunn	Edenderry	Omagh
Ivan Ferris	Whiteabbey	North Belfast
Andrew Galbraith	Ballygilbert	Ards
Jeremy Gardiner	Fisherwick	South Belfast
Ashley Graham	Richhill	Armagh
David Gray	Kirkpatrick Memorial	East Belfast
Stephen Hibbert	Main Street, Garvagh	Coleraine
Edward McKenzie	Castlereagh	East Belfast
Colin Millar	Belvoir	South Belfast
Scott Moore	Cunningham Memorial	Ballymena
Stuart Morrow	High Street, Antrim	Templepatrick
Graeme Orr	Curran	Tyrone
Owen Patterson	Scrabo	Ards
Mark Proctor	1st Portadown	Armagh
Alan Smyth	Clarkesbridge & 1st Newtownhamilton	Newry
Neil Stewart	Main St., Garvagh	Coleraine
Lachlan Webster	Glengormley	North Belfast

8. That the following grants be paid from the Incidental Fund:

Mini School & Interview	2,700
Pre-Term College Retreat	4,120
Applicants Day	450
Licentiates' Training	1,800
Other expenses	<u>1,000</u>
TOTAL	10,070

Motion on the Books

9. That the Board of Christian Training be approved as an agency recognised for funding by the United Appeal.

10. That the Board of Christian Training, together with the appropriate working Committees, be appointed for the ensuing year in accordance with Par 285 of the Code, as follows:

OVERTURES TRANSMITTED

Anent Pars 193(1)(b), 198(1), 214(4), 214(5), 215(1), 215(4), 215(6), 215(7)(a), 215(7)(b), 216, 216(5), 217(1)(a)(i)(x2), 217(1)(a)(ii)(x2), 217(1)(b)(i), 217(1)(b)(ii), 217(1)(b)(iv), 217(2)(b), 217(4), 217(6)(a), 217(7)(a), 217(b)(ii), 217(8)(c), 217(8)(d)(i)(x2), 218(1)(b), 218(2)(a), 268(4)(c), 280(1), 303(4)(d), 309(1)

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in the above paragraphs of the Code the words “Studies and” be deleted.

GEORGE MOORE

Anent Pars 78(b)(x2), Par 193(1)(a)(ii), 198(2), 207(2)

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in the above paragraphs of the Code the word “Studies” be deleted and the words “Christian Training” substituted in its place.

GEORGE MOORE

Anent Par 285 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 285 of the Code the words “Studies and” be deleted and that sub-paragraph (5) be renumbered (4).

GEORGE MOORE

Anent Par 285(1) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that Par 285(1) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

“(1) This Board shall consist of the Moderator and Clerk of Assembly, the Professors in Union Theological College and two representatives of the ministry students from the College, one representative from the Boards of Mission in Ireland, Social Witness, Mission Overseas and Youth and Children’s Ministry, the Director of Ministerial Studies, the Director of Christian Training, the Convener, Executive Secretary and Finance Convener of the Board and the Conveners of the working committees under its supervision, with their members, and two persons nominated by each Presbytery, together with not more than ten persons, the majority of whom shall be women, nominated by the Business Board.”

GEORGE MOORE

Anent Par 285(4) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that Par 285(4) of the Code be deleted.

GEORGE MOORE

Anent Par 272 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 272 of the Code the following paragraph be added:

“(6) To this Board shall stand referred at once all applications from students, licentiates or ministers of other churches to be received under the care of the Church and no application shall be dealt with by the Assembly until a report has been received thereon. The Board, directly or through a Committee on Reception, shall investigate all such applications and shall act thereon as follows:-

(a) Ministers and licentiates of other branches of the Christian Church shall apply to the Convener of the Committee on the Reception of Ministers and Licentiates by 15 December in any year.

(b) Each applicant shall be interviewed and a report brought to the spring meeting of the Committee which shall make a recommendation to the spring meeting of the Board which shall have power to issue and may approve or reject any application.

(c) The names of those ministers and licentiates who have been approved by the Board and received as ministers or licentiates eligible for call, subject to paragraph (d) below, shall be reported to the General Assembly.

(d) A minister or licentiate who has been received in this way shall not be eligible for call until he/she has completed any studies and/or assistantship required by the Board of Christian Training.

(e) A successful applicant who has not begun his/her required course of study and/or assistantship by 1 October in the year following his/her reception by the General Assembly shall cease to be eligible.

(f) In cases where the reception of a minister is being sought to facilitate the work of a Board of the General Assembly or where a vacancy commission seeks to approve the placing of a minister of another denomination on a list for hearing, the Committee on the Reception of Ministers and Licentiates may make special interview arrangements and the General Board shall have power to issue or to refer the matter to the General Assembly

(g) Ministers and licentiates whose applications are rejected by the General Board may appeal by memorial to the General Assembly.”

GEORGE MOORE

BOARD OF COMMUNICATIONS

Convener: Rev WA KENNEDY

Secretary: Mr STEPHEN LYNAS

1. The Board of Communications continues to oversee the work of its busy constituent Committees and the day-to-day operations of the Communications Department in Church House.

2. There is nothing more central to twenty-first century life than communications! This is the cyber age and it remains crucial that our Church is both aware of the implications of this for the mindset of today's (mostly younger) people AND that we make full use of the amazing access today's technology gives us to the world's most thoughtful and potentially influential people. As a Church we have only begun to grapple with this as a mission opportunity.

3. The normal life of any institution continues to throw up both problems and opportunities. In the past year we have perhaps been unusually prone to PR crises. These have continued to highlight the necessity for an effective and professional press relations service such as Stephen Lynas has provided for many years. It is important that those who have to deal with issues which may reflect positively or negatively on the public image of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland make use of the skills of our Communications Secretary, whose experience in managing news can maximize the impact of good stories and minimize potentially damaging reports.

4. The Rev Arthur Clarke retired at the end of 2007 from his long and distinguished editorship of the Presbyterian *Herald*. Arthur's deft literary skills and utter reliability have delivered the *Herald* without crises and with consistent quality. The Board is grateful to Arthur for carrying this burden so cheerfully and skillfully.

Every magazine must continue to evolve along with its readership and current trends, so readers will find a number of changes in style and emphasis in the *Herald* as it attempts to re-focus and perhaps attract younger readers. The new editor, Stephen Lynas, is keen to receive constructive feedback.

5. Our property communicates more than we realize to how we and our message are perceived by the passing world and by our fringe membership. Indeed our church buildings can actively hinder the development of mission or worship.

The Board is continually amazed at the amount of work being carried out by Congregations on churches, halls and manses! The Church Architecture Committee exists to advise in all projects, major and minor, and it is important that their expertise and experience are called upon at an early stage of projects.

6. The Presbyterian Historical Society is a healthy centenarian and continues to serve our Church and other Presbyterian bodies effectively and creatively. Congratulations to the Society on its achievement of this notable anniversary.

7. Once again it is no mere formality to put on record the Board's sincere thanks to the staff of the Department: Stephen Lynas (Communications Secretary), Anne McCully (Administration Manager), Edward Connolly (Production Manager), Sarah Harding (Communications Co-ordinator). Without their daily devotion to duty and considerable skills the Board could not continue to deliver the high standard of service it provides.

COMMUNICATIONS ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

1. The attention of the Committee focuses on the administration and finances of the Board, the Communications Office and the Presbyterian *Herald*. In addition it is responsible for the role of our Church in the Presbyterian Historical Society.

Department

2. The Communications Department incorporates the offices of information, publication and the production of the *Herald* and the Committee endorses the thanks already expressed in the Board of Communications report for the work of Stephen Lynas and his team. The Committee aims to complete the process of recruiting additional members of staff before the 2008 Assembly and further information will be given during the presentation of the reports. The Committee has been made aware of how our Church's relationship with the media needs to evolve with the changing social, political and cultural situation in Ireland, north and south, and beyond.

Presbyterian Herald

3. The Rev Arthur Clarke retired as editor of the Presbyterian Herald as Stephen Lynas took over the position and began his new responsibility with the February issue. The Committee endorses the gratitude of the Board for the fifteen years of dedicated and constant work that Arthur devoted to the production of the magazine. Obviously, a change in editor has brought differences in style and emphasis. The Committee trusts that these will articulate our renewed vision for the *Herald* as an example of Presbyterian good practice. It is hoped to encourage a magazine that will communicate our Church's point of view, as well as providing a forum for information and debate.

Historical Society

4. The activities of the society continue to be represented within the Committee by the joint convener, the Rev Ivor Smith. It is encouraging to learn of the reprint and launch of the 'Adair Narrative', as well as the initiation of the new Presbyterian Historical Society website. The Committee was also informed of the new opening hours for the library. The Society, in conjunction with the Ulster Scots Agency, is planning an important series of reprints beginning with

the autobiography of Robert Blair. Programme plans for 2008/09 include several items celebrating the 150th anniversary of the 1859 revival.

R ALAN RUSSELL, Convener

COMMUNICATIONS DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

1. The Committee has sought to fulfil the Assembly's remit of media training, media development, media consultancy and media relations, in a number of ways.

2. The Committee has corresponded with Government and Regulatory bodies on a wide variety of media issues this year and religious advisers for TV and radio continue to inform us of developments in broadcast media.

3. A successful informal meeting was held with Rotha Johnston, the new BBC Trustee for Northern Ireland, and Carrie Matchett, the new Head of Governance and Accountability in Northern Ireland, and representatives of PCI including the Moderator and Clerk. Areas of mutual interest were discussed and the Committee extended their good wishes to Rotha Johnston and Carrie Matchett in their new jobs.

4. **Excellence in Communication Awards:** To showcase and recognise excellence in PCI communications, the Communications Development Committee launched the Achievement in Communications Awards in 2007, designed to encourage and celebrate good practice in the use of technology and communications for PCI mission and life. The scheme received a significant number of entries and awards were presented to William Hayes for his work in local broadcasting in the Broadcast category; Waringstown Congregation for their promotional mission material in the Print category; Ballyclare Congregation for their DVD promoting congregational life in the Audio-Visual category; and Christ Church Rathgar for their website in the Internet category. The Committee agreed that the scheme run for a further two years with the next awards being presented at the 2008 General Assembly.

5. **The Churches Media Council:** The Rev Liz Hughes and the Convener attended the Churches Media Conference in June, with the Convener reporting on the Conference. It was noted that the Council is considering major changes to the structure and aims of the CMC. The Committee agreed to keep developments under review. The next Conference will take place from Monday 9th June to Wednesday 11 June 2008 with the theme *Going Digital: Searching for values in the new media environment*. It is hoped several representatives from PCI will be able to attend. Information on the Conference's training scheme for young people will also be circulated.

6. **Public Relations:** The Committee is working towards developing guidelines on public relations, including running promotional campaigns, issues management and effective media relations. This material will be developed to suit both Congregations and the wider Denomination.

7. **The Passion:** The BBC screened The Passion during Holy Week 2008, beginning on Palm Sunday 16 March and concluding on Easter Sunday 23 March. While this was not intended to promote Christian faith, the programme

was broadcast during peak viewing times and was heavily trailed by the BBC. It was agreed that information on this potential opportunity for Christian outreach be circulated amongst Ministers. Information on the series appeared in the *March Herald*. The Bible Society also produced educational packs based on the series and further information was able to be found at www.churchesmediacouncil.org.uk/passion and www.rejesus.co.uk.

C GLOVER, Convener

CHURCH ARCHITECTURE COMMITTEE

1. The Committee has met on nine occasions since the last report.
2. Fifty-one submissions were dealt with by the Committee.
3. Approval was given for:
 - 5 new church buildings
 - 5 new manses
 - 4 new halls
 - 5 alterations to manses
 - 6 Congregations to remove pews mainly for disability access
 - 12 alterations to churches and halls
 - 5 extensions to halls
 - 4 data projectors

A number of smaller projects were also approved.

4. The Committee has been involved in supporting Dundonald Presbyterian Church in their quest to build a new church. They have been told that the church building is going to be listed and a letter was sent strongly opposing listing.

5. The Autumn Tour was to Wexford, Kilkenny, Mountmellick, Tullamore and Mullingar. The purpose was to bring encouragement to those working in these areas. It is believed this was accomplished.

6. Sending in plans at an early stage, preferably before working drawings are produced, is much appreciated because it means the Committee can meaningfully make positive suggestions.

7. If a site visit would benefit your Congregation in planning a project, the Committee would be very pleased to organise this to offer guidance and advice. Please feel free to contact the Convener if you are unsure about how to proceed in your project.

8. The Convener would pay tribute to the Committee for their hard work and support throughout the year and especially to our architects for their expertise. Sincere thanks also to Anne McCully for her support in sending out the minutes each month.

9. Above all the Committee gives thanks to God for all the work that is taking place in His Name and for His Glory.

GD SIMPSON, Convener

Minister in Recognised Service

The Rev Dr Bert Tosh reports:

1. I continue as Senior Producer of Religious Programmes for BBC Northern Ireland. The past year has been one of consolidation in programmes such as Morning Service and Sunday Sequence, both of which recorded their highest ever audiences during the past twelve months. The standard of worship presented in Morning Service continues to be of a generally high standard, with many of the contributors realising that certain adjustments need to be made to maximise the effect of what is being communicated. Sunday Sequence, with William Crawley as presenter and Martin O'Brien as Producer, still strives to provide a range of different and often differing opinions on a host of religious and ethical issues.

2. Since February we have increased the number of live contributions to *Thought for the Day* with recorded talks now only on Tuesdays and Thursdays, which allows greater opportunity for reflecting on current events. We continue to make regular contributions to a number of network radio programmes, like *Prayer for the Day*, the *Daily Service* and *Sunday Worship* on Radio 4, *Pause for Thought* and *Sunday Half Hour* on Radio 2 and *Choral Evensong* on Radio 3.

3. Each year, I express my thanks to all those who contribute to this wide range of programmes. To repeat that gratitude is a reminder to me, as much as anyone, that we are hugely dependent on the commitment, time and preparation of many people.

4. In my years in the BBC the audience to which we broadcast has exhibited many changes. We are no longer able to make some of the assumptions that might have been made some twenty years ago. But the challenge to communicate remains the same.

5. In October 2007 I ceased to be convener in charge of Loughaghery and Cargycreevy. I am grateful to those Congregations for their many kindnesses to me and, on occasion, patience with me.

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the Report be received.
2. That the Rev Arthur Clarke be thanked for his successful editorship of the Presbyterian Herald and through it his contribution to the life of the Church.
3. That a grant of £1,500 be paid from the Incidental Fund to the Church Architecture Committee.
4. That a grant of £14,750 be paid from the Incidental Fund to the Presbyterian Historical Society.
5. That the Board of Communications, together with its associated working committees, be appointed for the ensuing year in accordance with Par 277 of the Code as follows:

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Convener: Rev ROBERT HERRON
Secretary: Rev TREVOR GRIBBEN

1. The Board of Education welcomed the decision of the 2007 General Assembly to include Secretary to the Board of Education as part of the job description of the new Deputy Clerk. To be a credible educational stakeholder, in an increasingly complex environment, the Board needs to have adequate professional and administrative support to carry out its role on behalf of the Church. It is vital that the Board is resourced to contribute in an informed way to the current education debates and takes every opportunity of engaging with policymakers.

2. The Board was pleased to welcome the Rev Trevor Gribben to his first meeting in March 2008. The new Secretary is already involved in the advocacy role of the Board and has been appointed to the Executive Committee of the Transferor Representatives' Council. His immediate tasks include providing support to Patrons of National Schools (Presbyterian) in the Republic of Ireland and helping the Board to consider how it can effectively contribute to policy matters in University and Further Education.

3. In Northern Ireland the Board continues to work closely with the Boards of Education of the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church through the Transferor Representatives' Council (TRC). The Rev Ian Ellis is the Secretary of the TRC and the Board is grateful to him for his work and leadership. On behalf of the TRC, Ian drafts many of the documents sent to government and other educational partners and he has proved to be one who is willing to have his work corrected, amended, rewritten, and plagiarised by other members of the TRC Executive.

4. The newly appointed Board Secretary will be seeking to develop a similar working relationship with his counterparts in the Republic of Ireland.

5. In light of on-going discussions regarding the future shape of educational provision and administration within Northern Ireland this year the Board will bring additional resolutions in the Daily Minutes.

STATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

NORTHERN IRELAND

Introduction

1. Given the plethora of political and bureaucratic entanglements which continue to dominate education it has become increasingly important to assert and strengthen our role in an ethos-focused educational enterprise. Our chief motivation must always be on the provision of quality holistic education for all

children and young people, regardless of their religious, cultural and socio-economic roots, and no matter what their physical and intellectual capabilities.

2. The Board continues to recognise the decisive contribution of committed and inspirational educational professionals to the lives of our children and young people. Whilst acknowledging the challenging and stressful elements of this vocation, it is impossible to adequately describe our indebtedness to the many people who work within our schools as teachers and in various supporting roles.

3. Many Presbyterians join with others to give voluntarily of their time and expertise on schools' Boards of Governors (NI) and Boards of Management (ROI). In so doing they subject themselves to public, statutory and legislative responsibility and scrutiny, and are thus deserving of the best available resources, support and training.

4. Our contribution to education in Northern Ireland continues to be most effectively channelled through the Transferor Representatives' Council (TRC). United with the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church, we are able to present a widely respected and representative voice. We have therefore been able to act and respond authoritatively to the full range of proposed changes. The main issues are set out below.

Review of Public Administration (RPA)

5. The Transferor Representatives' Council (TRC) has written to the Department of Education and addressed the Assembly Education Committee regarding its concerns for policy proposals for governance of controlled schools which would remove Church transferors' rights to representation on many such Boards.

6. In the future, it is proposed that transferors will only have rights of representation on schools they formerly owned, or which were superseded (e.g. several Church primary schools amalgamating). The TRC believes that this will lead to a huge loss of rights for transferors and that the proposal will, at a stroke, remove the Christian ethos, as of right, from the controlled sector of education.

7. As all changes in policy must meet the requirements of equality legislation, legal advice has been taken.

8. One of the key issues has been in relation to 'Policy Paper 5 – Governance and Accountability', where initial screening by the Department of Education indicated that no group would be adversely affected by the implementation of the new policy and concluded that an Equality Impact Assessment is not necessary. The Transferor Representatives' Council has challenged this conclusion and has demanded that a full Equality Impact Assessment take place (Appendix I – TRC submission to consultation on equality screening of Policy Paper 5).

9. The Board Convener wrote to Presbyteries highlighting the outcome of the screening document and encouraged Presbyteries, Congregations and individuals to express their concerns to the Department of Education and to local Members of the Legislative Assembly. The response was encouraging.

10. The TRC met the Assembly Education Committee asking members to obtain, from the Department, written, urgent and specific clarification of how

it will protect the Christian ethos in the controlled sector (Appendix II – Press release following a meeting with the Assembly Education Committee).

11. The TRC has also sought support from Members of the Legislative Assembly to block any legislation, which does not protect the Christian ethos of both Protestant and Catholic traditions (Appendix III - copy of the letter sent to MLAs on 28th February 2008).

12. The TRC seeks parity of protection for the Christian ethos in schools attended generally by Protestant children, currently enjoyed in the Catholic maintained sector of education. The TRC is entirely supportive of the right of Catholic schools to safeguard and maintain their Christian ethos in the context of identical funding. The TRC seeks comparative arrangements to make reasonable and equitable alternative provision for the Protestant Churches to continue to carry out the role they have always played in education.

13. The TRC has also submitted a paper in response to Policy paper 21 which deals with Sectoral support – post RPA. Paper 21 proposes that various sectors (including Transferors for the first time) receive a modest amount of statutory support. Currently the TRC, representing the three main Protestant Denominations, receives no support – unlike other sectors, including the Catholic maintained, Integrated and Irish Medium sectors. Given that TRC, representing the Protestant Churches, has not been provided with support to employ professional help, our ability to engage with the unremitting demands made by government is hampered. The Churches are indebted in particular to the TRC office-bearers, who amongst other demanding congregational and denominational responsibilities, have sought to fulfil the considerable demands made upon them. Nevertheless, at a time when strategic leadership and guidance is required, the transferred sector has been disadvantaged. The Committee believes that this current inequality could become systemically embedded and magnified if present proposals regarding school governance and educational management proceed unaltered.

14. At the time of writing, the direction and speed of implementation of the various proposals for RPA within education is unclear. The TRC is using this period to raise public awareness of the various issues of concern to Churches and meet with political parties, on the basis that any changes must eventually be approved by Assembly members.

Minister's proposals on arrangements for transfer to post-primary school

15. In December 2007 the Minister of Education made an announcement regarding future transfer arrangements from primary to post-primary schools. This was essentially a vision statement with little detail of practical outworking of the proposals. The main policy change is to move the point of transition to age 14, using the method of informed parental/pupil election. Post-14 children will have a range of pathways, determined by local area planning, which might include remaining in the current school, a change of school, or access to courses in other schools through collaborative arrangements. A controversial feature is the removal of the transfer test i.e. academic selection at Year 7 (P7). In the future parents of P7 children will choose a post-primary school on the basis of their preferences, as they would a primary. If schools are over-subscribed admissions criteria will include community, geographical and family criteria.

16. The TRC has been consulted by the minister and its views on the new proposals sought. Due to the lack of detail in the minister's statement the TRC was restrained in its response. The TRC response indicated that it seeks a system of transfer which enables equality of opportunity and high quality outcomes for all pupils, and believes there is a strong argument for deferring key pathway decisions until 14, based upon informed parental choice. However it expressed to the minister the view that new arrangements must be built upon firm foundations including: clear transfer procedures, working collaborative arrangements, significant investment in the schools' estate, functioning local area planning, consensus among key stakeholders and high levels of parental confidence. The time needed for these conditions to develop should not be underestimated and to forge ahead without the necessary preparation would be very risky and unlikely to gain support.

'Every School a Good School'

17. This recently published proposed school improvement policy outlines key indicators of a good school including: performance in assessments and examinations, outcomes of inspections, the quality of financial management, the view of governors and parents, collaborative arrangements with other schools etc. The policy also proposes accountability measures along with appropriate support and interventions to drive forward school improvement. In its response, the TRC welcomed the goal to improve school performance yet cautioned against a view of education that overlooks a school's social purpose and its value to a community.

Special Education

18. At the time of writing, the findings of the Review of Special Education Needs Provision in Northern Ireland have not been released. However, in reply to a question from a Member of the Legislative Assembly, it was stated by the Minister that a consultation will begin in the summer of 2008. Following concerns raised at the *Presbyterians Talk Education* event at last year's General Assembly, the Assembly passed a resolution welcoming this review (see Minutes of General Assembly 2007, p 103, res 6). The TRC continues to press for progress in this matter.

Religious Education Core Syllabus

19. In consultation with the RE Advisors from the Education and Library Boards, the TRC has been monitoring proposals relating to the statutory regulations governing time allocation for Religious Education. Essentially the proposal is that there should no longer be such a statutory requirement. The consultation that was scheduled for autumn 2007 has not yet taken place.

20. Key Stage 3 resources: The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment – RE Advisory Group has developed new teacher resources for Key Stage 3 including: a Subject Guide for RE within the NI Revised Curriculum, a World Religions web-site and materials suitable for teaching the subject areas of Prejudice, Sectarianism and Reconciliation. Planning is underway to continue this project into the future and also to provide

detailed resources at Key Stages 1 and 2. Unfortunately there appears to be no funding for a specific Primary Development Officer.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Primary Schools

1. During the year new Boards of Management for National Schools were appointed. The Board thanks those people who have completed a four year term and acknowledges the commitment of those who have been willing to offer their service for the next four years.

2. Patrons have expressed concerns regarding the level of the Capitation Grant for schools and note that the increase is lower than inflation at a time of increasing inescapable costs such as heat and light. The Department has also abruptly ended the "Summer Works Scheme" which provided much needed funding for the improvement and repair of buildings.

3. Concerns have been raised by the teaching unions regarding the failure of the Department of Education and Science to address the issue of teacher/pupil ratios. One of the unions has threatened industrial action if government fails to act.

4. The Board notes the announcement in December 2007 by Minister Hanafin regarding two new State Community National Schools. The Minister said, "The new schools will be open to children of all religions and none. They will be inter-denominational in character, aiming to provide for religious education and faith formation during the school day for each of the main faith groups represented. A general ethics programme will also be available for children whose parents opt for that and the schools will operate through an ethos of inclusiveness and respect for all beliefs, both religious and non-religious." Representatives of the Church of Ireland, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches have sought a meeting with the Department for clarification regarding Church involvement in these schools.

Secondary Education Committee

Mr Brian Duffy, Director of Secondary Education in the Republic of Ireland, reports:

1. The Secondary Education Committee (SEC) is a body comprising representatives from the Church of Ireland, the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Religious Society of Friends. It distributes the Block Grant received from the Government and coordinates education policy among the above Churches.

2. The Committee was pleased to distribute grants totalling €5,844,235 (€5,571,568 previous year). The Committee agreed to increase grants for the school year 2008/09 on a scale from boarding €1,140 - €5,775 (€1,140 - €5,250), day €480 - €2,160 (€480 - €1,998). An increase in certain allowances was also agreed in relation to the reckoning of assessments. This resulted in improved access to grants for a number of families. It was also noted that there had been an increase in enrolments in schools under Protestant management.

3. There has been no further progress on the issue of the provision of state-funded Chaplains to voluntary secondary schools, although some schools have continued to make such appointments from their own funds. The Department of Education and Science has been reticent to support a pilot project, despite previous commitments given to this effect. The issue of “resources” is being used to delay the project indefinitely.

4. The Department of Education and Science has introduced a cross-sectoral redeployment scheme for teachers in schools which are closing. The number of schools closing is usually relatively small but the Department has made it clear that the scheme is a pilot scheme for a further redeployment procedure where teachers are in excess of quota in their existing school. This could entail the movement of hundreds of teachers, depending on how such a scheme was to be constructed. Previously, schools have been allowed to remain over staff quota until the problem was corrected by natural wastage due to retirements, etc. This has provided much needed additional resources to such schools in the short term, as they are often in disadvantaged areas or areas experiencing sudden or large demographic change.

5. The schools under Protestant management had stated that they were not a party to the redeployment scheme and were never party to any previous redeployment scheme. Legal advice states that the scheme infringes constitutional rights in relation to issues of ethos and also employment rights under the Education Act. Four schools were refused the right to appoint new teaching staff to State paid posts as they had not taken part in the redeployment scheme. Regrettably, with the support of all voluntary secondary schools under Protestant management, the four schools have had to issue legal proceedings against the Department of Education & Science in this matter. These proceedings are ongoing and there has been no full hearing to date in the High Court.

6. A very valuable scheme for the much needed refurbishment of schools with serious maintenance problems due to old buildings, etc., has been discontinued without notice by the Department, following an invitation for tenders to be submitted for such works by the very same Department. This scheme, known as the “Summer Works Scheme” has been one of the best initiatives ever provided and its cancellation is to be deplored.

7. The prayers of members of the General Assembly are requested for the continuing work of all of the bodies which seek to maintain and improve educational standards for our children.

School Chaplain’s Report

Royal & Prior Comprehensive School, Raphoe

Rev Stanley Stewart reports:

1. I express gratitude to God for the opportunity to minister to over 500 students and 40+ staff in the context of this historic school environment. As one of the five ‘1608 Royal Schools’ it is a year of celebration and thanksgiving for four centuries of service in education.

The main points regarding my work this year have been:

a. Teaching duties: I continue to teach Religious Education. I have no Leaving Certificate classes this year even though those examined last year attained satisfactory grades. I have produced a student workbook for junior classes to provide supplementary materials and more structure to class work. This was necessary as commercially available textbooks do not reflect the religious ethos of the school. A similar resource is being developed for senior classes.

b. Pastoral Care: I have invested a lot of time as part of the Finn Valley Alliance for Positive Mental Health in obtaining funding from Pobal (Dormant Accounts) enabling a Youth Support officer to be appointed to work in the four second level schools in Raphoe and Stranorlar to raise awareness in positive mental health and suicide prevention in young people in line with the National Strategy. I have been instrumental in developing and implementing a student peer mentoring programme to support students at the transfer and induction stage of their second level schooling. As a member of the Pastoral Care Team, I continue to support students, especially in relation to relationship difficulties, bullying, behavioural problems, suicide prevention, teenage pregnancy and parenting, and substance abuse.

c. Faith Formation: In this Christian School (under Protestant Management), attended by students from a wide variety of religious backgrounds and none, I conduct Christian worship every morning in Assembly. In conjunction with the student-led Christian Union I am involved in evangelistic outreach. I appreciate the assistance of Miss Ruth Mitchell (Presbytery Youth Support & Development Officer) and Mr Andy Lamberton (Volunteer Youth Worker) for their major input to the CU this year.

2. Presbytery: As Moderator for the past year I have had the opportunity to encourage innovation and progress reorganisation in line with BMI strategy; this included assisting in leadership training and in this regard I thank the Board of Education for enabling me to undertake professional development with the Church Pastoral Aid Society.

3. Preaching: On recently bringing my data base of preaching engagements up to date I discovered in the three years I have been School Chaplain I have taken over 160 Church services – preaching on average two out three Sundays, the majority in vacancies in Donegal.

4. Prayer: I appreciate the prayer support being offered – as the only Presbyterian School Chaplain in the Republic of Ireland and the only full-time Chaplain outside the Board of Social Witness support structure, it can be lonely.

COLIN MCCLURE, Convener

APPENDIX I

Transferor Representatives' Council

Response to the consultation on policy screening by

the Department of Education on RPA Policy Paper 5

'GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY' -

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL BOARDS OF GOVERNORS

10 March 2008

1. The TRC is astounded at what it considers to be a fundamentally flawed screening process by the Department of Education. It fails to understand how the Department has screened the proposed policy which is yet to be introduced without establishing through any analysis whether a departure from the existing arrangements has a significant adverse impact by reference to any of the categories under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. As a minimum the TRC therefore requests the following basic information from which such an analysis could be made:-

- (a) Details of the composition (by religion Protestant/Catholic) of the eleven different management arrangements of existing School Boards of Governors prescribed in legislation in order to determine itself the breakdown from a religious perspective. This does not limit the Department from providing information about all of the nine categories required by Section 75.
- (b) The Department's anticipated composition (by religion Catholic/Protestant) of Boards of Governors under each of the proposed new categories of governors
- (c) Details of all schools in Northern Ireland specifying the school category and identifying those which have Church governors as of right (Catholic/Protestant) and
- (d) Details of those schools which will continue to have Church Governors as of right under the category of Foundation Governors (Protestant/Catholic).

It is the TRC's belief that the above information will establish a significant adverse effect of the proposed arrangements requiring justification by the Department.

2. In Section 1.2, where the brief description of the policy to be screened is set out, the Department states that the proposed new arrangements take account of equality issues affecting the rights of the transferors:

"these three churches will as former owners maintain the right to nominate representatives to those primary schools that they originally provided and then transferred to state control. They will lose their nomination rights to controlled primary and secondary schools that they never owned but will be eligible under

new revised arrangements to put forward representatives to serve as Governors of these schools”.

The Department does not appear to have been able to determine precisely which schools were owned and transferred to the state and which developed from previously owned and transferred schools. In essence it is the TRC’s position that the ethos of the controlled sector was developed from the schools transferred by the Protestant Churches and that this sector should be treated no differently from the Catholic maintained sector i.e. all controlled Primary and Secondary Schools should be treated as though they were formerly “owned” by the Churches. An alternative model would be to treat schools in the Catholic maintained and the controlled sectors as all owned by the state (where there is 100% funding of those schools which have Department of Education governors).

Either of the models set out above addresses the disingenuous and misleading comment in Section 1(ii)

“this change comes about because new legislation retaining the existing rights would now amount to discrimination on the grounds of religious belief and would not be in the legislative competence of the Assembly”.

3. It is submitted that the Department proposes to introduce new legislation which will have the effect of removing overnight the role of the transferors in the controlled sector and will lead to an indirectly discriminatory arrangement also likely to be contrary to the Northern Ireland Act 1998 as amended. That the Department should even countenance such a flawed proposal is deeply upsetting to the TRC and its constituency.

The alternative approaches suggested by the transferors above would mitigate the significant impact of such indirectly discriminatory proposals, which if not given due consideration will in the transferors view cast considerable doubt as to the justification for the Department’s proposals in this area.

4. The transferors have set out in previous correspondence and before the Assembly’s Education Committee their very serious concerns that lack of representation as of right paralleling that to be entrenched in the Catholic maintained sector will sweep away overnight a Christian ethos as of right within education in the controlled sector.

5. A recognition of the two Christian traditions within Northern Ireland does not preclude the Department providing arrangements for strong governance from other sectors on Boards of Governors.

The TRC is gravely concerned that this policy, if unamended, will yield a huge inequality of treatment to members of the Protestant community. It simply seeks a parity of treatment with that enjoyed by the Catholic /Maintained Sector.

APPENDIX II**Transferor Representatives' Council****PRESS RELEASE****7 December 2007****The Review of Public Administration (RPA) Policy Papers**

Protestant Churches petition Assembly Education Committee on the future of school governance

Office bearers of the Transferor Representatives' Council today appeared before the Assembly Education Committee, to express concern regarding future proposals for governance of controlled schools.

Currently, transferor governors (from the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches), comprise 4 out of 9 members on a controlled primary school. This right of representation on all controlled primary and secondary schools is now under serious threat due to proposals arising from the Review of Public Administration.

The Review of Public Administration (RPA) has proposed the removal of this statutory role of transferors on the ground that it purportedly contravenes equality requirements of the Northern Ireland Acts. In future, it is proposed that transferors will only have rights of representation on schools they formerly owned or which were superseded. The TRC believes that this will lead to a huge loss of rights for transferors and that the proposal will, at a stroke, remove the Christian ethos as of right from the controlled sector of education.

The TRC seeks parity of protection for the Christian ethos in schools attended generally by Protestant children, currently enjoyed in the Catholic maintained sector of education.

The effect of the proposed new reforms will be that, whilst a broad Christian ethos will be retained in Catholic schools, it will no longer be reflected in schools which pupils from the Protestant tradition will attend. Catholic schools will continue as of legal right to have faith representatives on Boards of Governors, however schools attended mainly by Protestant pupils will be prohibited by law from having any official Church representation.

The TRC is entirely supportive of the right of Catholic schools to safeguard and protect their Christian ethos in the context of identical funding. All it seeks is that comparative arrangements make reasonable and equitable alternative provision for the Protestant Churches to continue to carry out the role they have always played in education.

THE WAY FORWARD

The Department has indicated that the RPA reforms will be implemented in a phased approach. A draft first Bill is expected quite soon; however it will not be subject to public consultation.

The TRC therefore feels it now has no option but to seek to garner support to protect this Christian ethos.

Firstly, the TRC urges the Education Committee to obtain from the Department written and urgent clarification of specifically how it has protected the Christian ethos in the controlled sector within the draft of the 1st Bill.

Secondly, in the event that the Committee is not satisfied with the reassurance that the Bill will safeguard the position, the TRC requests the Committee, along with their MLA colleagues, to present a Petition of Concern to prevent passage of any legislation which will in this regard destroy parity of treatment with the Catholic Church, by removing statutory protection of a Christian ethos from the sector of schools educating children mainly from the Protestant community.

In conclusion, the TRC seeks support from MLAs to block any legislation which the Government cannot confirm will protect the Christian ethos of both Protestant and Catholic traditions.

APPENDIX III

Transferor Representatives' Council
A Letter to Members of the Legislative Assembly
Re: Equality Screening of Policy Paper 5 –
Governance and Accountability
Composition of School Boards of Governors
28 February 2008

The Transferor Representatives' Council (TRC) represents the Church of Ireland, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, and the Methodist Church in Ireland in matters of educational policy in Northern Ireland.

Dear MLA,

The Transferor Representatives' Council (TRC) wishes to draw to your attention a current equality consultation by the Department of Education (DE). A screening of the above policy has been carried out internally by DE and concludes that the results do not indicate a need for an equality impact assessment.

CONCERN

The TRC is astounded at what appears to be a fundamentally flawed screening process. It is incomprehensible how the Department has come to the conclusion that the proposed departure from existing arrangements for school governance will not have a significant adverse impact on the Protestant Churches' existing rights on controlled schools.

This conclusion is all the more amazing given the high level representations made by the Churches to the Department on this issue, the comments made in submissions by the Education and Library Boards, other Church bodies and many controlled schools. In December 2007 the TRC petitioned the Assembly Education Committee on this issue and issued a press statement to the media. As a result of heightened public awareness the TRC has been greatly encouraged by the very strong support of parents and governors for its stance of contesting these discriminatory proposals.

Currently, transferor governors (from the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches), comprise 4 out of 9 members on a controlled primary school and a proportional representation on all controlled secondary schools. The RPA has proposed the removal of this statutory role of transferors on the ground that it purportedly contravenes equality requirements of the Northern Ireland Acts.

OUTCOMES IF THE POLICY IS UNCHALLENGED

If the new proposals are accepted by the Assembly:

- The Assembly will be removing a large number of governors nominated to controlled schools by the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches. The precise number has not been disclosed by the Department, however it is clear that all controlled secondary schools will lose their church representation by right and it has been estimated that in some areas up to a third of all controlled primary schools would be affected;
- The Roman Catholic Church representation will remain unchanged on grant maintained schools (also funded 100% by state funds);
- Only one Church will have rights of representation on post-primary schools (i.e. the Roman Catholic Church);
- The Controlled sector will be divided between schools formerly owned by the Transferring Churches and those not formerly owned, thus creating another sector of schools in NI;
- At a stroke this will remove the Christian ethos as of right from the controlled sector of education;
- Transferors will also lose their current decision making role by right through membership on each Education and Library Board.

UNFAIR TREATMENT

The TRC seeks parity of protection for the Christian ethos in schools attended generally by Protestant children, currently enjoyed in the Catholic maintained sector of education. It is important to note that the TRC is entirely supportive of the right of Catholic schools to safeguard and maintain their Christian ethos in the context of identical funding.

The TRC seeks comparative arrangements to make reasonable and equitable alternative provision for the Protestant Churches to continue to carry out the role they have always played in education.

PETITION

We therefore request MLAs:

- to respond to this equality consultation drawing attention to this flaw in its screening process, that the Protestant community will be significantly adversely affected by the changed policy;
- to further state that the implications of this unfair treatment are serious and the proposed policy change requires the full rigour of a full equality impact assessment.

- not to pass any legislation which does not protect the Christian ethos of both Protestant and Catholic traditions

For your information, the current consultation ends on 10th March, 2008.

The TRC thanks you for your consideration of its concerns.

Yours faithfully,

Revd I Ellis (Secretary to TRC and the Board of Education, Church of Ireland)

Revd Dr L Glenny (Secretary of the Board of Education, Methodist Church in Ireland)

Revd R Herron (Convener of the Board of Education, Presbyterian Church in Ireland)

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the Report be received.
2. That the General Assembly fully support the Transferor Representatives' Council in seeking to ensure parity of protection for the Christian ethos in schools in the Controlled Sector currently enjoyed by schools in the Catholic Maintained Sector.
3. That the Board of Education, with its associated working committees for the ensuing year, be appointed in accordance with Par 284 of the Code as follows:

BOARD OF FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

Convener: JOHN MILLAR, OBE

1. The apparently never abating concerns about Pensions and the Board's Review of Pensions, of which more later in this Report, have tended to overshadow the considerable amount of hard and detailed work carried out by the Board and its four Committees.

2. The outcome of the processing of the Charities Bill is awaited together with details of the format of accounts. The Board has recognised one software package as suitable to meet the likely requirements of the legislation and, hopefully, another will be available in the next few months. An update on the Charities Bill has been issued to Treasurers.

3. New procedures for reporting Ministers' Expenses to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs have, in the main, worked well in the first year. However, a small number of Ministers have failed to comply and steps are being taken to ensure compliance so that the entire procedure will not be put in jeopardy.

4. A Health and Safety Manual was provided to all Congregations and this was followed by a successful seminar in Church House. This subject will impact on all Congregations and, whilst responsibility lies with Congregations, further consideration will be given to other ways of promoting the subject.

5. At last year's Assembly, the resolution setting the CMF assessment was passed with the following amendment 'and consideration be given to those Ministers who felt they were disadvantaged by the change in calculating Augmented Grant'.

The Pensions' and Assessments' Committee considered this at length (see that Committee's Report) and the Board accepted the recommendation that, whilst recognising the disappointment of those affected, no change should be made to the current basis for calculation of augmentation.

6. A review by the Board of the operation of the Tyrone Memorial is scheduled for 2009. Discussions with the Union Commission have highlighted matters connected with Augmentation of Stipends as well as other areas of concern which would suggest that a more wide-ranging review should be considered. If ongoing discussions confirm this view, a detailed proposal will be submitted to the General Assembly.

7. The extent of the external work on Church House is related to the eventual outcome of the deliberations of the Church House Panel. The Board is currently in the process of seeking Tenders for the work on Church House, excluding Fisherwick Buildings. A proposal for an assessment in 2008 of 3.50p in the £ of stipend is appended.

8. The Actuarial Valuation of the Ministers' Pension Scheme (1978) at 31 December, 2006, revealed a deficit of £3 million and this necessitated an assessment for 2008 of 26p in the £ of stipend which was approved by the General Board on 13 March, 2008.

9. The undernoted proposed assessments represent in total, an increase over 2007 of 2.5p in the £ of stipend.

	2008	2007	2006
	p	p	p
Central Ministry Fund	18.00	16.00	15.00
Retired Ministers' Fund	6.00	7.00	8.50
Widows of Ministers' Fund	5.50	6.25	7.00
Prolonged Disability Fund	0.25	0.50	0.75
Incidental Fund	5.00	6.00	6.00
Church House External Work	3.50	3.50	0.00
Special Assembly*	0.25	0.25	0.00
Ministerial Development Fund*	0.25	0.25	0.00
	-----	-----	-----
Sub-total	38.75	39.75	37.25
Ministers' Pension Scheme (1978)	26.00	22.50	22.50
	-----	-----	-----
Total	64.75	62.25	59.75
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*These figures are set by other Boards and are provisional at the time of writing.

Review of Pensions

10. At the 2007 General Assembly, the Board submitted detailed proposals for a merging of the Church's three Defined Benefit Schemes, with amendments to the benefits accruing. That Assembly passed the following resolution:

That members of the Staff and PWA/Overseas Board etc. Pension Schemes transfer into the Ministers' Pension Scheme (1978) (to be appropriately renamed), but that the Board of Finance and Personnel be instructed to re-examine the proposed increase in the retirement age with a view to keeping it at 65, that they supply to each member of the various schemes the details of how the proposed changes to the existing scheme will affect their future pension provision and that they bring proposals, revised or otherwise, to the General Assembly 2008.

Since the General Assembly, the matter was discussed at four meetings as follows:

- (a) Pension Review Panel 31 August, 2007
- (b) Board Meeting 9 October, 2007
- (c) Pension Review Panel 27 November, 2007
- (d) Board Meeting 5 December, 2007.

The deliberations at these meetings are summarised below.

(a) Pension Review Panel 31 August, 2007

The Board Convener called a meeting of the Panel that had carried out the Review of Pensions for the Board and that group, less one person, a Minister, who did not wish to participate further met, on 31 August, 2007.

The Panel meeting noted that there were three issues arising:

- (i) To transfer the members of the Staff and PWA/Overseas Boards/Irish Mission schemes into the Ministers Pension Scheme 1978 (MPS)
- (ii) To reconsider the proposal to increase the retirement age to 67 and
- (iii) To issue to all members details of how the proposed changes would affect their pension entitlement.

In considering the three issues, the Panel agreed:

1. The transfer of the Schemes could not take place until the benefit structure was agreed.
2. The proposal for retirement age - see below.
3. As indicated by our Advisers, the cost of producing the individual benefit figures for members will be in the region of £10,000 – £15,000, plus VAT. However, before the preparation can commence, it will be necessary to await the Board's response to the Assembly resolution.

In considering the retirement age at 67, the Panel considered a number of options:

1. To reduce the retirement age to 65 and seek some compensatory adjustment to the other benefits to keep the overall costs as proposed (e.g. reduce the accrual rate from 1/60 to e.g. 1/65 or 1/70).
2. The Church to pay the additional 1.9%, at an annual cost of approx £240,000 per annum, to fund for retirement at 65.
3. As (2) but in a two-third : one-third split i.e. for the Church to pay an additional 1.25% and members to pay 0.65% (making the members' contribution 7.65%).
4. To continue to recommend the proposals as outlined in the Report to the General Assembly in June 2007 (i.e. retain a retirement age of 67) as being the best solution within the estimated cost levels.
5. To consider the use of an asset of the Church (e.g. Church House) as a contingent asset.

It was agreed that the preferred option of the Panel remained that presented to the 2007 Assembly i.e. retirement age of 67. It was recognised that the rationale for this needs to be highlighted to the membership (not just Minister members) and particular emphasis needs to be given to the following:

- that, despite the high commitment and the growing movement away from such schemes, the Church seeks to continue a defined benefits scheme;
- there is a trend towards higher state pension age;
- that members will still be able to retire at 65 and those near retirement will have a limited impact on their pensions;
- that under the proposed arrangements there will be more available as tax-free cash than at present (subject to pension law remaining unaltered);
- that the proposed scheme is the best solution in line with the proposed costings.

(b) Board Meeting 9 October, 2007

The Panel's views were reported to the Board in October, 2007. Some members of the Board were unhappy at the fact that there had not been a Minister present at the Panel's August, 2007, discussions and the Board asked

the Panel, supplemented by two Ministers, to meet again to consider the matter and report to a meeting of the Board in December.

(c) **Pension Review Panel 27 November, 2007**

The enlarged Panel met in November with representatives of Kerr Henderson, the Pensions Advisers, and Mr P Murray, the Schemes' Actuary, in attendance.

A protracted discussion of the issues took place and a Report of this meeting was presented to the Board on 5 December, 2007.

The key points of the Panel's Report are:

1. There was agreement that the 'employer' cost of 14.2% should not be exceeded.
2. There was no obvious change that could be made to the proposed benefits that would enable the financing of reducing Retirement Age to 65.
3. The Actuary indicated that he would be 'comfortable with' changed assumptions (i.e. that everyone would retire at 66, even if retirement age 65, and investment returns would be 0.1% better). This was of interest to those on the Panel who wanted to retain a Retirement Age of 65 without any apparent cost. However, there was disagreement on this point and it was decided to present this to the Board for a decision.

(d) **Board Meeting 5 December, 2007**

At that meeting, the Board considered the results of the Actuarial Valuation of the Ministers' Pension Scheme (1978) as at 31 December, 2006. Using the same assumptions as were used in the proposed new arrangements presented to the Assembly in 2007, the Scheme showed a deficit of £3 million resulting in the Trustees seeking an increase in the Church's contribution from 15.6% of pensionable income to 23.2%. The Board accepted this.

The Board then debated the Report from the Review Panel and, not being convinced of the wisdom of changing the original assumptions, passed a resolution **'that the Board, having examined the proposed increase in retirement age to 67, agrees not to amend its proposal and that the proposals of benefits of the newly merged Scheme be re-submitted to the General Assembly'**.

This decision enabled the Board to issue instructions for the preparation of Statements showing the effect of the proposed changes on the members of the three Schemes and these are expected to be ready for issue towards the end of April, 2008.

The Board, having examined the Regulator's Guidance, noted the Panel's view that use of contingent assets should only be considered if worthwhile savings in the Pension Protection Levy could be achieved. Calculations by the Financial Secretary show that, at this stage, it would not be worth pursuing this matter but that it should be kept under review. In any event, use of contingent assets would require the consent of the General Assembly and the Scheme Trustees.

Regrettably, and without any discussion with the Board or its Convener, a Presbytery has issued a Paper, within and beyond the bounds of that Presbytery,

summarising and commenting upon the Panel's Report to the Board in a manner which does not truly or fully reflect all the issues discussed. The Panel's Report is reproduced below, in full, (Appendix 1) so that the Assembly may have a view of all the arguments presented. This clearly highlights concerns surrounding the assumption of higher investment returns than those used in the most recent revaluation of the Ministers' Scheme (1978), particularly in light of the investment bias towards equities. Concern was also expressed at the assumption that **all** members would retire at 66 given the pressure for a retirement age of 65.

It should be pointed out that the Actuary is an adviser and he can give his advice within a range of options acceptable to him and the Regulator. He does not determine the views of the Board or the policy of the Scheme Trustees and he most certainly did not say that any aspect of our proposals was or was not necessary.

Conclusion

The Board has responded to the 2007 Assembly Resolution in good faith and has spent considerable time and effort in reviewing its proposals. The decision not to change the proposed retirement age was not taken lightly and it should be pointed out that the Assembly Resolution did ask for a response 'revised or otherwise'. The Board believes that the proposed structure of the merged scheme is the best use of the resources available.

Since the Board's decision, the Pensions' Regulator has issued a Consultation Document which suggests that Schemes should be making greater provision for increasing longevity which, if adopted, as seems likely, could increase the cost of the proposals by more than 1%.

Further, since the Valuation of the Ministers Scheme in 2006 and, particularly, since the end of 2007, there has been great uncertainty in stock markets which make it difficult for Pension Schemes to achieve investment returns approaching the assumptions made. Whilst we seek to provide benefits in the long term, there is a requirement for funding rates to recognise ongoing situations. Therefore, it would be wrong to disregard the possibility of a funding rate, for the merged schemes, higher than presently calculated.

The Boards' Proposals are as presented in 2007 (see Appendix 2 – amended to reflect new data and dates) and represent a significant effort on the part of the Board to maintain defined benefits when the increasingly accepted option elsewhere is to move to money purchase schemes. We may yet be forced down that route. Indeed, some on the Board believe that we should go down that route but the Board believes the present proposals present a reasonable response to a difficult situation.

11. As always, the Board is grateful to all who participated in or contributed to its work in any way.

PENSIONS' AND ASSESSMENTS' COMMITTEE

Central Ministry Fund

1. At the end of 2007, the CMF had a retained balance (excluding investments) of £2,119,980, a decrease of £207,492 on 2006.

2. The level of retained balance has reduced in recent years from £2,854,950 at the end of 2004. The reasons for the reduction are complex but largely centre around several issues.

3. Firstly, the increase in the cost of augmentation is £45,480 from £518,525 in 2004 to £564,009 in 2007.

4. Secondly, the welcome increase in the number of licensed assistants required additional expenditure of £94,783, from £58,154 in 2004 to £152,937 in 2007.

5. Thirdly, total payments of CMF bonus in 2007 were £860,049, an increase of £67,138 over payments in 2004, whilst income, arising from those funds from which the bonus is supposed to be derived, increased by £6,639, from £243,179 in 2004 to £249,818 in 2007. In effect CMF had to find £610,231 in 2007 for payment of bonuses. This is equivalent to an assessment of circa 6.25p per £ of stipend! There is arguably a case for 'capping' the bonus at it's present level, in order to curtail the increasing burden on CMF.

6. Much harder to quantify, is the loss to CMF brought about by the lower level of increases paid, under Tyrone Memorial, to Ministers in the higher paying charges. In effect the strong are paying relatively less to help the weak than they would have paid, had Tyrone not been in operation.

7. In addition, part of the deficit arises where augmented charges continue to receive augmentation despite increases in specified sources that would enable them to afford to make a greater contribution towards stipend. The Committee are most grateful to the Union Commission who are seeking to persuade such congregations to meet their fair share of the burden.

8. Taking these factors into account the Committee concluded that, despite their desire to reduce the burden of assessments on Congregations, the decline in the retained balance in CMF needs to be addressed in order to maintain a prudent reserve.

9. The proposed rate of assessment for 2008 is therefore 18p per £1 of Stipend, an increase from 16p in 2007, and 15p in 2006 but still less than the assessments of 21p in 2003.

10. The following increases were set by the Board, under the Tyrone Memorial Scheme:

Stipend	% Increase
£0-£25,000	3.80%
£25,001 - £30,000	3.00%
£30,001 - £35,000	2.50%
£35,001 - £40,000	2.25%
£40,001 and over	1.50%

EURO Stipends increase by 5.0% under Tyrone Memorial

11. The following recommendations were approved by the Board for 2008:

(a) **Ministerial Minimum**

	Northern Ireland		Rep. Of Ireland	
	2008 £	2007 £	2008 €	2007 €
Ministerial Minimum	21,450	20,660	33,917	32,302
After 5 years' service	21,986	21,176	34,765	33,110
After 10 years' service	22,522	21,693	35,613	33,917
After 15 years service	23,059	22,210	36,461	34,725
After 20 years service	23,595	22,726	37,309	35,532
After 25 years service	24,131	23,243	38,157	36,340
After 30 years' service	24,668	23,759	39,005	37,147

(b) **Family Grants 2008**

	Northern Ireland	Rep. Of Ireland
	£	€
Birth to 10 years	320	945
11 to 15 years	480	1,490
16 years and over		
At school	720	2,755
At university	2,395	4,595
Bands – Joint Incomes		
<i>Reduction - Nil</i>	24,745	37,925
<i>Reduction - £1 for every £5</i>	33,290	51,010
<i>Reduction - £1 for every £2</i>	33,290	51,010

(c) The grant in respect of any child who is 16 years + falling into category (b) and who is in receipt of a maintenance or training grant shall be reduced by £1 every £1 by which such grant or other sponsorship or scholarship exceeds £1000.

(d) The amount a Minister may earn, apart from congregational work, without the augmented grant being affected, shall be £4,368 under Par 316(2)(d)(i) of the Code, or £2,250 under Par 316(2)(d)(ii). The maximum under the above paragraphs shall be £4,368.

(e) That in reckoning augmentation for 2007, the CMF shall not take account of a sum not exceeding the annual bonus, being income from the Commutation, Sustentation and Central Ministry Funds. Code Par 316(2)(e).

12. At last year's Assembly the resolution setting the CMF assessment was passed with the following amendment 'and consideration be given to those Ministers who felt they were disadvantaged by the change in calculating Augmented Grant'.

13. The Committee considered this matter at considerable length. Under the previous method, augmentation to the current ministerial minimum had been calculated, based on the previous year's stipend, thus ignoring increases in stipend for the current year. This had resulted in ministers in augmented charges being paid more than the minimum.

14. When the current method, whereby augmentation is based on the current years stipend was introduced, some ministers felt that they had been disadvantaged, in that the pay rise they had received had been less than they had expected.

15. It is evident, however, that the previous method of calculation had given rise to inequities between ministers whose congregations paid them the minimum stipend, and those in augmented charges who had received more than the minimum. In effect congregations who paid their minister the minimum were subsidising, through their higher CMF assessments, augmentation to a figure, higher than the minimum, for ministers whose congregations paid them less than the minimum and consequently contributed less to CMF. The Committee agreed that this was clearly inequitable.

16. The Committee recognised the disappointment of those effected but agreed that whilst the effect of the change could and should have been better communicated, the principle that the minimum stipend should be the same for all ministers, was correct. In effect no minister was paid less than the minimum stipend to which they were entitled, under The Code.

17. Additionally, when a similar change had been introduced in a previous year for Ministers serving in the Republic of Ireland, no complaints were received.

18. This is a 'one off' correction and in this year and future years all ministers will receive the full increase agreed.

19. The Committee agreed, therefore, to recommend to the Board that, whilst recognising the disappointment of those affected, no change should be made to the current basis for calculation of augmentation.

Widows of Ministers' Fund

20. At the end of 2007, the WMF had a retained balance (excluding investments) of £1,035,234 an increase of £185,691 on 2006. £118,639 of this increase came about because of generous bequests.

21. The following recommendations were approved by the Board for 2008:

- (a) That the assessment for 2008 be 5.75p per £1 of Stipend, a reduction from 6.25p in 2007, 7.00p in 2006 and 7.75p in 2005.
- (b) That the maximum Widows' Pension be £5,899.
- (c) That widows not in receipt of Northern Ireland State Pension receive £5,899 plus £475.
- (d) That widows not in receipt of Northern Ireland State Pension or PWFA receive £5,899 plus £500.
- (e) That widows whose husbands were not eligible for Northern Ireland State Pension receive £5,899 plus £4,716.

Presbyterian Widows' Fund Association

22. All ministers join this Association at ordination. The annual membership subscription is 1.25% of the Ministerial Minimum for active ministers and is 0.2% for retired ministers. An additional 0.1% is charged to

ministers not under the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Membership provides an annuity to widows, which is currently £1,164.

Retired Ministers Fund

23. At the end of 2007, the RMF had a retained balance (excluding investments) of £1,706,359 an increase of £139,244 on 2006.

24. The following recommendations were approved by the Board for 2008:

- (a) That the assessment for 2008 be 6.00p per £1 of Stipend, a reduction from 7.0p in 2007, 8.5p in 2006, 9.5p in 2005 and 11p in 2004.
- (b) That the maximum Basic Retirement Allowance be £10,725.
- (c) That Supplemental Grant for those living in the Republic of Ireland with no State Pension is currently £7,543 married, £4,716 single.

Ministers' Pension Scheme (1978)

25. The Trustees' Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 December, 2007 are included in the published accounts.

26. Results of the triennial revaluation of the scheme showed an actuarial deficit. Under the law this has to be calculated on 3 different bases each of which use slightly different assumptions. The trustees considered all the bases but agreed to the 'intermediate' basis which showed a deficit of £3m. Whilst investment performance has been satisfactory, albeit with considerable difficulties caused by volatility in world investment markets, there are still negative scheme funding factors largely due to lower long term bond yields and continuing increase in longevity.

27. The Funding rate for accrual of future benefits, on the intermediate basis, has been calculated as 26.2% of pensionable income (20.2% employer; 6% employee).

28. The funding rate for repayment of the deficit, over a 15 year term, which is the average period to retirement of the active members of the scheme, would, on the intermediate basis, cost a further 2%. The Pensions Regulator, however, is uneasy about 'recovery periods' in excess of 10 years, and therefore the Trustees sought a 10 year recovery period at a funding rate of 3%.

29. The combined funding rate, therefore, being requested by the Trustees, on the advice of the scheme actuary, is 29.2% of pensionable income (23.2% employer; 6% employee).

30. Congregational contributions to MPS are collected by an assessment on stipend rather than as a percentage of pensionable income.

31. The current assessment of 22.5p per £ of stipend has resulted in more being collected than the funding rate required, any surplus being paid into the Ministers Pension Scheme (1978). Had this not been so the deficit would have been considerably greater. The assessment required to fund 23.2% of pensionable income, without any surplus, is 26p per £1 of Stipend, an increase of 3.5p.

32. A formal 'Schedule of Contributions' has, by law, to be agreed within 15 months of the valuation date, 31 December, 2006 i.e. no later than 31 March, 2008. The General Assembly, in 2007, granted authority to the General Board

'to act for the General Assembly in any necessary situation, arising before the June 2008 General Assembly, in connection with the Actuarial Valuation of Ministers' Pension Scheme (1978)'.

33. The Committee recommended, that an assessment of 26p per £ of stipend, with effect from 1 January, 2008, be considered by the Board for submission to the General Board for approval. This recommendation was agreed by the General Board in March 2008.

34. Since the last Assembly, the following were granted leave to retire, at or over age 65, by their Presbyteries:

the Rev AW Boyd (Ballyhenry), the Very Rev Dr SJ Dixon (1st Antrim), the Rev J Lamont (Carrigart & Dunfanaghy), the Rev FAC Wilson (Under care of Prolonged Disability Fund), the Rev D Nesbitt (First Ballybay & Drumkeen), the Rev Dr SA Matthews (Bannside), the Rev WL Orr (Donaghmore & Glascar), the Rev WL Haslett (Ballyblack), the Very Rev Dr KNE Newell (Fitzroy).

35. Unanimous approval was given to the Rev NM Williamson (Magheramorne) and to the Rev R Vallely (Ballylinney) to seek the permission of the 2008 General Assembly to retire on or after their 64th birthdays in December 2008 and February 2009 respectively.

36. The Trustees did not award any discretionary increase for pensions in payment, accrued pre 1997, in excess of the Guaranteed Minimum Pension.

Ministers' Prolonged Disability Fund

37. At the end of 2007 the fund had a retained balance of £746,391 an increase of £ 26,546 on 2006.

38. The following recommendation was approved by the Board for 2008:

- (a) That the assessment for 2008 be 0.25 p per £1 of Stipend, a decrease from 0.5p in 2007 and 0.75P in 2006.
- (b) That the maximum level of grant for 2008 increase to £10,810.
- (c) That Family Grants are paid to Ministers in receipt of benefit from the Prolonged Disability Fund on the same basis as for active ministers.

39. In 2007, 5 ministers received benefits under the fund. Currently 4 are receiving benefits, 1 minister now having retired.

40. In addition to annual grants, pension contributions to MPS are paid by the fund until the beneficiary returns to work or attains his or her normal retirement age. In broad terms the cost to the fund for each person receiving benefit, including pension contributions, is in excess of £16,000pa.

The Staff Pension Scheme

41. The Trustees' Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 December, 2006, are included in the published accounts.

42. The current funding rate is 31.1% (25.1% Employer 6% Employee). This is the funding rate recommended by the scheme actuary to redress the funding deficit identified at the triennial valuation at 1 January 2006.

43. The Annual Reports, 2007 (p236 par 26 (b), (c) & (d)) indicated that changes to the benefit structure had to be made in order to achieve the funding rate indicated. Such changes are subject to a statutory requirement to consult

with employee members. The required consultation regarding changes made to the Scheme, has been completed and no issues were raised by scheme members.

Incidental Fund

44. At the end of 2007, the Incidental Fund had a retained balance of £249,642 an increase of £140,768 on 2006.

45. The principal reason for the surplus was that, whilst a budget of £190,000 had been provided for costs incurred in connection with the Pensions Review, expenditure had amounted to £32,718 because some changes have yet to be approved by the General Assembly.

46. Grants from the Incidental Fund are approved by General Assembly under resolutions pertaining to individual Boards. It is the role of the Board of Finance and Personnel, acting on advice from its Pensions and Assessments Committee, to recommend an appropriate assessment, sufficient to meet the grants agreed and to maintain a prudent reserve.

47. The Annual Reports, 2006, p242, pars 20 to 25 indicated that for specific reasons the retained balance in the Incidental Fund had decreased to a level that the Committee would wish to restore '*to a more substantial figure in future years*'.

48. The current surplus affords the opportunity to meet such grants as are agreed by the General Assembly, to restore the retained balance to a prudent level and to reduce the assessment.

49. If the assessment is reduced from 6p to 5p per £ of stipend, then assuming that income and expenditure match budget during 2008, the retained balance at the end of the year is forecast to be £118,606.

50. The following requests for grants were received:

Arrangements	£16,000
Inter-Church Relations	£47,000
Social Witness	£2,000
Youth & Children's Ministry Board	£9,086
PCI Holiday	£6,000
Peace and Peacemaking	£28,000
Historical Society	£15,700
Board of Christian Training	£8,500
Architecture	£1,500
General Board	£35,500
Board of Finance and Personnel	£170,950
TOTAL	£340,236

51. The Board of Finance and Personnel budget includes £150,000 in respect of Legal, Actuarial, Advisory and administrative costs likely to be

incurred, should General Assembly approve changes to the Church's pension schemes. This has already been funded in 2006/7 assessments.

52. The following recommendation was approved by the Board for 2008:

That the assessment for 2008 be 5.0p per £1 of Stipend, a reduction from 6.0p in 2007.

The Ministerial Development Fund

53. At the end of 2007, the Ministerial Development Fund had a retained balance of £392,463. Responsibility for recommending any assessment for this fund lies with the Board of Christian Training.

Church House Stonework Repair

54. Responsibility for recommending any assessment for repairs to Church House stonework lies with the Property Management Committee.

DOUGLAS CROWE, Convener

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

1. The Committee met on two occasions during the year.

2. During the year, Mrs Eileen McClenaghan resigned as Head of Personnel. Throughout her service with PCI, her contribution was always of the highest quality and worthy of our thanks. The Committee was pleased when Ms Laura Kelly was appointed to replace Mrs McClenaghan. She has already proved to be a valuable addition to the staff and, along with her team, continues to provide a professional HR service.

3. Thanks are also due to Mr Herbie Smyth and the Rev David Irvine, supported by Mr Ian McIlhenny from the Financial Secretary's Office, for their work in respect of the Retired Ministers' House Fund.

Personnel Matters

4. The roll-out of the Job Evaluation Scheme is continuing and it is expected that all administrative posts will have been evaluated before the General Assembly in June.

5. A seminar on Health & Safety was held in November 2007, attended by 198 persons from 94 Congregations. The feedback from the seminar was very positive and our thanks are due to Mrs Nancy Henry from Ballydown Congregation for her input to the event. The Committee is considering how best to keep Health & Safety in front of Congregations, who have the responsibility for such matters.

6. Work has continued on the task of developing and updating personnel policies and procedures to reflect the changing legislative requirements and the needs of our staff.

7. An intranet site has been made available to staff as a means of improving internal communication and this will be developed over the coming months and years.

Retired Ministers House Fund

8. The application for outline planning consent in respect of the property in Cullybackey that was bequeathed to the Fund by Miss Jane Megaw has been progressing. All the necessary surveys have now been completed and it is expected that discussions on marketing the site will take place later in 2008.

9. A property on Hillsborough Road, Lisburn, is being extended to make it suitable for renting under the rules of the Fund.

10. A property in Galway is being repaired to make it lettable, in advance of any decision to sell.

11. Approaches made during the year were limited and it was possible to meet all approved applications.

DAVID LAMB, Convener

APPENDIX

Sterling Salary Scales of Staff in post on 1 January 2008 (inclusive of a discretionary 3.5% increase with effect from 1 January 2008, following the annual review of salaries.)

EXECUTIVE POSTS**Scale 1 (£21,655 - £25,913)**

Communications Officer, BMI
 General Secretary, PWA
 Payroll & Assessment Manager
 Programme Officer, Peacemaking, Youth Level, (FT)
 Taking Care Trainer and Co-ordinator

Scale 2 (£24,583 - £29,770)

Assistant Residential Services Manager
 Buildings Manager & Safety Officer
 Children's Development Officer
 Director of Nightlight
 Financial Manager
 Finance & Office Manager
 Programme Officer, Peacemaking, Adult Level, (FT)
 Project Manager, Willowbrook
 Training Officer, YACB, (FT)
 Youth Development Officer
 University Chaplain UUJ

Scale 3 (£27,622 - £33,878)

Director of Programmes
 Education in Mission Officer, BMO
 IT Development & Support Manager
 Minister & Superintendent, Kinghan Mission
 Personnel Officer, BMO

Scale 4 (£30,543 - £38,401)

Head of Personnel
 Residential Services Manager
 Senior Financial Accountant
 University Chaplain (QUB)

Scale 5 (£33,878 - £41,495)

Communications and Press Secretary
 Director of Christian Training
 Director of Youth & Children's Ministry
 Deputy General Secretary

Scale 6 (£36,457 - £44,628)

Executive Secretary, BMO
 Director of Social Service
 Executive Secretary, BMI

Scale 7 (£41,495 - £53,656)

General Secretary
 Financial Secretary

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RELATED POSTS**Scale 1 (£11,906 - £13,900)**

Clerical Officer
 Handyperson
 Secretary/Receptionist
 Telephonist

Scale 2 (£12,884 - £15,052)

Caretaker and Warden, Youth Centres
 Clerical Officer (Personnel)
 Secretarial/ Clerical Officer (Taking Care)
 Secretary (YACM)
 Receptionist/Telephonist
 Secretary (BMI)
 Secretary/Clerical Assistant (Personnel)
 Secretary (GSO)
 Information and Technology Assistant (GSO)
 Secretary/Receptionist (PWA)
 Clerical Officer (FSO)

Scale 3 (£14,577 - £17,007)

Co-ordinator – Counselling Services
 Deputy Building Manager
 Nightlight Development Officers (one FT)

Payroll & Clerical Assistant
 Senior Secretary
 Wages Clerk
 Senior Secretary (YACM)
 Senior Secretary (PWA)
 Senior Secretary (BMO)
 Senior Secretary (BMI)

Scale 4 (£16,648 - £19,319)

Administrative Assistant (Personnel)
 Assistant to the Information Officer
 Departmental Secretary
 Lay Assistant-Kinghan
 Personal Secretary (FSO)
 Deputy Senior Administrator (BMO)
 Office Supervisor and Personal Secretary (BMI)
 Administrative Assistant (YACM)
 Senior Secretary (GSO)

Scale 5 (£18,306 - £21,284)

Assistant Accountant
 Co-ordinator PCI Year Team & Volunteers
 Development Officer, PWA, (FT)
 Financial Assistant
 Personal Assistant to the Director of Social Service
 Production Manager
 IT Support Assistant
 Regional Youth & Support Workers (Euro Scale), (FT)
 Resident Manager, Tritonville Close (Euro Scale)

Scale 5 (Enhanced) (£20,317 - £23,365)

Assistant Chaplain, QUB
 Senior Administrative Officer (YACM)
 Personal Secretary & Office Supervisor (GSO)
 Personnel Officer
 Senior Administrative Officer (BMO)

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

1. Following a competitive tendering process, the design team of Alastair Coey, Architects, working in conjunction with Hastings and Baird, Quantity Surveyors and Doran Consulting Engineers, were appointed to survey the external fabric of Church House and Fisherwick Buildings and to prepare a building contract for all the necessary work. Following consultations with the Church House Panel, it was agreed, in the first instance, that the contract should

not include Fisherwick Buildings at this stage. It is anticipated that a confirmed tender amount will be available for the General Assembly.

2. During the past year there has been a small number of vacant units at all times, but the rentals for the Shopping Mall, Fisherwick Buildings and the significant income from the letting of the Assembly Hall and other associated rooms, contribute to a substantial income.

3. The Board agreed that payment for the stonework, roofing and other external repairs should continue to be paid as an annual assessment of 3.5p per £ of stipend.

4. The Committee is grateful to the staff directly involved with the management and operation of the building and thanks them for their professionalism, hard work and dedication throughout the year.

HUBERT MARTIN, Convener

FINANCE, LEGAL AND IT COMMITTEE

1. The Committee has pleasure submitting the report on its work since the last Assembly.

2. **General Expenses** – General Expenses for the year ended 31 December 2007 were below budget and considered to be satisfactory.

Budgeted expenses for the year ended 31 December 2008 reflect a budgeted increase of about 6.59% compared to 2007 actual expenses or 3.75% compared to 2007 budget expenses. This was primarily due to approved staffing related matters. Overall the budget was considered to be satisfactory.

3. **Allocation of General Expenses** – The allocation of General Expenses was reviewed during the year. Following discussions with the United Appeal Board, a more logical basis was agreed, which reflected the number of staff and computers used by each Board. No Board should be better or worse off as a result of the changes due to corresponding amendments of United Appeal funding.

4. **Auditors/SORP accounts** – For year ended 31 December 2007 two sets of SORP (Statement of Recommended Practice) accounts have been prepared - one for the activities under the General Assembly and the other for the Trustees who have separate legal status. The audit opinion is expressed on these accounts rather than those of the individual Agencies. The audit opinion was qualified with respect to certain technical disclosures required under Financial Reporting Standard 17, relating to Pensions Liabilities.

5. **Statistics** – see appended tables

6. **Statistics Form and Statement of Recommended Practice** – The sub-committee set up to consider revising the statistics form in line with the requirements of those who use the statistics and the Statement of Recommended Practice has made good progress during the year. GCD Technologies have now produced a final version of the software and the sub committee are currently negotiating a discount structure. The sub committee plan to undertake training in various Presbyteries. Enquiries have also been made with various Boards for additional information needed from the Statistical Returns.

7. **Regulation of Charities** – The Northern Ireland Charity Bill has now been issued and continues into Committee stage. The Finance, Legal and IT Committee has been involved with the ongoing consultative process. The Charities legislation will result in some significant administrative changes and details of proposed accounting and audit changes have been sent to Treasurers.

8. **Risk Assessment** – Risk Assessment is ongoing. A questionnaire was passed to all Board Convenors/Secretaries to enable them to report to The Board. At the time of writing not all reports had been received. Nothing as yet has come to our attention which we need to report on.

9. **Bank Overdrafts** – The Committee continued to receive reports on overdrafts.

10. **Ministerial expenses** – 380 returns were received and returned to HMRC, covering £2.135m expenses. It caused concern that 23 Ministers did not make returns and the Financial Secretary has written to them, as failure to make a full return may jeopardise the scheme.

11. **Handbook for Treasurers** – As the handbook has not been updated since 2002, it is planned to review the Handbook once the new Charities legislation regulations are made available during the coming year.

12. **Information Technology** – Mr McMurray has made an extremely valuable contribution with respect to IT and is now providing valuable support to IT systems in PCI projects outside Church House. A prioritised project list for 2008/09 has been developed.

13. The Committee continues to work on a number of other tax, finance, legal and IT matters.

14. Special thanks go to the team in the Financial Secretary's Office for their hard work and assistance to the Committee during the year.

MICHAEL FITCH, Convener

TABLE ONE

PERSONS AND AGENCIES

	2006	2007	Increase	Decrease
Retired Ministers	211	209		2
Ministers in Active Duty	382	381		1
Retired Missionaries	9	9		
Missionaries in Active Duty	54	51		3
Total Ministers and Missionaries	656	650		6
Licensures	13	17	4	
Congregations	549	549		
Total Families	109,489	108,198		1,291
Persons of All Ages	261,745	257,676		4,069
Contributors to FWO or Stipend	88,179	86,726		1,453
Baptisms	1,740	1,832	92	
Admitted to Lord's Table for First Time	1,931	2,071	140	
Communicants	110,422	109,705		717
Attended at Least One Communion during year	68,759	68,353		406
Ruling Elders in Kirk Session	6,959	6,934		25
Number on Rolls in Sunday Schools and Bible Classes	27,928	27,044		884

TABLE TWO
CONGREGATIONAL INCOME

	2006		2007		% Difference	
	£	€	£	€	N.I.	R. of I.
Specified Sources	29,265,381	2,766,837	30,059,182	2,886,009	2.7%	4.3%
Building Fund etc. "For Others"	17,279,315	1,990,321	21,164,101	1,107,365	22.5%	-44.4%
	7,190,897	555,980	7,702,406	630,268	7.1%	13.4%
Raised from other sources	5,534,255	1,306,142	5,435,245	1,312,665	-1.8%	0.5%
Bequests etc.	11,502,494	760,761	9,646,780	384,951	-16.1%	-49.4%
Total Receipts	70,772,343	7,380,041	74,007,714	6,321,258	4.6%	-14.3%
Total Receipts Less						
Bequests etc.	59,269,849	6,619,280	64,360,933	5,936,307	8.6%	-10.3%
Bequests	1,785,614	305,032	2,047,239	90,686	14.7%	-70.3%

TABLE THREE
CONGREGATIONAL EXPENDITURE

	2006		2007		% Difference	
	£	€	£	€	N.I.	R. of I.
Paid to ministers, other salaries and wages, allowances to ministers and others	15,018,534	1,288,805	15,861,640	1,404,979	5.6%	9.0%
Payments under Assembly Assessments	5,087,482	524,646	5,447,635	522,407	7.1%	-0.4%
Building, Repairs, etc.	20,174,812	2,735,207	20,829,156	1,885,666	3.2%	-31.1%
United Appeal Schemes	3,144,001	222,301	3,401,810	254,778	8.2%	14.6%
Supplementary Schemes Other Religious and Charitable Objects	4,918,175	551,997	5,585,493	609,749	13.6%	10.5%
General Expenses	9,079,736	1,150,025	9,369,244	1,297,959	3.2%	12.9%
Total Payments	57,422,740	6,472,981	60,494,977	5,975,538	5.4%	-7.7%

TABLE FOUR
CONGREGATIONAL BALANCES

	Closing 2006		Opening 2007		Closing 2007		% Difference	
	£	€	£	€	£	€	N.I.	R. of I.
Credits	37,092,428	5,132,382	36,875,927	5,165,094	42,004,554	4,986,785	13.9%	-3.5%
Debits	4,812,446	560,956	4,749,172	530,379	5,824,637	445,282	22.6%	-16.0%
Net Credits	32,279,982	4,571,426	32,126,755	4,634,715	36,179,917	4,541,503	12.6%	-2.0%

TABLE FIVE**MINISTERS' INCOME AND ALLOWANCES (SEE NOTES)**

	2006	2007	
	£	£	% Difference
Total Ministerial Income			
(Active Duty — Note 2)	9,944,760	10,352,322	4.1%
Retired Ministers' Income	2,163,058	2,209,976	2.2%
Stipend Paid	7,856,250	8,340,575	6.2%
Allowances			
Light, Heat, etc			
Ministerial Duties			
Total	2,252,482	2,307,790	2.5%

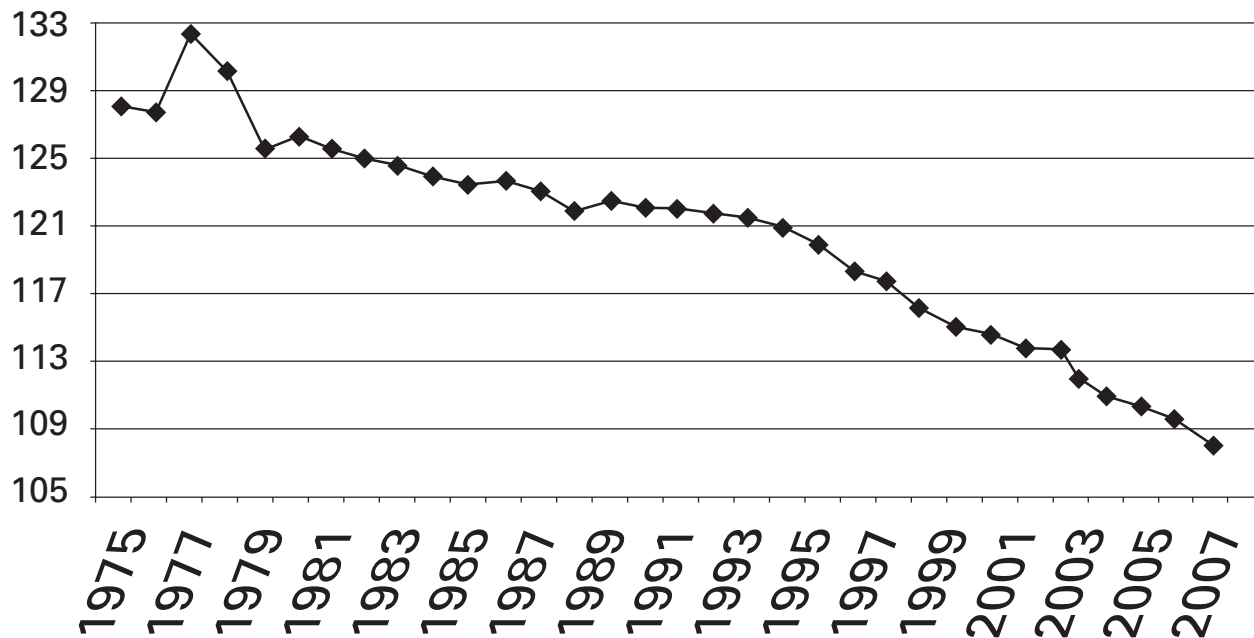
Note 1 Figures for the Republic of Ireland have been converted into £STG using the average value of the Euro for the year.

Note 2 This refers only to 351 ministers in charge of congregations, excluding Assistants, Chaplains, Missionaries, Professors, Administrative Officers and Ministers in recognised service in special work.

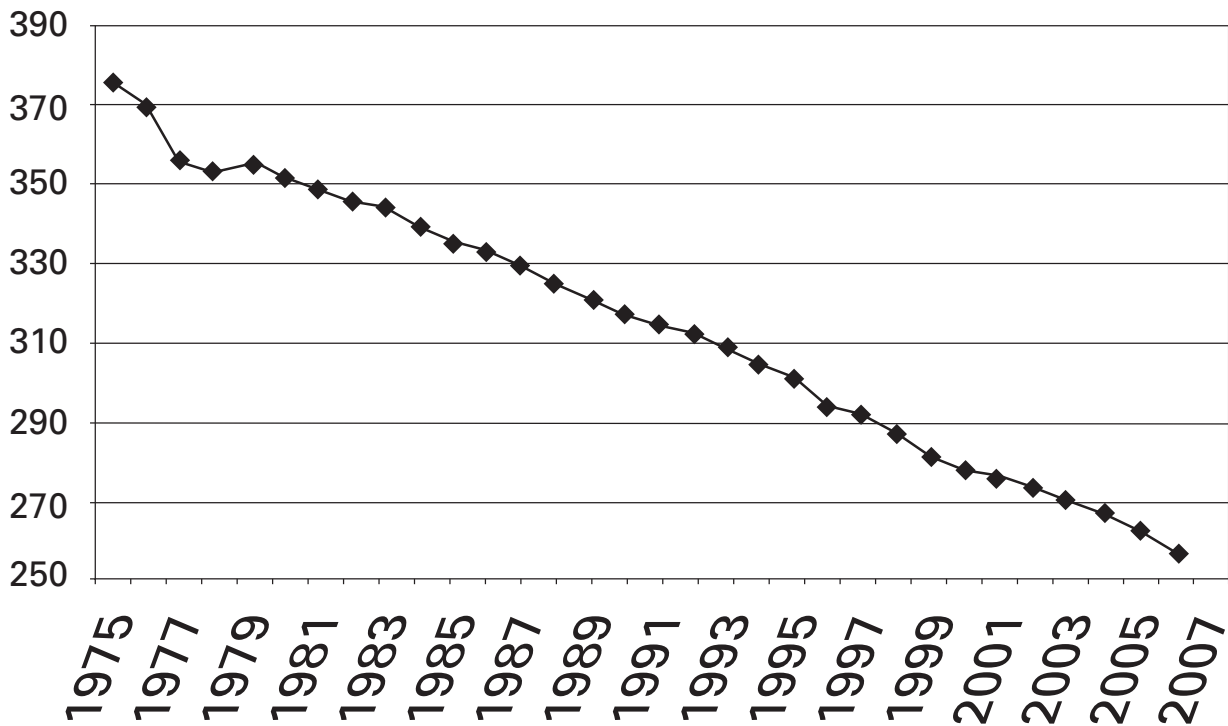
TABLE SIX**PERSONS**

	2006	2007
Persons who are aged 18 and under	47,982	46,253
Average attendance at Sunday Worship — Morning	83,906	82,838
— Evening	19,127	18,822

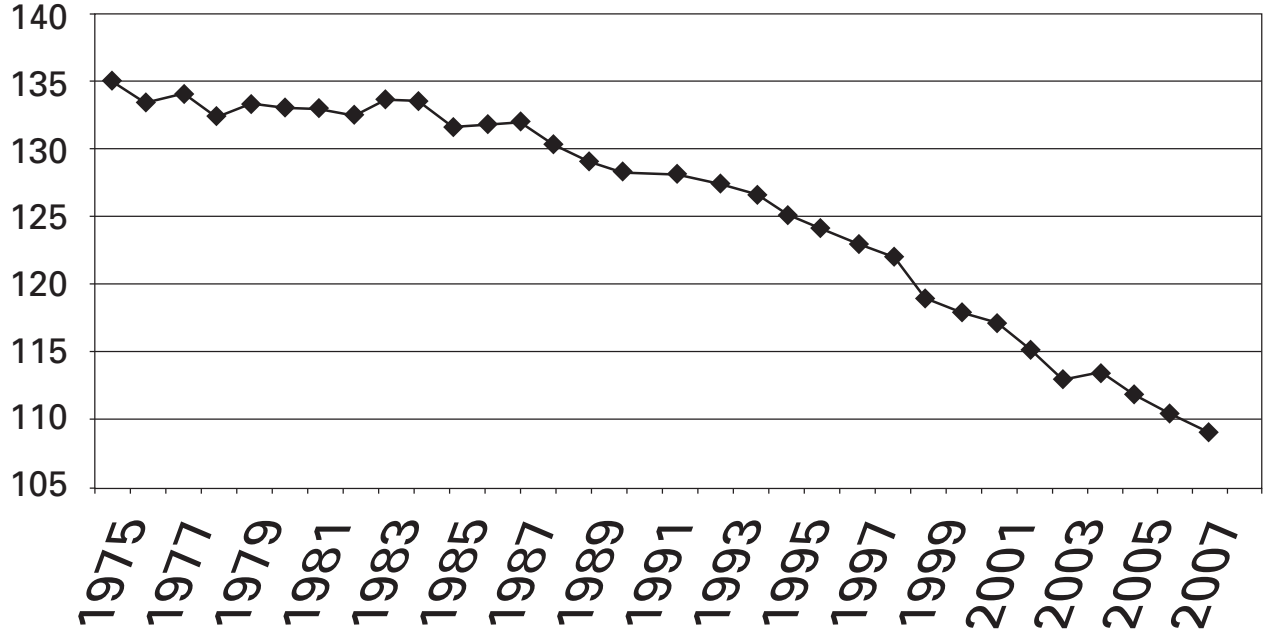
FAMILIES ('000)



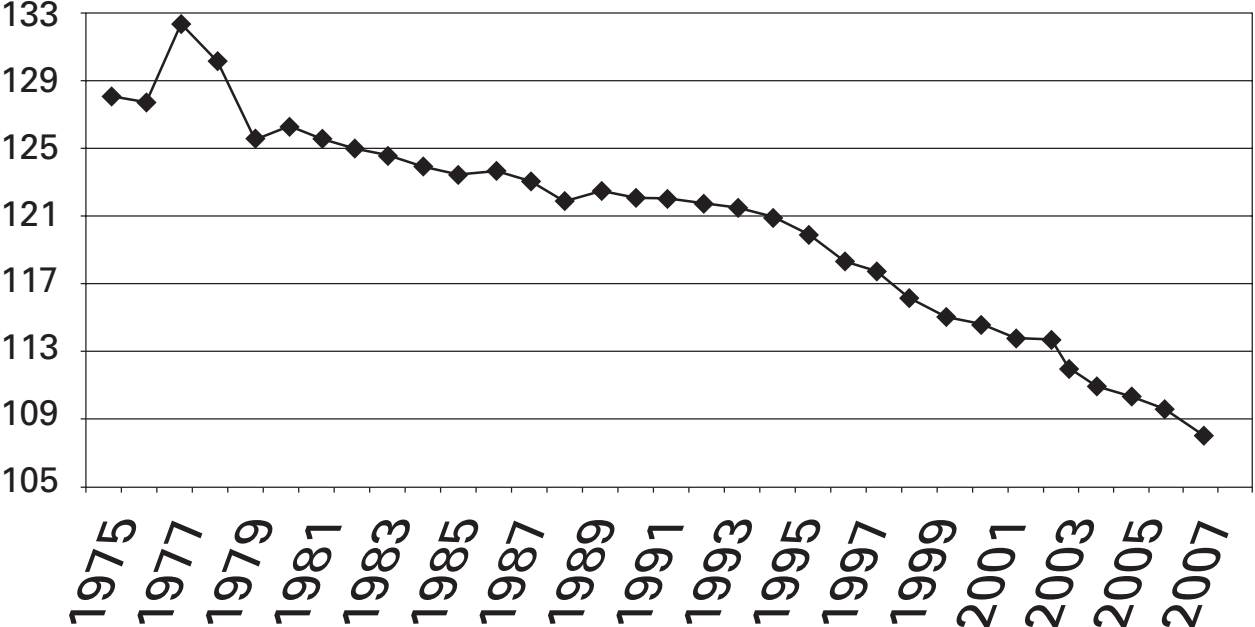
PERSONS ('000)



COMMUNICANTS ('000)



FAMILIES ('000)



APPENDIX 1

PENSIONS' REVIEW PANEL

**REPORT TO THE BOARD OF FINANCE AND PERSONNEL –
5 December, 2007**

The Panel met on 27 November and, by way of preparation for the two ministers attending, a Briefing Document was produced by the Financial Secretary. A copy of this is attached to this Report. (The Briefing Document is not attached here as it related solely to background information).

Three members of the staff of the Scheme Advisers, Kerr Henderson, were in attendance.

The options outlined in the Brief were discussed in detail.

The Panel recognises the concerns around increasing costs of pensions and agreed that the contribution rates proposed, 14.2% employer and 7% employee should not be altered.

Consideration of the issue of the proposed retirement age of 67 took place in the context of maintaining the proposed contribution levels and the following emerged:-

1. To continue to recommend the proposals as outlined in the Report to the General Assembly in June 2007 (i.e. retain a retirement age of 67)

Views were expressed that this would not be acceptable.

Kerr Henderson advised that the average age of retirement since the Ministers' Scheme began is just over 66 years. Therefore the proposed increase to 67 would not be a major change from historical average actual retirement date.

2. Reduce the retirement Age to 65 and seek some compensatory adjustment to the other benefits to keep the overall costs as proposed (e.g. reduce the accrual rate from 1/60 to e.g. 1/65 or 1/70)

The possible change to other benefits was discussed with the most likely area being the accrual rate. The actuary indicated that this would have a marked impact on pensions and it was the view of the panel that a later retirement age would be preferable to a lower accrual rate.

3. The Church pays the additional 1.9%, at an annual cost of approx £240,000 per annum to fund for retirement at 65.

As stated earlier, the Panel is not proposing this additional cost.

4. As (3) but in a two-third : one-third split i.e. for the church to pay an additional 1.25% and members to pay 0.65%

As with 3 above.

The Panel questioned the Actuary on the assumptions used by him in arriving at the costs of the proposals. He explained that these are exactly the

same as those used in the Ministers' Pension Scheme Valuation which will be reported in the additional item on the Agenda.

He indicated that, if he changed his assumptions to reflect that members, on average, would retire after their 66th birthday (present assumption 65) and that investments in equities would produce returns of 1.6% over gilt yields (present assumption 1.5%), then the funding rate could remain at 14.2% and the retirement age be reduced to 65.

The Actuary indicated he would be comfortable with this, although, it should be said that, on his advice, the Trustees of the Ministers' Scheme accepted his earlier assumptions.

The majority of the Panel was of the view that the proposals made to the 2007 General Assembly were the results of well considered deliberations and had many merits. They would not wish to see the excellent work that had been carried out rejected by the Assembly and were therefore of a view that some weakening of the assumption underlying the proposed scheme may be a way forward and an acceptable way of resolving the issue.

A minority view was not convinced and saw the tinkering with the assumptions as a means of getting an answer we liked. The reality would be that we would be providing additional benefits, i.e. by maintaining the retirement age at 65, costing some £250,000 per annum and not putting an equivalent amount into the Fund. This would be 'financed' by hoping that, on average, members will work to 66 and there will be a better return on investments. If the assumptions on which the proposed scheme is based do not materialise, additional contribution or changes to the benefit structure will be required.

The Trustees of the new scheme will have to approve of the revised assumptions. However, at this stage, we don't know who the Trustees of a new Scheme will be but, as with the Ministers' Scheme Trustees, they will have the concern of whether or not expected investment returns will meet liabilities. As a result, they will surely want to be prudent on assumed rates of return.

The Board should be aware that the 3 main pension funds have a heavy bias towards equity investments and on average the equity content will be in the region of 75 -80% with the balance being in bonds/gilts. On the assumption that the investments in the new scheme will be on a similar basis, the scheme will continue to be susceptible to the volatility of the stock market. Increasing the bond/gilt element will, in an increasing market, reduce the potential level of outperformance in the scheme.

The Panel has already made its proposals for the pension provision and retirement age and, in reviewing the proposed age of retirement, has indicated the alternatives open to the Board, and, ultimately, to the General Assembly. Whilst the Panel is not making a definitive proposal, the alternatives, and the Panels views, are set out above to enable the Board to form its views for submission to the General Assembly.

The key assumptions used in arriving at estimated total contribution rates of 21.2% are:

	Existing Proposals	Alternative as above
Normal Retirement date under the Scheme	67	65
Average Age on Retirement	67	66
Pre Retirement discount rate	6.0%	6.1%
Post Retirement Discount	5.0%	5.1%
Inflation	3.1%	3.1%
Pension increases on post 6 April 97 pensions	3.1%	3.1%
Mortality allowances – (based on adjust 1992 tables and a cohort allowance for those born between the wars)	Medium	Medium

CONTINGENT ASSETS

The Panel was asked to consider the question of the use of contingent assets. The Financial Secretary's Briefing sets out the pros and cons of these.

After discussion, the Panel took the view that, whilst there may be situations which require the use of contingent assets we should only consider using this procedure if it could be shown that worthwhile savings could be achieved in the Pension Protection Fund Levy. Again, it should be noted that this would require the consent of Scheme Trustees.

SUMMARY OF MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE BOARD

1. To confirm that the resolution passed by the General Assembly in 2007 should be interpreted to mean that the members of the Staff and PWA Schemes only transfer to the Ministers' Pension Scheme once the new benefit structure and other arrangements for that scheme (to be appropriately renamed) have been finalised i.e. that the members of the staff and PWA Schemes do not transfer into the existing MPS.

2. The Board may wish to confirm the Panels view that the cost of the proposed scheme with a combined contribution rate of 21.2% should not be altered to allow for a reduction in the retirement age from 67 to 65.

3. The Board needs to make a decision on

(a) whether it wishes the Proposals submitted to the General Assembly in 2007 to be resubmitted to the General Assembly in 2008 unaltered but explaining the matters which have been considered and in particular those relating to the proposed increase in the retirement age to 67

OR

(b) whether it wishes to provide for a retirement age of 65 and weaken the assumptions underlying the proposed scheme and in particular to use an assumption that the average age on retirement will be 66 even though those members will be entitled to retire at 65. That the assumption for the level of equity out performance be increased from 1.5% to 1.6% above the long term gilt rate of 4.5%

OR

- (c) whether there are any other options worthy of consideration.

APPENDIX II

REPORT ON REVIEW OF PENSIONS – 2008

The General Assembly passed the following resolution in June, 2006:-

‘That the General Assembly request the Board to bring detailed proposals for pensions to the General Assembly in 2007’

Summary of Proposals

1. Members of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Pension and Life Assurance Plan (the “Staff Scheme”) and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland PWA / Overseas Board / Irish Mission Retirement and Death Benefits Scheme (the “PWA Scheme”) should transfer into the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Ministers’ Pension Scheme (1978) (“MPS (1978) Scheme”) (to be appropriately renamed). We have been advised that this is legally permissible.

2. The benefits of the new Scheme should be significantly revised. A summary of the proposed benefits is given in this Report and a Schedule showing the proposed benefits, compared with existing benefits, is attached to this Report. (Schedule 1)

3. The new scheme would be implemented on 1 January, 2009, or as soon as possible thereafter.*

* for brevity, further references in this report to ‘1 January, 2009, or as soon as possible thereafter’ are shown as ‘1 January, 2009’.

Definitions

There are two types of Pension Schemes referred to in this Report:

Defined Benefit - These include final salary and career average earnings schemes. The principle is that members are entitled to a particular level of benefit depending on their length of service and their salary. It is the pension benefit which is defined and it is then necessary to ensure that the contributions from both the employer and the employee are sufficient to provide that benefit.

Defined Contribution - These are pension schemes into which an employer and employee pay regular contributions fixed as an amount or percentage of pay. The contributions paid into the scheme are invested and the value of the investments at retirement is applied to the provision of a pension. The pension benefit is not defined.

Background

The review of Pension arrangements commenced following the General Assembly of 2005, prompted by a deteriorating funding position of Defined Benefit schemes generally and of the three such PCI schemes in particular.

During the Review period, the situation has not improved dramatically and more and more companies and organisations are taking action to minimise the risks inherent in Defined Benefit Schemes.

In the last few years many high-profile companies have closed their Defined Benefit Schemes completely or to new members. A recent report claims that only 15% of workers in the private sector in the UK are now members of such schemes.

Present Pension Arrangements of Presbyterian Church in Ireland

PCI operates the following Pension arrangements:

Scheme	Nature of Scheme
MPS (1978) Scheme	Defined Benefit based on revalued average salary
Staff Scheme	Defined Benefit based on final salary
PWA Scheme	Defined Benefit based on final salary
Pension's Trust (some Board of Social Witness employees)	Defined Contribution
Standard Life Stakeholder Pension	Contributory – no employer contribution

The contributions to the Schemes are:

Scheme	Employee - £000	PCI - £000
MPS (1978) – y/e 31.12.06	630	1,737
MPS (1978) – Addtl. y/e		350
31.12.07 from 1978 MPS Fund		
Staff Scheme– y/e 31.12.07	96	443
PWA Scheme – y/e 31.03.07	63	276
Pensions' Trust	24	36

Contributions to the schemes, based on pensionable income in the year of contribution, are:

Scheme	From	Employee - %	Employer - %
MPS(1978)	01.04.99	4.40	12.20
(next valn 31.12.09)	01.04.02	5.00	14.00
	01.04.05	6.00	15.60*
	01.04.08	6.00	23.20
Staff Scheme	01.01.98	3.75	15.25
(next valn 31.12.08)	01.01.01	3.75	15.25
	01.01.04	5.00	20.85

	01.01.07	6.00	25.10**
PWA Scheme	01.04.97	4.00	13.50
(next valn. 01.04.09)	01.04.00	4.00	13.50
	01.04.03	5.00	22.50
	01.04.06	6.00	26.20**
Pensions' Trust		4.00	6.00

* ceased funding for discretionary increases otherwise a higher rate. Revaluation pending.

** rates reduced by changes in benefits.

Scheme Funding positions

Despite ever increasing contributions by PCI, as well as by Scheme members, and various alterations to benefit structures, deficits have persisted. The recent valuation of MPS (1978) as at 31 December, 2006, showed a deficit of £3 million resulting in an increase in the Funding Rate from 15.60 to 23.2%.

The three Schemes having differing valuation dates complicates matters but the Schemes' Actuary has calculated that deficits in the Schemes at 31st December, 2006, were £3m in MPS, £0.2m in the Staff Scheme and £1m in the PWA/Overseas etc Scheme. These deficits reflect 'savings' from benefit changes made in an effort to contain contribution rates.

	MPS (1978)	Staff Scheme	PWA Scheme
Valuation date	31/12/2006	01/01/06 updated to 31/12/06	01/04/05 update to 31/12/06
Assets	£58.7m	£7.9m	£5m
Liabilities	£61.7m	£8.1m	£6m
Deficit	£3.0m	£0.2m	£1m

The way forward

In its initial Report in 2006, the Panel enumerated its conclusions, thus:

- (a) The current costs of pension provision and the risk of even higher costs are unsustainable. Urgent consideration should be given to a more efficient and affordable pension policy for PCI.
- (b) As a general principle, every effort should be made to have some pension provision for all employees. Indeed, there are proposals currently before Government that, if adopted, would make it compulsory for employers to contribute at least 3% towards an employee's pension if the employee also contributes.
- (c) There is no obvious benefit from or justification for 3 separate Defined Benefit Schemes. The benefit structures are different and the administration is more involved and costly. Whatever future policy is

adopted, the number of Schemes should be reduced.

As to a) – the Panel confirms its conclusion and, in its proposals, seeks to reduce costs and minimise future risks.

As to b) – whilst still holding to this view, the Panel believes that no widening of the provision of pensions should take place pending the introduction in 2012 of the Government's recent proposals.

As to c) – the Panel reiterates the view that, whatever future policy is decided, benefits for those who would normally be covered by the 3 Schemes should be similar and provided under one 'umbrella'.

Future Provision

The important word here is FUTURE – no proposals by the Panel will affect any benefits accrued by members prior to any change.

The Panel debated, at considerable length, whether the recommendation for future benefits should be by way of Defined Benefits (as at present where benefits are calculated by a known formula) or Defined Contribution ('money purchase' where future benefits depend on the value of an individual's fund at the date of retirement and the amount of benefit such a fund will provide).

Clearly, a Defined Contribution scheme has attractions for PCI in that the level of contribution is predetermined and will not vary irrespective of investment performance or other factors. The disadvantages for employees are that it is difficult to forecast pensions and pensions can fluctuate depending on investment and annuity conditions at date of retirement. This could have the effect of members on similar pensionable salaries retiring within a short time of each other having different pensions.

However, in spite of the attractions of defined contributions, the Panel concluded that, if at all possible, a Defined Benefits' Scheme should be maintained. Accordingly, whilst seeking to minimise, as far as possible, the risk of having to fund massive future deficits and to introduce more affordable PCI contributions, the Panel is recommending that:

1. Members of the Staff and PWA Schemes transfer into the MPS (1978) Scheme (to be appropriately renamed). We have been advised that this is legally permissible.

2. The benefits of the new Scheme will be significantly revised. A Schedule showing the proposed benefits, compared with existing benefits, is attached to this Report but the main benefits proposed are as follows:-

Defined Benefits

Commencing 1 January, 2009

Employee Contribution 7%

Normal Retirement Age 67 (members may still retire at 65 but the benefits arising after 1 January, 2009, will be actuarially reduced).

Normal Retirement Pension calculated at 1/60th of CARE for each year of service (Career Averaged Revalued Earnings). The annual revaluation based on the UK Retail Prices' Index (RPI).

Part of pension may be exchanged for Normal Retirement Cash (currently tax free) – up to 25% of applicable fund.

Death in Service – Spouse’s pension 50% of member’s prospective pension at normal retirement date plus child pension

Life Assurance Benefit of four times member’s pensionable salary at date of death.

Death after Retirement – Spouse’s pension 50% of member’s.

Early Retirement – actuarial reduction will apply

Pensions in payment for service after 1 January, 2009, will increase annually by Limited Price Indexation i.e. RPI up to maximum of 2.5%.

Implications of the proposed changes

For PCI

If approved, the proposals will take effect from 1 January, 2009. There is substantial legal and actuarial work to be carried out as well as consultation with Scheme members.

The initial PCI contribution rate is estimated at 14.2% and this will reduce the cost of pensions by some £450,000 per annum based on current contribution levels. In addition, the increase of 3.5p in the £ of stipend in the assessment re MPS (1978) from 1 April, 2008, would be saved. However, these savings would be reduced by any required increase arising from changes in life expectancy assumptions. Future rates, of course, will be subject to investment returns, interest rates etc.

The potential reduction in pension costs is significant but it only arises because contributions have risen exceptionally in recent years and the proposal is aimed at restoring a more reasonable cost. The reduced contribution rate should, in due course, be reflected in congregational assessments and United Appeal Targets of Honour.

The proposed employee contribution rate is 7% and it is proposed that any future increase in costs of the Scheme be borne 2/3rds to PCI and 1/3rd to Scheme members.

The Panel considered the question of Contracting back into the State second pension and, based on advice taken, decided not to recommend a change from the present Contracted Out position at this stage.

For Members of the Schemes

Benefits accrued to the date of any change will not be affected by these proposals. However, it will be apparent from the Schedule of proposed and comparative benefits that the prospective pension of members will be less than heretofore. Benefits will accrue at a lower rate and these will be based on Career Average Revalued Earnings (CARE). The revaluation will be based on the RPI (ministers currently have a revaluation at Average National Earnings and the Staff, PWA, etc. members accrue benefits on Final Salary).

In keeping with increasing longevity, it is proposed to increase the Scheme retirement age to 67 (this does not mean members have to work to 67, but if benefits are taken at 65 those in respect of service in the “new” scheme will be actuarially reduced for early payment). Changes are also proposed to reduce the rate of increase to pensions in payment into line with statutory levels.

The financial impact of the change in pension arrangements will depend on individual circumstances and their length of service. During April, 2008, members will receive a statement showing the impact of the proposals on their benefits. In broad terms:

- Members close to normal retirement date will see less of an impact on their pension as they have already built up most of their pension entitlement whereas.
- Members with long future service will have lower pension.
- An option to surrender pension for cash on retirement will, if exercised, give opportunity for higher cash sums than at present. Such sums are presently tax free but future payments will be subject to appropriate legislation at the date of payment.

Schedule A attached gives a general guide as to the impact of the proposed changes. The impact will depend on whether the member is a member of the Staff or PWA Scheme or the MPS(1978) Scheme. *(Please note these figures are for illustrative purposes only and are not guaranteed)*

Sensitivity of the Scheme Benefit Proposals

The panel considered at length the accrual rate within the proposed scheme and decided upon a rate of 1/60th. If the accrual rate was reduced to 1/70th the contribution rate to the scheme would decrease by 2.3% or if the accrual rate was reduced to 1/80th the contribution rate would reduce by a further 1.9%. In spite of the extra cost, the Panel believed that members would want to maximise benefits even if contributions would rise to 7%.

The panel also considered the age of retirement and proposed this should be increase from 65 to 67. If the retirement age was left at 65 the cost of the scheme would increase by 1.9%.

An employer contribution rate of 1% would cost approximately £125,000.

Cost of implementing proposals

It is anticipated that the final cost of implementing the revised Scheme, if approved, will be approximately £190,000. This includes legal fees of £60,000, Actuarial fees of £60,000 and Administration and Consultancy fees of £70,000. Most of this has yet to be spent but will be financed by the Incidental Fund Assessments in 2006 and 2007.

Conclusion

The Panel has spent a lot of time wrestling with a difficult issue and, despite good reasons for succumbing to the 'easy way out' of a Defined Contribution Scheme, has opted to ask the Church to accept the inbuilt risk of continuing a Defined Benefit Scheme.

The proposals will reduce the attractions of existing benefits, but there is no guarantee that congregations could continue to fund the current costs and underlying commitments being made. The Panel believes that members should recognise that many employers are taking pragmatic decisions to remove their commitment to Defined Benefits and that these proposals reflect the desire of the

Church to provide benefits that compare favourably with those of many other companies and organisations.

The change to providing for increases in future earnings to RPI (rather than National Average Earnings) will have the effect of the new arrangements starting with an actuarial surplus! In view of the volatility of all the factors involved in the calculations, no regard is being paid to the surplus in calculating the contribution rate for the proposed scheme at this time.

It is hoped that the proposals, if approved, will be followed by a prolonged period of stability. The situation will, of course, continue to be closely monitored so that, if necessary, further corrective action can be taken.

SCHEDULE 1

ESTIMATED EFFECT OF PROPOSED PENSION SCHEME CHANGES

STAFF and PWA SCHEMES

Age at 1 JANUARY 2008	Accrued Pensionable Service to 1 January, 2008 (Years)	Pension from age 65 – Existing Scheme in today's terms £pa (Note1)	Proposed Annual Pension in today's terms - £pa			
			From age 65	% Reduction in Pension	From Age 67	% Reduction (Increase) in Pension
35	0	19,500	13,800	30	17,000	13
35	10	26,100	17,900	31	21,100	19
45	10	16,800	12,600	25	14,900	11
45	20	22,500	16,800	25	19,100	15
55	20	14,500	12,300	16	13,800	5
55	30	19,300	16,400	15	17,900	7
60	20	11,200	10,200	9	11,400	(1)
60	30	15,700	14,400	8	15,600	1
60	40	20,200	18,600	8	19,700	2

MINISTERS' PENSION SCHEME (1978)

Age at 1 JANUARY 2008	Accrued Pensionable Service to 1 January 2008 (Years)	Benefits from age 65 – Existing Scheme in today's terms £pa (Note 1)		Proposed Annual Benefits in today's terms – £pa					
				From Age 65			From Age 67		
		Pension	Tax-free lump sum	Pension (after tax- free lump sum)	Tax-free lump sum Assuming max taken	% overall reduction (increase) in Pension*	Pension (after tax- free lump sum)	Tax-free lump sum – Assuming max. taken	%overall reduction (increase) Pension*
35	0	14,660	43,970	9,740	64,910	21	11,770	78,450	3
35	10	19,540	58,620	12,360	82,380	25	14,370	95,770	12
45	10	12,630	37,880	8,620	57,460	19	10,070	67,140	4
45	20	16,840	50,510	11,240	74,940	20	12,670	84,470	10
55	20	10,880	32,650	8,020	53,470	12	8,970	59,800	1
55	30	14,510	43,520	10,640	70,950	13	11,570	77,130	4
60	20	8,420	25,250	6,580	43,870	7	7,320	48,780	(5)
60	30	11,790	35,360	9,200	61,360	7	9,920	66,110	(1)
60	40	15,150	45,460	11,830	78,840	7	12,520	83,450	1

(Note1 – assumes no change to existing scheme)

* this is the reduction (increase) in pension after converting tax-free cash to pension
(Please note these figures are for illustrative purposes only and are not guaranteed)

The Board appreciates that many may find these illustrations complicated. Further explanations will be available during the consultation period prior to changes taking effect.

SCHEDULE 2

COMPARISON OF EXISTING PENSION SCHEME BENEFITS WITH PROPOSED BENEFITS

Pension Review Panel

	MPS	PWA/OB/IM Scheme	Staff	Proposed
Eligibility Conditions	Scheme specific	Scheme specific	Scheme specific	Admission on application to Licentiates, Ministers, Irish Mission Worker, Deaconess. Missionary, or those employed on a Board of Finance and Personnel salary scale. Those declining to join must complete a waiver form. <i>(Note : consideration was given to a probationary period but there was no actuarial justification for this)</i>
Normal Pension Age	65	65 (prior to 1 April 2006, 60)	65	67 <i>(Note : if a member decides to retire at 65 they must take all their benefits at that stage)</i>
Salary Definitions	CARE	Standard Definitions	Standard Definitions	CARE (Career Revalued Average Earnings) to exclude endowment income, overtime payments or other one off payments. Annual revaluations to be based on RPI

Pension Review Panel

	MPS	PWA/OB/IM Scheme	Staff	Proposed
Pensionable Service	Excludes service before start date of scheme on 6 April 1978	Can include service before start date of scheme on 1 September 1972	Can include service before start date of scheme on 15 December 1971, for members who joined the scheme before 1 February 1995	Service after 1 January 2008
Normal Retirement Pension (subject to HMRC limits)	1/80th x Revalued Average Salary x Pensionable Service. Salary revalued annually	1/60th x Final Pensionable Salary x Pensionable Service on basis of AEI	1/60th x Final Pensionable Salary x Pensionable Service	1/60th x Revalued Average Salary x Pensionable Service. Salary to be revalued annually on the basis of RPI
Normal Retirement Cash (subject to HMRC limits)	3 x Member's pension	1/4 x members pension x commutation factor	3/80th x Final Pensionable Salary x Service with employer	25% of Fund Value. Commutation factors to be cost neutral to scheme.
Payment of Cash	In addition to pension	In exchange for pension	In exchange for pension	In exchange for pension
Post 6 April 1997 scheme pension increases	In line with inflation up to a maximum of 5% each year (LPI)	LPI	The greater of 3% and LPI	LPI (2.5%)
Pre 6 April 1997 scheme increases	Non GMP – discretionary increases only, Post 1988 1988 GMP -3% each year, Pre 1998 GMP No increase	3% each year on whole benefit (LPI applies to Spouses death in service pensions)	3% each year on whole benefit	N/A
Early Retirement (other than incapacity)	Between ages of 50 & 60 for members in the scheme at 6 April 1992 No consent is required for such members on requesting	Between age of 50 & 60 for members in the scheme at 1 April 1993 Male members who left the scheme before 1 April	Between age of 50 & 65 for members in the scheme at 1 July 1994 Female members who left the scheme before 1 July	Between ages of 50 (from 2010 increases to 55) and 67 with actuarial reduction

Pension Review Panel

	MPS	PWA/OB/IM Scheme	Staff	Proposed
	early retirement on or after age 60 – however para 223 of Code may prevent members from exercising this right	1993 need consent to take early retirement between 50 & 60	1994 need consent to take early retirement between 50 & 60	
Reductions on early retirement (non-incapacity)	Complex methodology adopted. Early reduction factors applied to equalise benefits between male and female members for pensionable service after 16 May 1990	For members in active service at 1 April 1993 early reduction factors apply based on period between early retirement date and age 60 (65 from 1 April 2006). More complex methodology applies for male members who left the scheme before 1 April 1993– method adopted should be confirmed.	For members in active Service at 1 July 194 early retirement reduction factors apply based on period between early retirement date and age 60- no reduction applies on early retirement between 60 and 65 if employer consent to retirement given, otherwise early retirement reduction apply	Early reduction factors to apply - to be cost neutral to the scheme
Life assurance benefit on member's death in service	4 x Minimum stipend at date of death	4 x members pensionable salary at date of death	4 x members pensionable salary at date of death	4 x members pensionable salary at date of death
Spouse / Dependants death in service pension	Greater of 2/3 x prospective members pension at Normal pension date , and 25% x Minimum Stipend	1/2 x members pre – commuted pension at date of death	1/2 x members pre – commuted pension at date of death	1/2 x members prospective pension at Normal Retirement Date)

Pension Review Panel

	MPS	PWA/OB/IM Scheme	Staff	Proposed
Additional Child Pensions on members death after retirement or death in service	1/4 x Spouses pension for each Child (maximum 4)	None	None	1/4 x Spouses pension for each Child (maximum 4)
Spouses/ Dependant's Death in deferred pension	1/2 x members revalued to date of death	A Spouses pensions at the members date of death – complex and confusing definitions apply as to the amount of spouses pension payable	1/2 x members pension revalued to date of death	1/2 x members pension revalued to date of death
Revaluation of non-GMP benefits in deferment	Increased in line with inflation up to a maximum of 5% per annum compound based on the number of complete years between the members date of leaving pensionable service up to the date payment of benefits commences, subject to any adjustments that may be necessary to achieve equality of benefits between men and women for pensionable service completed after 16 May 1990	Increased in line with inflation up to a maximum of 5% per annum compound based on the number of complete years between the members date of leaving Pensionable Service and Normal pension date	Increased at a fixed rate of 5% per annum compound for the number of complete years between the members date of leaving Pensionable Service up to the Members 60th birthday. If the members actual retirement date s after age 60 increases at the rate of 5% per annum compound will continue to be added until the earlier of the member's retirement date and the members 65th Birthday	Increased in line with inflation up to a maximum of 5% per annum compound based on the number of complete years between the members date of leaving pensionable service.

Pension Review Panel

	MPS	PWA/OB/IM Scheme	Staff	Proposed
Leaving service – less than two years pensionable service completed	Net Refund of member contributions	Net Refund of member contributions	Net Refund of member contributions if the member leaves the scheme for any reason other than as a result of redundancy On redundancy the member may choose a preserved pension or a net refund of member contributions	Statutory provisions
Employer contribution rate	15.6%	26.2%	15.85% (under review proposed 25.1%)	14.2%
Member Contribution rate	6%	6%	5% (under review proposed 6%)	7%
Permanent Health Insurance	No scheme in place – but Note prolonged Disability Fund	No Scheme in place	Scheme in place (UNUM)	This matter needs to be considered separately from this pension review
Additional Voluntary Contributions	Norwich Union / Abbey National	Norwich Union / Abbey National	Norwich Union / Abbey National	Not offered – exiting members can continue. No transfers in to be accepted.
Widows benefits	2/3 for retirements after 1 January 1994 (prior 50%)		50%	50% of members

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the Report be received.
2. That members of the Staff and PWA/Overseas Board etc. Pension Schemes transfer into the Ministers' Pension Scheme (1978) (to be appropriately renamed) on 1 January, 2009, or as soon as possible thereafter.
3. That the Benefits of the newly merged Scheme be as proposed in Schedule 2 of Appendix II attached to this Report.
4. That the rate of assessment for the Incidental Fund for 2008 be 5p in the £ of stipend.
5. That the rate of assessment for the Central Ministry Fund for 2008 be 18p in the £ of stipend.
6. That the rate of assessment for the Retired Ministers' Fund for 2008 be 6.0p in the £ of stipend.
7. That the rate of assessment for the Widows of Ministers' Fund for 2008 be 5.50p in the £ of stipend.
8. That the rate of assessment for the Ministers' Prolonged Disability Fund for 2008 be 0.25p in the £ of stipend for Ministers, Licentiates and College Professors and of Basic Ministerial Minimum for Ministers who are Missionaries.
9. That the rate of assessment for the Church House External Work for 2008 be 3.5p in the £ of stipend.
10. That, under the provisions of the Code Par 223(3), the Rev NM Williamson (Magheramorne) and the Rev R Vallely (Ballylinney) be given permission to retire on or after their 64th birthday and that their pension be in accordance with the Code and the Rules of the Ministers' Pension Scheme (1978).
11. That the General Board be authorised to act for the General Assembly in any matter arising before the June, 2009, Assembly in connection with the implementation of this Assembly's decisions on the Review of Pensions.
12. That the Board of Finance and Personnel, with its associated working committees for the ensuing year, be appointed in accordance with Par 286 of the Code as follows:

MEMORIAL TRANSMITTED

To the Venerable the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to meet in Belfast on 2nd day of June, 2008.

The Memorial of MARY ETHEL DEATHERAGE Respectfully Showeth:

That she was Licensed as a Probationer for the Ministry in Drum Congregation in the Monaghan Presbytery on 24th June, 2007 and is Assistant Minister in Ballywalter Congregation in the Ards Presbytery.

That according to the regulations of the Code, Par 211, as a condition of ordination she will be required to become a member of the Presbyterian Widows Fund Association and pay the subscriptions as required by the rules of the Association.

That the required subscription includes ‘The Current Annual Subscription for every year or part of a year over thirty years of age up to and including the date of his Ordination.’

That when she will be eligible for a call from a Congregation and subsequent ordination, she will be 55 years of age.

That in addition to the yearly subscription to the Presbyterian Widows’ Fund Association she would be required to pay a sum in excess of £6000 to make up the years since her 30th birthday.

That she has never been married and is without any dependents.

That she worked from 1977 to 1985 as a volunteer with Youth with a Mission in Germany with basic support from her home Church in the USA.

That she studied for a Master of Education Degree from 1985-1988 in preparation for missionary service in China from 1988 to 1992 and in Mongolia from 1992 to 2002, as a volunteer without regular financial support. That she worked from 2003 to 2004 as a boarding supervisor in the Royal School, Cavan. That she studied from 2004 to 2007 as a student for the ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

That during those years she had no opportunity to accumulate savings or subscribe to a pension plan.

That the requirement to pay a significant sum of money to an organisation from which she would receive no benefit amounts to a crippling financial disadvantage, given the expenses she will inevitably incur at the beginning of ministry in her own Congregation and her need to make provision for retirement.

Memorialist, therefore, prays your Venerable Assembly to consider her position and, if possible, release her from any obligation to join the Presbyterian Widows’ Fund Association.

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

ME DEATHERAGE
30th day of January, 2008

Adopted by the Kirk Session of Ballywalter at its meeting on the 30th day of January, 2008, and transmitted with the strong recommendation that its prayer be granted.

R ALAN RUSSELL, Moderator
DEREK A PATTON, Clerk

Licensed by the Ards Presbytery at its meeting on the 5th day of February, 2008 and transmitted with the strong recommendation that its prayer be granted.

TWD JOHNSTON, Moderator
R ALAN RUSSELL, Clerk

UNITED APPEAL BOARD

Acting Convener: Rev Dr DJ WATTS

1. The Board, on behalf of the missions and agencies of the Church, wishes once again to express thanks to all Congregations who fully supported the United Appeal. Special thanks are extended to those who generously exceeded their target figures. This appeal enables vital work to be carried out in the name of the Presbyterian Church in mission and service throughout the world. Without the wholehearted support of every Congregation, the Church's ability to witness to Jesus Christ is challenged.

2. When the accounts of the 2007 Appeal were finalised it was below target by £21,869 (£12,205 in 2006). However, £107,120 was received as late payments to the 2006 Appeal (£106,245 in 2006) and so it was possible to pay the Boards their budgeted grants in full for 2007. The Board would emphasise again to Treasurers the need for United Appeal money to be paid on time and indeed for payments to be made regularly throughout the year. If regular payments became the common practice throughout the Church the Board would not need to hold so much in reserve to meet the monthly payments which go to the receiving Boards in anticipation of the Congregations' yearly response. 7½% of a Board's budget figure is paid monthly through the year, to enable considered financial planning at Board level.

3. This year, for the first time, the Board considered six-month summary accounts against budget, for each receiving Board. This proved helpful in identifying any issues and discussing them at an early stage. Tribute must be paid to the work of the Finance Office and Financial Secretary, as well as those who consider the finances of each individual Board. Their diligence enables the mission work of the Church to continue strongly in financially challenging times.

4. Each Board was asked to submit a "Five Year Financial Projection" by 31 October, 2007. At the time of writing all but the Communications Board have done so. This included:

- Key Objectives/Mission of the Board
- Current activities undertaken to achieve those objectives
- Current Staffing structure and requirements (number of staff by grade)
- SWOT analysis (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats)
- Planned activities highlighting new or discontinued areas of work
- Planned Staffing structure and requirements (number of staff by grade)
- How achievement of the plan will be measured
- Financial Projections
- Capital Expenditure requirements

It was noted that if all the Boards' requests were met in full, assuming a 5% increase in the United Appeal each year, the United Appeal Board's reserves

would be used up and it would be significantly overdrawn by 2010. This has enabled the Board to begin discussions as to how savings may be achieved.

5. Of course there would not be a problem if members became more enthusiastic in their support for the Church's mission and so contributed more to the United Appeal. The Publicity sub-Committee is working at ways to increase the visibility of the work which is being supported, as are the individual Boards. As well as the twice-yearly Briefing, video clips and down-loads are being planned and delivered. There is, however, no substitute for the enthusiastic support of the Church's mission by the leadership in each Congregation.

6. During the year the Board of Finance and Personnel, in consultation with the United Appeal Board, reviewed the way the general expenses of the General Assembly (the General and Financial Secretaries' Offices) are allocated to the Incidental Fund and individual Boards. In future it is recommended the General Secretary's Office costs should be charged to the Incidental Fund as general expenses involved in the running of the General Assembly and supporting the various Boards and Committees. The Financial Secretary's Office costs should be charged on an agreed basis to the Boards etc. who are using the service. While this has meant adjustments to some of the Boards it has been accommodated in the agreed budgets for 2009.

7. The funding of the Communications Office has been considered and a small sub-Committee appointed to look more closely at the issues involved.

8. Budgets submitted by the Boards for 2009 have been carefully considered. Some of these had been reduced following discussions on the 5-year plans but collectively still showed an increase over the agreed allocations for 2008 of 9.6%. With further discussion the 2009 Appeal was agreed at £3,509,200 – an increase of 4.25%. (See Schedules III and IV). This will cause some of the Boards to have to reconsider the extent of their work in the future.

9. The 4.25% increase has only been achieved by using up more of the Board's reserves and utilising the few remaining surpluses held in Board accounts. The Board of Mission in Ireland has been asked to bring into its budget figures over the next 10 years the substantial monies received from the sale of land originally purchased for Church Extension at Carrickfergus and presently held in a Capital account. The stark reality is that there is no financial slack left in the system. In future either the United Appeal will have to increase or the mission work of the Church will have to be cut back. There are difficult decisions ahead.

10. This report should not end, however, on a negative note. This Church depends on a great God who not only provides for our current needs but gives vision for the future. As manna in the wilderness, God will provide for the work ahead as the Church and individual Boards discern His will for mission. Of course, He may provide by making greater demands on His people, and challenging each of us to review our real commitment to the mission of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

11. During the year the Rev Trevor Gribben resigned as Convener of the United Appeal Board on being appointed Deputy Clerk of the General Assembly. He is thanked for his careful and thoughtful Convenership, during which time the procedures of the United Appeal were helpfully clarified.

APPRAISALS COMMITTEE

1. During the year the Appraisals Committee considered the posts and projects submitted to it and approved those listed below. It also decided, and the Board confirmed, that permission for any new post should in the future lapse if no appointment has been made in six months.

Posts Approved

- Chaplaincy at Dublin Institute of Technology (shared post)
- Director of Programmes (Youth and Children's Ministry)
- Head of Personnel (Finance and Personnel)
- Regional Youth and Support Workers, Donegal and Monaghan Presbyteries – extension to fixed-term contracts (Youth and Children's Ministry)
- Centres' Director, part-time, 2-year term (Youth and Children's Ministry)
- BMI Communications Officer, permanent to replace an existing temporary post (Mission in Ireland)
- BMI Support Officer (Mission in Ireland)
- Temporary Administrative Assistant, Field Staff Management, May-December 2008 (Mission in Ireland)

Projects Approved

- Site for new Church building at Drogheda
- Refurbishment and extension at Union Theological College – up to £2.1m

SCHEDULE I

Presbytery	Contributing Families 2006	Specified Sources 2006 £	United Appeal 2008 £
Ards.....	9,125	3,066,630	339,882
Armagh.....	3,960	1,620,934	163,176
Ballymena.....	7,602	2,777,180	295,170
Belfast North.....	5,844	1,769,646	207,170
Belfast South.....	3,081	1,392,197	134,037
Belfast East.....	7,874	2,936,522	308,972
Carrickfergus.....	5,684	1,667,731	198,610
Coleraine.....	4,470	1,693,494	176,831
Derry & Strabane.....	3,372	1,090,946	123,313
Donegal.....	1,259	456,571	48,703
Down.....	4,691	1,352,493	162,622
Dromore.....	5,089	1,859,108	197,594
Dublin & Munster.....	1,385	884,103	74,210
Foyle.....	2,894	777,481	97,251
Iveagh.....	3,702	1,344,436	143,310
Monaghan.....	995	368,212	38,889
Newry.....	2,788	1,111,358	113,269
Omagh.....	2,528	877,904	95,691
Route.....	3,615	1,189,872	133,297
Templepatrick.....	4,402	1,479,568	163,973
Tyrone.....	3,819	1,431,196	150,230
	88,179	31,147,582	3,366,200

50% of the allocation for 2007 has been based on contributing families and 50% on Specified Sources. Specified Sources for Congregations in the Republic of Ireland have been converted to euro on the basis of the average exchange rate for 2006 of 1.47.

SCHEDULE II

	Requested 2008 £	Proposed Grant 2008 £
BOARD OF MISSION IN IRELAND*	1,030,000	1,000,000
Home Mission	175,000	175,000
Irish Mission.....	450,000	420,000
Congregational Life	75,000	75,000
Property Committee (Church Extension).....	100,000	100,000
Home Mission General Account	230,000	230,000
BOARD OF EDUCATION*	10,000	10,000
BOARD OF STUDIES & CHRISTIAN TRAINING		
Board of Studies and Christian Training	16,500	16,500
Union Theological College.....	195,700	165,700
Students Bursary Fund.....	344,000	344,000
BOARD OF YOUTH & CHILDREN'S MINISTRY*	465,000	395,000
BOARD OF SOCIAL WITNESS		
Social Witness Board.....	145,000	145,000
Kinghan Mission	50,000	25,000
PCI Counselling (Marriage & Family Project).....	10,000	10,000
Chaplains' Committee.....	60,000	60,000
University Chaplains'	160,000	160,000
BOARD OF MISSION OVERSEAS*	1,092,000	1,000,000
BOARD OF COMMUNICATIONS*	130,000	130,000
	3,708,200	3,461,200
Currency losses		
Contingencies (max 5% of Total Appeal)		80,000
Allocation from reserves		(175,000)
	3,708,200	3,366,200

* Board operating on a consolidated budget

SCHEDULE III

Presbytery	Contributing Families 2007	Specified Sources 2007 £	United Appeal 2009 £
Ards.....	8,378	2,974,848	332,486
Armagh.....	3,938	1,703,311	172,993
Ballymena.....	7,478	2,848,167	307,336
Belfast North.....	6,065	1,901,134	226,863
Belfast South.....	3,763	1,680,028	168,177
Belfast East.....	6,598	2,722,757	282,661
Carrickfergus.....	5,585	1,678,756	204,968
Coleraine.....	4,344	1,747,278	183,616
Derry & Strabane.....	3,346	1,106,265	128,305
Donegal.....	1,330	480,366	53,226
Down.....	4,927	1,525,571	183,264
Dromore.....	5,063	1,890,200	205,992
Dublin & Munster.....	1,336	927,161	77,827
Foyle.....	2,870	826,139	103,327
Iveagh.....	3,686	1,391,017	150,784
Monaghan.....	979	383,373	40,811
Newry.....	2,811	1,129,619	118,761
Omagh.....	2,535	903,267	100,775
Route.....	3,644	1,252,337	142,337
Templepatrick.....	4,252	1,499,302	168,168
Tyrone.....	3,798	1,454,500	156,528
	86,726	32,025,396	3,509,205

50% of the allocation for 2008 has been based on contributing families and 50% on Specified Sources. Specified Sources for Congregations in the Republic of Ireland have been converted to euro on the basis of the average exchange rate for 2007 of 1.47.

The above allocations reflect the move of Congregations to new Presbyteries from March 2008. Presbyteries affected: Ards, North Belfast, South Belfast, East Belfast and Down.

SCHEDULE IV

	Requested 2009 £	Proposed Grant 2009 £
BOARD OF MISSION IN IRELAND*	1,180,000	1,050,000
Home & Irish Mission	690,000	560,000
Congregational Life	70,000	70,000
Property Committee (Church Extension).....	75,000	75,000
Home Mission General Account	300,000	300,000
Urban Mission.....	45,000	45,000
BOARD OF EDUCATION*	35,000	35,000
BOARD OF CHRISTIAN TRAINING*	551,615	526,700
Board of Christian Training	31,876	32,000
Union Theological College	260,724	235,700
Students Bursary Fund	207,000	207,000
Applicants, Students & Licentiate.....	11,015	11,000
Summer Assistants	35,000	35,000
Christian Training	6,000	6,000
BOARD OF YOUTH & CHILDREN'S MINISTRY*	520,000	510,000
BOARD OF SOCIAL WITNESS	366,000	357,500
Social Witness Board	252,000	250,000
PCI Counselling (Marriage & Family Project).....	24,000	22,500
Chaplains' Committee.....	90,000	85,000
BOARD OF MISSION OVERSEAS*	1,050,000	1,050,000
BOARD OF COMMUNICATIONS*		
Department of Communications	90,000	85,000
	<hr/> 3,792,615	<hr/> 3,614,200
Currency losses		
Contingencies (max 5% of Total Appeal)		70,000
Allocation from reserves		(175,000)
		<hr/>
Appeal to Congregations		3,509,200
		<hr/>

* Board operating on a consolidated budget

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the Report be received.
2. That the United Appeal for 2009 be as set out in Schedules (III) and (IV).
3. That the resignation of the Rev TD Gribben as Convener of the United Appeal Board be accepted, that he be thanked for his services and the Rev RIA Allely appointed in his place.
4. That the United Appeal Board for the ensuing year be appointed in accordance with par 287 of the Code as follows:-

COMMISSION ON TRUSTS

1. Attention is drawn to the Capital Account of the General Investment Fund. The Commission advised the acceptance of the Trust Funds.

2. The Irish Presbyterian Church Act, 1871, states: "It shall be lawful for the trustees, if they shall think fit, with the approval of the said general assembly, to accept or take a transfer of any other gift or bequest ..." (Par 11). Similarly the Act of 1901 states: "The Trustees may if desired to do so by the said General Assembly ..." (Par 4(1)) and "The Trustees may if authorised so to do by the General Assembly ..." (Par 4(2)). The Commission on Trusts has been appointed to indicate to the Trustees the approval, desire or authorisation of the General Assembly in these matters.

3. In practice the Commission on Trusts does not meet sufficiently often to examine every bequest accepted by the Trustees and the Commission therefore recommends that in future the membership of the Commission should be the Moderator and Clerk of Assembly, Mr AJ Rankin (General Assembly's Solicitor) and the nine members of the Executive Committee of the Trustees. The present members are to be thanked and commended for their work.

AJ RANKIN, Convener

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the Report be received.
2. That the Commission on Trusts for the ensuing year be appointed in accordance with Par 130 of the Code as follows:-

TRUSTEES OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND

Hon Secretary: Rev Dr DONALD J WATTS

Financial Secretary: Mr CLIVE KNOX

1. The following is an extract from the Minutes of the proceedings of the Trustees at their Annual General Meeting held in Church House, Belfast, on 15 April, 2008.

2. The Report of the Executive Committee and the Statement of audited Accounts for the year ended 31 December, 2007 of the following were laid before the Trustees, and were adopted by them:

The General Investment Fund

The Commutation Fund

The Non-Participating Trust Funds

The Magee Fund

The Tops Wilson Trust Fund

The Fire Insurance Trust Fund

The Fortune Mission Bequest

The Lindsay Memorial Fund

Trust Funds

3. Moved by the Rev R Cobain, seconded by Mr G McCullagh and unanimously agreed, that the Report and the Statements of Accounts be adopted, signed by three Trustees, inserted in the Appendix to the Minute Book and lodged with the Clerk of Assembly to be laid before the Assembly in June. The Report and the Statement of Accounts were, therefore, signed by the Rev Dr RJT McMullan Mr L Cubitt, and Mr A Speer and lodged in accordance with the foregoing resolution.

4. It was reported that the Executive Committee had also received and examined the audited Accounts for 2007 of the Getty Trust, Union Theological College and The War Memorial Hostel and had accepted these for inclusion in the volume of Accounts to be submitted to the General Assembly. On the proposal of Mr WC Henderson, seconded by the Rev Dr RJT McMullan, this report was received.

5. Three retiring members of the Executive Committee were re-appointed for a further three years, these being Mr D Bell CB, Mr W Ervin and the Rev WJ Orr.

6. On the proposal of Mr WC Henderson, seconded by Mr JO Greer, the V Rev Dr D Clarke was elected to the Executive Committee to replace the Rev WDF Marshall (retired).

7. Mr AT Ross (if possible) and Mr JO Greer were nominated members of the General Assembly, according to the provision of the Code Par 97 (h) (iii).

The Executive Committee nominated the Rev Wilfred Orr a member of the College and Magee Management Committee on behalf of the Trustees.

8. The Trustees considered and agreed a recommendation of the Executive Committee that the Board of Trustees should hold an Annual General Meeting, normally in March, and one other meeting in October. An overture to amend the Trustees Bye-laws is appended.

Trust Funds

9. A summary Account of the various Trust Funds is included in the Book of Accounts 2007. The following Trust Funds are distributed by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Trustees.

Mrs A M Davidson Trust: The total income for 2007 available for distribution is £7,901.90. The following recommendation is made to the General Assembly:

Union Theological College	£3,400.00
Church House Repairs	£3,351.90
Youth/Sunday School	£1,150.00
	<hr/>
	£7,901.90
	<hr/>

Sir Wm V McCleery Estate: The total income for 2007 available for distribution is £41,256.04. The following recommendation is made to the General Assembly:

Central Ministry Fund	80%
Retired Ministers' Fund	10%
Widows of Ministers' Fund	10%

Estate of Miss Irene Scott: The total income for 2007 available for distribution is £8,547.94. The following recommendation is made to the General Assembly:

Board of Social Witness	£3,997.94
Church House Repairs	£4,550.00
	<hr/>
	£8,547.94
	<hr/>

Estate of Miss Ida Mary McGeown: The total income for 2007 available for distribution is £5,485.76. The following recommendation is made to the General Assembly:

Church House Repairs	£2,985.76
Board of Social Witness	£2,500.00
	<hr/>
	£5,485.76
	<hr/>

Estate of Mr Victor Morrow: The total income for 2007 available for distribution is £1,816.08. The following recommendation is made to the General Assembly:

Union Theological College	£908.04
Church House Repairs	£908.04
	<hr/>
	£1,816.08
	<hr/>

GENERAL INVESTMENT FUND

10. Declaration of Dividend	15.4.07	15.10.07
Number of shares qualifying	5,432,911	5,432,174
	£	£
Income from investment for distribution and income tax recoverable less administrative charge and Investment Advisers' Fees	892,680	991,652
Dividend per share	15.00p	16.00p

In the year 2007 £122,504 was transferred to the Dividend Equalisation Reserve and the balance on the Dividend Equalisation Reserve at 31 December, 2007 is £856,784.

The combined annual Dividend of 31.00p per share is to be compared with 30.00p per share for 2006; 27.00p for 2005; 27.00p for 2004; 29.30p for 2003; 28.5p for 2002; 28.00 for 2001; 28.00 for 2000; 27.00 for 1999; 25.00 for 1998.

11. Valuation	15.4.07	15.10.07
	£	£
Valuation of Investments	38,845,253	41,362,738
Cash on Deposit	673,317	642,534
Dividend Equalisation Reserve	812,023	856,784
Property and Ground Rents	3,000,000	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	£43,330,593	£42,862,056

No of Shares Issued	5,421,219	5,437,343
Share Value	£7.9928	£7.8829

12. Following detailed discussion and a report from the property agent, the Trustees decided to sell the directly held properties investments and they were auctioned on 23 March, 2007 and sold for £3,000,000. The proceeds were forwarded to Newton Investment Management Limited and invested in property investment funds. Initial returns have been below expectation.

Crescent Church Loan Fund

13. Loan requests of £95,000 were approved during 2007. Interest is currently charged on loans at bank base rate on the average balance outstanding over the term of the loan.

Getty Bequest

14. The allocation of grants out of the income of the Trust Estate of John Getty for the year ending 31 December, 2007 was as follows:

Overseas – Foreign	2,850
Overseas – Jewish	1,550
Home Mission	3,750
Belfast City Mission	2,850
TOTAL	£11,000

Familybooks Limited

15. At the June 2007 General Assembly a Motion on the Books was passed requesting “That the General Assembly rescind the decision requesting the Trustees to retain and invest the net proceeds of the sale of Familybooks for a period of ten years against the contingency that the Church may decide at a future date to re-establish a Presbyterian bookshop”.

Familybooks

16. In accordance with a General Assembly resolution “That the General Assembly agree any funds received by the Incidental Fund from the nett proceeds of the sale of Familybooks should be allocated on receipt to the Board of Christian Training, to be used as a special fund for the production of suitable resources to assist congregations in their mission and ministry, on the recommendation of the Christian Training Committee” the Trustees have distributed £96,641.48 to the Incidental Fund. The remainder of the proceeds of sale of £101,727.87 have been retained for the benefit of the Trustees Discretionary Fund.

Non Participating Trusts Fund

17. Following detailed discussions and a report from the Assembly Solicitor the Trustees have realised some of the investments held in the Non Participating Trusts Fund and re-invested the proceeds in the General Investment Fund.

Fisherwick Management Services

18. Following the transfer of the administration of service charges to the Property Management Committee the company has been wound up and struck off the Register of Companies.

Banking Arrangements

19. During 2007 the Trustees carried out a review of the number of bank accounts in use and, in view of the transfer of investment management to Newton Investment Management Limited on a discretionary basis and other efficiency savings, agreed to close a number of existing accounts and instead use the Church’s central bank account.

Commission on Trusts

20. The Trustees have been in discussion with the Commission on Trusts regarding the role of the latter and support the proposals included in the Commission on Trusts Report to the General Assembly.

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the Report be received.
2. That the recommendation regarding the Mrs A M Davidson Trust be adopted.
3. That the recommendation regarding the Sir Wm V McCleery Trust be adopted.
4. That the recommendation regarding the Miss Irene Scott Trust be adopted.
5. That the recommendation regarding the Miss Ida Mary McGeown Trust be adopted.
6. That the recommendation regarding the Victor Morrow Trust be adopted.
7. That in accordance with the Will of the late John Getty the following be constituted as the Committee for the “direction and management of the application” of the income from the Getty Bequest:

Very Rev Dr S Hutchinson, Revs Dr DJ Watts, RJA Bell, WJ Orr; Mr Wilson Ervin, CBE, Sir Eric McDowell, Mr David Bell, CB, Mr AT Ross, Mr John Millar, OBE.

OVERTURE TRANSMITTED**Anent Appendix 15 of the Code: ASSEMBLY TRUSTEES – BYE-LAWS, Par II of the Code**

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Appendix 15, Par II of the Code the words “in October and February” be deleted and the words “half-yearly” substituted in their place.

DJ WATTS

2010 SPECIAL ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE

Convener: Rev TC MORRISON

Introduction

1. The Committee has met on four occasions and it continues to be the case that the Special Assembly is a work in progress.

It is hoped to report on some matters in more detail at the General Assembly.

Date

2. The date of the Special Assembly has been agreed with Dublin City University as 23 – 26 August, 2010.

Theme and Structure of the Assembly

3. These remain as reported last year and are reproduced below.

Theme

- To strike a note of confidence in God and his Gospel
- To encourage and inspire the delegates in their Christian life
- To focus on “being” not “doing”
- To proclaim the wonder of grace and its implications
- To be a joyous experience and celebrate the Good News

Structure

There was full discussion on the duration, starting and finishing days, the broad structure of a daily programme and the need to avoid overload. It was agreed that starting on a Monday evening and finishing on a Thursday evening was the optimum arrangement and that the undernoted could form the basis of the event.

		Monday	Tuesday to Thursday
Morning	9.30 am		Bible Reading
	11.00 am		Seminars
Afternoon	2.30 pm		Optional opportunities e.g. stand alone workshops of a practical nature, space for corporate and personal reflection, resource for Ministers and paid congregational workers and organised social outings
Evening	7.30 pm	Celebration (Monday-Thursday)	
	9.30 pm	Informal Fringe Event (Monday-Wednesday)	

Speakers

4. Much time has been spent and prayer offered in considering who might be invited as our keynote speaker and several people have been approached, none of whom is available. At the time of writing the Committee is reflecting on the right way forward with regard to this matter.

Working Groups

5. Various Working Groups have been established within the Committee with responsibilities for different aspects of planning. They are working diligently within their own spheres to ensure thorough preparation for all matters.

Committee Membership

6. During the year the Rev David Montgomery stepped down as Co-Convener and the Rev Ronnie Hetherington and Mr Gordon McCracken resigned from the Committee. Nominations of any replacements will be brought to the General Assembly.

We thank them for their contribution during their time on the Committee.

Finance

7. While there will be additional costs in using a venue in Dublin, as compared with say Coleraine, the substantial balance carried forward from the last Special Assembly of 2004 will more than cover them. The first congregational assessment was received in 2007 and there are 2 more years to come i.e. 2008 and 2009. This will ensure, that with the income from delegates fees, the event will be self-financing.

RESOLUTION

1. That the Report be received.

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MEMORIALS TRANSMITTED

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AW Carson (14); RI Carton (18); N Cubitt (18); M Gibson (14); CA Grant (19); JH Hanson (18); JRI Harbinson (18); DS Henry (18); HJ Honeyford (18); R Hill (14); P Jamieson (14); KP Meyer (17); DJ Montgomery (14); RJ Montgomery (12); SA McCracken (15); PG McCrea (19); DK McCrory (17); ES McDowell (19); JD McGaughey (12); W McLaren (17); B McMillan (15); H Ross (20); J Rushton (17); FP Sellar (17); GR Stockdale (16); DJ Temple (17); AS Thompson (20).			
Retired			
M Barr (19); AW Boyd (13); DS McIlwrath (16); D Nesbitt (18); JR Savage (14).			
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