

GENERAL ASSEMBLY



ANNUAL REPORTS



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ORDER OF BUSINESS

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

Tuesday

GA Business Committee –
Initial Report

Presbyteries

General Council (Section 1)

Fellow workers with God who
makes things grow

Congregational Life and Witness

Social Witness

Wednesday

Public Affairs

Training in Ministry

Listening to the Global Church

General Council (Section 2)

General Council (Section 3)

Thursday

Global Mission

Mission in Ireland

Chaplaincy as Mission

General Council (Section 4)

General Council (Section 5)

Friday

Judicial Commission

Special Judicial Commission

Commission on Applications

Memorials Transmitted

Trustees

Linkage Commission

GA Business Committee –
Second Report

NOTES

MONDAY, JUNE 5

Assembly Buildings

7.00 p.m. –

Service of Worship
Constitution of Assembly
Election of Moderator

TUESDAY, JUNE 6

9.30 a.m. –

1. GENERAL ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE:
Initial Report and Resolutions 1-4 (pages 3-4 and 179).
2. Reports of Presbyteries (pages 195-203).
- (9.45) 3. GENERAL COUNCIL: Section 1 of Report and Resolutions 5-7 (pages 1-3, 12-23 and 180).
Residential Assembly Conference Task Group; Reformation Celebration Task Group; Historical Archiving Task Group; Memorial Record.
- (10.45) 4. Reception of Corresponding Members and Delegates.
Church of Scotland: Rt Rev Dr Derek Browning; Rev John McMahon; Miss Anne Mulligan
United Reformed Church: Rev John Proctor
Church of Ireland: Rt Rev John McDowell; Dr Elizabeth Leonard
The Methodist Church in Ireland: Rev Brian Anderson, Mr Stanley Graham
Religious Society for Friends: Mr Daniel H Sinton
Evangelical Reformed Church of Latvia: Mr Artis Celmiņš
Reformed Church in Hungary: Rev Dr Zsolt Barta
Presbyterian Church of South Sudan: Rev James Makuei Choul
Presbyterian Church of East Africa: Rev Alfred Mugendi Kanga
CCAP, Synod of Nkhoma: Rev Vasco S K Kachipapa
National Evangelical Synod of Syria & Lebanon: Rev Fadi Elia Dagher
Presbyterian Church of Pakistan: Rev Maqsood Kamil
(Please note: some of the above are waiting on the granting of a Visa. Any changes or additions to the above will be reported in the Supplementary Reports.)

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

NOTES

(11.30) Short Intermission.

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

including the Memorial Roll.

1.00 p.m. LUNCH.

2.00 p.m. –

5. CCLW ALTERNATIVE PRESENTATION
– **Fellow workers with God who makes things grow**

(3.00) Tea/Coffee Break.

- 3.30 6. COUNCIL FOR CONGREGATIONAL LIFE AND WITNESS: Report and Resolutions (pages 204-235).

- 4.30 7. COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL WITNESS: Report and Resolutions (pages 236-260).

Lapsed Business (if any).

(5.45) Close of Business.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7

9.30 a.m. –

8. COUNCIL FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS: Report and Resolutions (pages 261-272).

(10.45) Tea/Coffee Break.

- 11.15 9. COUNCIL FOR TRAINING IN MINISTRY: Report and Resolutions (pages 273-289).

12.15 p.m. – Worship.

1.00 p.m. LUNCH.

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

NOTES

2.00 p.m. –

10. LISTENING TO THE GLOBAL CHURCH
– **Leadership in the Crucible**

(3.00) Tea/Coffee Break.

- 3.30 11. GENERAL COUNCIL: Section 2 of Report and Resolutions 8 & 9 (pages 24-31 and 180).
Priorities Committee; Dialogue and Resources Task Group; Moderator's Advisory Committee.

- 4.30 12. GENERAL COUNCIL: Section 3 of Report and Resolutions 10-18 (pages 32-71 and 180-181).
Support Services Committee; United Appeal Committee; Charity Registration Task Group; Use of Congregational Property Task Group; Holding Trustees Task Group.

Lapsed Business (if any).

(5.45) Close of Business.

6.00 p.m. – SPUD will host an Assembly Fringe event in the Minor Hall: Young People and the Church. This will include up front contributions and round table discussions as SPUD shares some of the input, conversation and discussion arising out of the 2017 Youth Assembly. A light tea will be served.

7.45 p.m. – Evening Celebration: Everyday Disciples

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

NOTES

THURSDAY, JUNE 8

9.30 a.m. –

13. COUNCIL FOR GLOBAL MISSION: Report and Resolutions (pages 290-314).

(10.45) Tea/Coffee Break.

- 11.15 14. COUNCIL FOR MISSION IN IRELAND: Report and Resolutions (pages 315-340).

12.15 p.m. – **Worship.**

1.00 p.m. LUNCH.

2.00 p.m. –

15. CMI ALTERNATIVE PRESENTATION
– **Chaplaincy as Mission**

(3.00) Tea/Coffee Break.

- 3.30 16. GENERAL COUNCIL: Section 4 of Report and Resolutions 19-28 (pages 72-119 and 181).
Relationships with Other Denominations Task Group; Doctrine Committee; Church Relations Committee.

- 4.45 17. GENERAL COUNCIL: Section 5 of Report and Resolutions 29-37 (pages 120-179 and 182-183).
Engagement and Consultations Task Group; Nominations Committee; Guysmere Centre Task Group.

18. OVERTURES: Ad-Hoc (pages 184-194).
Lapsed Business (if any).

(6.00) Close of Business.

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

NOTES

FRIDAY, JUNE 9

In Private

9.30 a.m. –

19. JUDICIAL COMMISSION: Report and Resolutions (pages 341-349).
20. OVERTURES: Judicial Commission (pages 350-354).
21. SPECIAL (JUDICIAL) COMMISSION: Report and Resolution (page 355).
22. COMMISSION ON APPLICATIONS: Report and Resolution (page 356).

In Public

23. MEMORIALS TRANSMITTED (pages 357-358).
 24. TRUSTEES: Report and Resolutions (pages 359-364).
- (10.45) Tea/Coffee Break.
- 11.15 25. LINKAGE COMMISSION: Report and Resolutions (pages 365-391).
- 12.00 26. GENERAL ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE: Second Report and Resolutions 38-41 (pages 4-11 and 183).
- Lapsed Business (if any).
- CLOSE OF ASSEMBLY.

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

GENERAL ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE

A Guide to Assembly Procedure

1. **Members of Assembly** consist of all ministers in active duty or retired and some elders, ex officio, together with a representative elder from each established Congregation plus other elders commissioned by Presbyteries to correspond with the number of ministers serving in special appointments. The Assembly quorum is fifty members.
 - (a) Deaconesses, Licentiates, Presbytery representatives of Presbyterian Women and youth, representatives of SPUD and some others are invited to “sit and deliberate” as associates – i.e., to take part with members freely in debate but without voting. Kirk Sessions have been given permission to name an additional elder who may sit and deliberate when the representative elder is not able to attend.
 - (b) While members should bear in mind any opinions or concerns of their Congregations, Kirk Sessions or Presbyteries, neither ministers nor elders attend as “delegates”, obliged to vote as instructed by any of these. The Assembly should be a gathering of fully responsible, free Christian men and women, always open to spiritual guidance and information on a Church-wide basis, not a device for counting up decisions already made elsewhere.

2. **The Moderator** is chairman of the Assembly, in charge of proceedings, but should not take sides in debates. Former Moderators may deputise from time to time, should the Moderator wish to take part in debate or to withdraw from the House.
 - (a) When the Moderator rises to speak at any point all other members must yield to the Chair.
 - (b) Members should stand when the Moderator enters or leaves at the beginning or end of proceedings. Members may enter or leave at any time during proceedings, but should do so with as little disturbance as possible. It is a courtesy in so doing to give a slight bow to the Chair.
 - (c) The recommended form of address to the House is simply “Moderator” (not “Mr.” Moderator, etc). Speakers should face towards the House and the microphones, not towards the Moderator.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GENERAL COUNCIL

SECTION 1

Tuesday - 9.45 am

Convener: Very Rev Dr RL CRAIG
Secretary: THE CLERK

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. On behalf of the General Assembly, the General Council has been conducting its business through eight General Assembly Committees and ten Task Groups. Inevitably, the report of the General Council to the General Assembly is the longest of the Annual Reports; to facilitate the business of the General Assembly, the report of the General Council will be received in five sections, as outlined in the timetable of business.

2. This year, some of the major work of the General Council has fallen into two categories – internal and external.

Internal.

3. Since its inception the work of the General Council has been overshadowed by the new structures regarding the administrative function of the denomination; that is, how the Councils and offices in the Assembly Buildings serve the mission of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. To this end, the Priorities Committee has held two one-day conferences and one overnight conference at which all the Council Conveners, Secretaries and other non-aligned representatives reflected together regarding the Priorities of the General Assembly through its Councils. The five priorities, which should shape the resources of the Councils, are outlined in the report of the Priorities Committee.

4. Since 1990 the Presbyterian Church in Ireland has held four special residential Assemblies on the campus of the University of Ulster at Coleraine. Every congregation within the denomination has been invited to send three representatives to this year's residential Assembly in August where, gathered together, the theme of **Everyday Disciples** will be explored through praise, prayer, seminar and keynote address.

5. 2017 marks the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, as the Protestant denominations look back to the person of Martin Luther and the nailing of his 95 Theses on the door in Wittenburg. To mark this anniversary the Presbyterian Church in Ireland is holding three Reformation Celebrations (in Belfast, Dublin and Londonderry), as outlined in the report.

External.

6. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland, as a Reformed denomination holds the confession of one, catholic and apostolic Church. Yet the relationship

of the denomination with other Christian Churches (within Ireland, across the U.K. and the world) could appear often to be haphazard and ad hoc rather than intentional. Relationships have been formed for a variety of reasons - historical, theological, missional. At this time, as other denominations have been reflecting on their practice and policy, the General Council has established, in response to the decision of last year's General Assembly, a Task Group to consider our relationships with other denominations, so that they might be more meaningful and mutually beneficial.

7. In common with all Christian Churches in the West, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland has been coming to terms with the demise of Christendom and the reality of living in a pluralist society. One of the consequences of our changing society for the Christian Church is how to relate both to our secular society and to peoples of other faiths. This comes into sharp focus when the Church is asked to participate in civic events which have a religious dimension. Questions, regarding our witness, have to be addressed regarding participation in such events. It will take another year to bring a full report from the Doctrine Committee on this matter and, in the interim, the policy of the denomination is to continue with the current practice of participation.

8. To facilitate the ordering of business in the Assembly, the General Assembly Business Committee will report in its own right at the beginning and the end of the Assembly (9.30am on Tuesday and 12noon on Friday respectively). As at last year's Assembly, the main General Council report will be considered in five separate sections, as follows:

Section 1 (9.45am on Tuesday 6th June):

- Residential Assembly Task Group
- 500th Anniversary of the Reformation Task Group
- Historical Archiving Task Group
- Memorial Record

Section 2 (3.30pm on Wednesday 7th June):

- Priorities Committee
- Dialogue and Resources Task Group
- Moderator's Advisory Committee

Section 3 (4.30pm on Wednesday 7th June):

- Support Services Committee
- United Appeal Committee
- Charities Registration Task Group
- Use of Congregational Property Task Group
- Holding Trustees Task Group

Section 4 (3.30pm Thursday 8th June):

- Relationships with other Denominations Task Group
- Doctrine Committee
- Church Relations Committee

Section 5 (4.45pm Thursday 8th June):

- Engagement and Consultations Task Group
- Nominations Committee
- Guysmere Centre Task Group
- Ad Hoc Overtures

9. As always, this summary cannot be concluded without acknowledging the unstinting service of conveners, committee and task group members. Too many to name in person, they have given of themselves to both the Lord and His Church. In the past year, Joyce Anderson retired from the General Secretary's Department, after a lifetime of service within the Assembly Building; Susan Hamilton has replaced her and has been on a steep learning curve as she has embraced the work of the department. As the General Council records our debt to Joyce we welcome Susan on to the staff and assure her of our support and prayers.

10. As General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary, both Rev Trevor Gribben and Rev Jim Stothers have ably guided the Council through all of its business. Thanks to both of them for their time, support and wisdom.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE

INITIAL REPORT

Matters relating to the 2017 General Assembly (Tuesday morning 9.30am)

1. The General Assembly Business Committee has continued to review the work and arrangements of the General Assembly.
2. A draft Order of Business for 2017 was agreed and approved by the General Council. This includes the following:
 - (a) As last year a Friday morning has been included in the order of business.
 - (b) There will be alternative presentations on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons featuring respectively, the Council for Congregational Life and Witness, Listening to the Global Church, and the Council for Mission in Ireland. It is hoped that these alternative presentations will engage, inspire and enable the General Assembly to participate in aspects of its business in a more creative way.
 - (c) The General Council's report and business is divided into five sections over different days.
 - (d) The Arrangements Panel has appropriate matters in hand and a budget of £20,000 has been agreed for recommendation to the Assembly.
3. **The Wednesday night event** will be a prelude to the theme of the Special Assembly: *Everyday Disciples* and the Rev Vaughan Roberts will be the speaker. The Rev Rico Tice has been engaged for 2018.

4. **SPUD input to Assembly.** SPUD seek to be very much part of the Assembly; they will meet at the start of Assembly week to consider what contribution they can make to debate; are keen to provide stewarding on the Opening Night and Wednesday evening; and are planning an event at tea-time on the Wednesday themed around *Young People and the Church*.

5. **Appointment of Delegates to other Assemblies etc.** Delegates have been appointed to attend other Church Assemblies and meetings:

- Church of Ireland Synod 2017: The Very Rev Dr Ian McNie and an elder from the Dublin and Munster Presbytery.
- Methodist Conference 2017: The Very Rev Dr Frank Sellar and an elder from a Lisburn Congregation.
- Quaker Yearly Meeting 2017: The Rev Lorraine Kennedy-Richie.
- Presbyterian Church in Wales 2017: Rt Rev Dr Noble McNeely, accompanied by Mrs Florence McNeely

6. Consideration of appointments to the 2018 Church of Scotland General Assembly will this year take place as part of the report of the Relationships with other Denomination Task Group (at 3.30pm on Thursday's business). For completeness, the normal resolutions delegating power to the General Council to appoint delegates to the 2018 meetings listed in point 5 above along with the 2018 United Reformed Assembly (which meets every two years), will also this year be taken at that same point in the Assembly business.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE

SECOND REPORT

Matters relating to future General Assemblies (Friday 12 noon)

7. **Evening options for future General Assemblies.** As requested by last year's General Assembly, the Committee has undertaken further work including exploration of the viability of mid-week evening business sessions. General Assembly Business Committee Appendix 1 presents two options for decision at the 2017 General Assembly. The first option includes two evening sessions and the second three evening sessions, finishing with an Evening Celebration after the final session.

8. To produce these options the Committee considered a number of restrictions on arranging business. Among these were:

- Evening sessions should be engaging for working elders and younger people but also be proper business sessions.
- Having three full sessions in one day would be tiring, especially for those commuting long distances, so should be avoided.
- No business can be conducted before the Opening Night.
- The reception of corresponding members and delegates and the Lord's Supper should occur on the first day of business.
- There should be worship every day, but not immediately after lunch.

9. Having three evening sessions as well as the Opening Night and Evening Celebration requires meeting for a total of five evenings. Three evenings could be accommodated within a five-day General Assembly by using the last evening for business, but with the danger that people will be tired and miss it. Alternatively the Evening Celebration could be on the last night, after the Assembly has closed. Since the Evening Celebration has proportionally more people attending who have not been at business all week, it is likely to be less affected by tiredness than a business session would be and it would allow the end of the Assembly to be marked by celebration, mirroring the opening. Making use of the last evening in this way would free up enough space to remove all business from another morning.

10. **Named Additional Elders.** Last year's Assembly also asked the Committee to review the arrangements concerning representative elders and named additional elders. The arrangement last year was: *each Congregation be permitted to nominate an additional named Elder to sit and deliberate (but not vote) when the representative Elder is not available to attend* (2015 Reports p.7 and Minutes p.25).

11. Consideration was given to extending what was done last year by allowing two or more elders from the one congregation to be able to share the voting card: i.e. either, but not both, could vote. Discussion of the constitutional implications of this took place and this threw up considerable difficulties in making this extension. The Committee agreed that there be no change this year but recommends that from 2018 onwards each congregation be entitled to send one additional communicant member or ruling elder, aged 30 or under, to sit and deliberate alongside the representative elder.

REPORTS FROM OTHER CHURCH ASSEMBLIES etc

Methodist Conference 2016 Report

The Very Rev Dr J Stafford Carson reports:

1. The Irish Methodist Conference met in Portadown from 15th to 20th June, 2016. PCI was represented by Rev Principal Stafford Carson and Mr George Russell. As delegates, we were warmly received and had the opportunity to renew old friendships and to nurture current ones. Many of those who are now more senior in Methodist ministry expressed appreciation for the opportunity to be trained alongside Presbyterian students, and how the friendships formed at that stage have continued for a lifetime. The Presbyterian contribution to the Conference was significant in that Rev David Bruce led the worship and Bible study in a very thoughtful and challenging way at the start of each day of business.

2. Many of the issues which are debated in our General Assembly were reflected in the discussions and debates of the Conference. The nature of ministry, the re-structuring of the organisation of the church, the financial challenges facing the church, the need for mission and evangelism, as well as the "hot topic" of human sexuality, were all on the agenda.

3. The Methodist Church in Ireland is declining. In a recent five year period, the church membership declined by 4.3% from 15,503 full members in 2009 to 14,835 in 2014. The church leadership anticipates a continuing decline of around 2% per year. Currently there are 111 ministers in active duty and it is anticipated that 42 of these will retire in the next 10 years. The Methodist Church in Ireland needs around 7 new ministers per year to maintain its current level and, like PCI, they have had a smaller number of candidates offering themselves for ministry so that there is an anticipated shortfall of 20 ministers in the next 5 years. This represents a significant staffing shortage.

4. The Conference recognised that there are important issues that need to be addressed as a result of this decline. There is a need for significant re-structuring of circuits and it is proposed to reduce the 8 districts in Ireland to 3, with the appointment of 3 full-time District Superintendents. The Conference recognised that ministry is increasingly complex and challenging, with high levels of stress and resulting “burn out” among serving ministers. Many committed members of the church are “committed out” and there is a need to use the gifts and talents of a greater number of church members. The Methodist Church in Ireland faces significant challenges and difficult choices in terms of both human and financial resources.

5. Yet there remains within the church a great desire to see the kingdom of Christ advance. A number of speakers addressed the importance of evangelism and mission. “We used to have evangelists” said one, “but now we have pastoral workers.” Another responded by pointing out that the greatest weapon in our evangelistic armoury is pastoral visitation. Another speaker deplored the proliferation of church meetings leaving less time for outreach and evangelism.

6. The Conference also discussed a report entitled “Sexuality: Developing Good Conversation on Difficult Questions” and commended having a dialogue rather than a debate on these issues. The report clearly identified the question “How do we interpret Scripture?” as being central in this dialogue. This report was sent to district and local level for consideration and the Conference will continue to discuss this issue at future meetings.

URC General Assembly 2016

The Right Rev Dr Frank Sellar reports:

URC Assembly: Southport 8th-11th July 2016

1. The opening act of the General Assembly was most impressive. An open Bible was brought to the front as people stood and this affirmation was made “The highest authority for what we believe and do is God’s Word in the Bible, alive for his people today through the help of the Holy Spirit”.

2. 269 people from 13 Synods, half ministers, half elders, with 26 under 26 years of age, gathered to ‘represent, consult, participate and own’ the decisions of the Assembly which meets every other year. (The next Assembly is to meet in Nottingham 2018.) International and ecumenical guests were granted both full voting and speaking rights. Since most people stay in local hotels for the duration of the Assembly, attendance at all sessions was very good, enabling the theme of the church to be properly discussed and unfolded.

3. A number of interesting differences to our own General Assembly included the welcome number of black participants, the use of orange and blue voting cards, not as a 'yes' or no' but as a means of discerning the warmth or coolness of the assembly toward an issue, and the layout of the hall round tables rather than in rows, thus facilitating fellowship and interaction.

4. The URC elect not one but two Moderators (one lay, one ordained) two years in advance, and they share the chairing of Assembly and responsibilities thereafter equally. The Clerk and General Secretary are two distinct responsibilities (the Clerk being a regular minister who fulfils this role in an honorary capacity only for the duration of the Assembly) and members of Assembly were invited not to clap after speeches but only after presentation of reports.

5. One of the most moving parts of the Assembly for me was at a fringe event, when the Moderator of a Presbyterian Church in the Indian Sub-continent region highlighted the extreme dangers many of his church members face because of oppression socially, religiously and legally. His own church for example is protected by 20 armed police each Sunday. They and others like them need our prayers.

6. Matters under official discussion included the Mission Council's report 'Walking the Way-living the life of Jesus today – A fresh emphasis on making and releasing disciples within the United Reformed Church.' A memorandum of understanding was made between the URC and the Presbyterian Church of Korea. A very helpful Environmental policy for the URC was outlined and agreed. Support for a new international Nuclear Weapons ban treaty was given and the Marriage of same-sex couples was a major item on the agenda. Because of its historic polity, ('Congregational in day to day activity, Presbyterian when something is wanted!' as someone put it) the URC were at pains to point out that while the church as a whole does not express a single view on this subject, this resolution was designed to enable local congregations of the URC to marry same-sex couples if they were so wished. The resolution required a two-thirds majority to become policy, and after a tense debate gained 92% agreement, thus making the URC the first major church grouping in the British Isles to take this far-reaching step.

7. While appreciating the warm hospitality and learning much as a guest of the URC, when the Assembly Bible was ceremoniously removed at the end of the conference, following this decision on same-sex marriage, I was left wondering if the words contained in the Bible, previously affirmed as authoritative, were quite different from those I and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland know and respect, or if the United Reformed Church have sadly in effect swapped its highest authority from the Scriptures of Old and New Testaments to personal preference, ecclesiastical fudge and political correctness, resulting in having now no positively alternative message to say to secular society on this particular issue.

8. One sobering final thought though: *Could it be, Heavenly Father, that while we in PCI may not be guilty of this specific myopia, might we have different blind spots which are difficult for us to see...through failing to acknowledge how things important to us actually have become greater in our personal affections and in our congregations than the authority of your Word, causing us effectively to fail to submit to Jesus as Lord? Please grant us humility, help us discern, and thus become more obedient to You for your glory. Amen.*

Presbyterian Church of Wales General Assembly 2016

The Right Rev Dr Frank Sellar reports:

Eglwys Bresbyteraidd Cymru – Llandudno 11th-13th July 2016

1. I will long remember the splendid singing at this year's General Assembly in 'The Queen of Welsh resorts' Llandudno. Being part of the congregation was like being enveloped by a Welsh male voice choir. Worship was earnest, thoughtful and reverent. While all the business was conducted in Welsh, simultaneous translation was provided by head-sets for monoglot English speakers in a most sympathetic style.

2. The business of the Assembly was led by the Moderator Rev Dr Elwyn Richards, Minister of Berea Newydd, Bangor and on the final night Professor John Gwynfor Jones (79) was installed as his successor for the coming year. The Moderator's role can be filled by either a teaching or ruling elder. The Presbyterian Church of Wales is made up of 24,000 members, with 45 ministers serving an astonishing 620 congregations. While lay members play their part, this is a hugely stressful calling on clergy divided in multiple charges.

3. While the Assembly met in the Welsh speaking Seilo (Shiloh) church building, refreshments were served across the road in the equally large English speaking building shared between the Welsh Presbyterian Church and the United Reformed Church. Its minister, the Rev Neil Kirkham, gave a very helpful Assembly lecture on 'Leading in times of change', something hugely critical not only for Wales but also for ourselves in PCI. He posed the question "Would a business watch a decline for a century and do nothing about it"? When all is changing in society, church must be bold in relating to people in their contexts while also keeping in touch with God. We are to share Christ's vision for a renewed world and live it out with integrity, prepared to challenge culture and to reimagine a new future under his rule.

4. Items under discussion included Presbytery Visitation checklists, 'Challenges and opportunities for the churches post Brexit', and the best use and function of PCW's historic residential retreat centre 'Trefeca'.

5. Wales has a long standing relationship with the Presbyterian Church of India due to the missionary endeavours of the Rev. John Thomas Jones in 1841 and guests from India took part in the Assembly along with representatives from other Presbyterian churches in the British Isles as well as local Methodist, Independent, Roman Catholic and Baptist churches.

6. It was good to enjoy fellowship with this warm-hearted church and to pass on repeated good wishes to Professor Stephen Williams from those who held him and his father and grandfather before him in nothing but the highest regard.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE

APPENDIX 1

General Assembly Business Committee – Options for Evening Sessions

Option 1. Two evenings

- Start late on Tuesday morning at 10.30.
- Take a longer lunch on Tuesday to help cope with there being three sessions in one day.
- Move the first General Council Session to Tuesday afternoon.
- Move the council that would have an alternative presentation on Tuesday afternoon to the evening, along with its alternative presentation.
- Have no morning session on Wednesday, instead starting after lunch with business followed by worship.
- Have an evening session on Wednesday consisting of a report from a council accompanied by an alternative presentation.
- Move the Evening Celebration to Thursday evening
- This is the most that can be accommodated within a General Assembly that starts with the Opening Night on Monday and finishes with business on Friday during the day. It provides two new opportunities for working elders and younger people to be more involved in the business of Assembly.

Option 2. Three evenings

- This takes Option 1 and makes the following changes:
- Hold the Evening Celebration on Friday evening after the close of the Assembly.
- Have no morning session on Wednesday or Thursday, instead starting after lunch with business followed by worship.
- Out of the three evening sessions, have two (Tuesday and Thursday) with alternative presentations that will be interesting and engaging and one evening (Wednesday) with two council reports, maximising the amount of business in which working elders can participate.
- As Friday will now include the business from Thursday morning, lunch will be required.

This option maximises the opportunities for working elders and younger people to participate in the General Assembly.

The two timetables which follow are intended to help visualise what the 2017 General Assembly could have looked like with evening sessions. These timetables aim to keep sessions the same length and on the same days as the real 2017 timetable, but some changes to the order of sessions and occasionally to the day have been necessary to accommodate evening business and the priorities for working elders and younger people.

RA PATTON
Convener

Two evenings

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
09:30				9.30 General Council 4	9.30 Private business, Memorials, Trustees
10:00					
10:30		10.30 GABC 1, Reports of Presbyteries, Memorial Record, Reception of Delegates		10.45 Coffee	10.45 Coffee
11:00				11.15 Council for Training in Ministry	11.15 Linkage Commission
11:30		11.30 Intermission			
12:00		11.45 Worship incl. The Lord's Supper		12.15 Worship	12.00 General Council 5
12:30					
13:00		1.00 Lunch		1.00 Lunch	1.00 GABC 2
13:30					1.15 Lapsed business
14:00			1.45 General Council 3	2.00 CMI Alternative presentation	1.45 Closing worship
14:30		2.30 General Council 1			2.00 Finish
15:00			3.00 Worship	3.00 Coffee	
15:30		3.30 Coffee	3.45 Coffee	3.30 Council for Mission in Ireland	
16:00		4.00 Council for Social Witness	4.15 General Council 2	4.30 Council for Global Mission	
16:30					
17:00		5.15 Lapsed business	5.15 Lapsed business	5.45 Lapsed business	
17:30		5.30 Dinner	5.30 Dinner	6.00 Dinner	
18:00					
18:30					
19:00	7.00 Opening Night with worship	7.00 Council for Congregational Life and Witness	7.00 Council for Public Affairs		
19:30				7.45 Evening Celebration with worship	
20:00		8.00 CCLW Alternative presentation	8.00 Alternative presentation: Listening to the Global Church		
20:30	8.30 Finish				
21:00		9.00 Finish	9.00 Finish	9.15 Finish	

Three evenings

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
09:30					
10:00					10.00 Private business, Memorials, Trustees
10:30		10.30 GABC 1, Reports of Presbyteries, Memorial Record, Reception of Delegates			
11:00					11.15 Coffee
11:30		11.30 Intermission			
12:00		11.45 Worship incl. The Lord's Supper			11.45 Council for Training in Ministry
12:30					
13:00		1.00 Lunch			12.45 Lunch
13:30					
14:00			1.45 Alternative presentation: Listening to the Global Church	1.45 Council for Global Mission	2.00 General Council 5
14:30		2.30 General Council 1	2.45 Worship		
15:00				3.00 Worship	3.00 Coffee
15:30		3.30 Coffee	3.30 Coffee		3.30 Linkage Commission
16:00		4.00 Council for Social Witness	4.00 General Council 4	3.45 Coffee	4.00 GABC 2
16:30				4.15 General Council 3	4.30 Lapsed business
17:00					5.00 Closing worship
17:30		5.15 Lapsed business	5.15 Lapsed business	5.15 Lapsed business	5.15 Dinner
18:00		5.30 Dinner	5.30 Dinner	5.30 Dinner	
18:30					
19:00	7.00 Opening Night with worship	7.00 Council for Congregational Life and Witness	7.00 Council for Public Affairs	7.00 Council for Mission in Ireland	
19:30					7.45 Evening Celebration with worship
20:00		8.00 CCLW Alternative presentation		8.00 CMI Alternative presentation	
20:30	8.30 Finish		8.15 General Council 2		
21:00		9.00 Finish		9.00 Finish	
			9.15 Finish		9.15 Finish

2017 SPECIAL ASSEMBLY TASK GROUP

1. At the time of writing the Task Group organising the EVERYDAY DISCIPLES Special Assembly has met on 12 occasions, with several more meetings pending. Progress has been steady over recent months and is gathering momentum as the Special Assembly at Coleraine draws closer.

2. The Everyday Disciples Assembly Conference from 21st to 24th August 2017, is designed to provide delegates with a unique opportunity to explore the real challenges and opportunities of following Jesus today. It is planned to assist PCI to excite, equip and empower impactful disciples for everyday life.

3. Discussions are ongoing with the two keynote speakers, Ray Ortlund and Randy Pope, who will outline the general principles and themes of everyday discipleship, to help, inspire and encourage delegates in a context of worship. Ray Ortlund Jnr is Senior Pastor, Immanuel Church, Nashville and Regional Director of 'Acts 29 Movement'. Randy Pope is Lead Teacher, Perimeter Church, Atlanta and Director of 'Life on Life Ministries'. Arrangements are being made to ensure that the accommodation and transport requirements of our overseas visitors are met.

4. The Creative Production Department (CPD) has been highlighting the keynote speakers through the *Herald* and the PCI website. The Task Group appreciates the support of CPD in promoting the event.

5. Each of the morning and evening plenary sessions will be 'fronted' by a variety of colleagues, and praise will be led by members of the New Irish Orchestra and Choir.

6. The seminar programme is almost finalised at the time of writing, as follows:

- Disciples in family: **Mrs Sarah Holmes**, specialist in Christian family counselling and completing her doctorate in early childhood studies at Liverpool Hope University, (hosted by Graeme Thompson)
- Disciples who work and play: **Rev Christoph Ebbinghaus**, Kirkpatrick Memorial (hosted by Rick Hill)
- Disciples who think and engage: **Dr Paul Coulter**, lecturer at Belfast Bible College in Practical Theology, Missiology and Christian apologetics, (hosted by Mark Goudy)
- Disciples who worship : **Dr. David Montgomery**, IFES Ireland (host TBC)
- Disciples across the world : **Mr Stephen and Mrs Roz McIlwaine**, formerly missionaries in Jordan and Interserve, and members of Fitzroy congregation, (hosted by Richard Kerr)
- Disciples who really care: **Dr. Andrew Collins**, consultant psychiatrist at the Southern Health Trust and Christian counsellor, (hosted by Lachlan Webster)

7. Each seminar track will offer a foundational session (late morning, Tuesday and Wednesday) with the option of some specialised seminars offered in the late afternoons.

8. Informal, interactive 'wind-down' sessions with live music and a possible film night are being organised for each evening and a bookstall will operate during the event.

9. An 'Admin' sub-group is liaising with Ulster University, Coleraine, regarding accommodation and catering requirements, IT support, floor management logistics, budgetary issues, insurance cover, first aid etc. Several young people who have previously stewarded at MAD have agreed to assist with stewarding during the event. The Task Group appreciates the huge workload undertaken by Mr David Thomson in many of these areas.

10. **Registration booklets** have been sent to all ministers. Congregations can nominate up to three delegates (with some additional places where there are joint charges or other full time staff). **Residential fee** – £175 or €200 which includes overnight en-suite accommodation in the university and meals. **Non residential delegates** – £60 or €70. Delegates are encouraged to register either by return of post, or online through the PCI website as soon as possible. It is hoped that congregations will meet the costs of delegates attending.

11. A further information booklet is to be circulated during May to all registered delegates, and a delegate handbook will be provided during the event.

12. As arrangements are fine-tuned leading up to the event, prayers are appreciated for a good representative attendance from congregations across the island, for God to encourage and challenge all who attend and engage with the programme, and for fruitful follow-up post-event.

JOHN KIRKPATRICK and GORDON BEST, Co-Conveners

REFORMATION CELEBRATION TASK GROUP

13. Since its appointment by the General Council the Task Group has met on seven occasions to plan and prepare for the Celebration of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation.

14. The event is being held on Tuesday 17 October in Dublin [Abbey Church]; Wednesday 18 October in Londonderry [Waterside Theatre]; and Thursday, 19 October in Belfast [Assembly Buildings]. Admission to all three evenings will be free of charge.

15. The group has adopted the title '**FAITH AT THE CROSSROADS – Rediscovering the Reformation**'. Each evening will follow a similar format but will also be adjusted to take account of the particular context in which it is being held.

16. **Dr. Conrad Mbewe** will be the keynote speaker at all three evenings. Dr. Mbewe has served as pastor of Kabwata Baptist Church in Zambia since 1987. He holds a Master of Arts (MA) in Pastoral Theology and a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Missions. He is the Chancellor of the African Christian University and has spoken at numerous conferences in both northern and southern hemispheres. His preaching ministry has led to him being described as 'the Spurgeon of Africa.' In August of last year he spoke at the opening meeting of the Bangor Worldwide Convention which was held in the Assembly Hall and chaired by the Moderator, Rt. Rev. Dr. Frank Sellar.

17. The group has engaged members of **New Irish Arts**, directed by Jonathan Rea, to lead the praise at all three venues. They have also invited Jonathan to rework/rearrange one of Martin Luther's hymns in order to make

it accessible to a wider audience. This will form part of the celebration and will subsequently be available to choirs and congregations. The evening will also include short video extracts from a BBC film made several years ago depicting the life of Martin Luther and a roundtable discussion exploring the relevance of the Reformation for today. Rev. Chris Kennedy will lead each evening and link the various parts together.

18. Arthur J Gallagher have kindly agreed to sponsor a printed programme which will include a number of 'take home' ideas with information on resources which can be used by families and congregations to learn more about the Reformation and its significance.

19. The group has also been working closely with PCI's Creative Production Department to promote and publicise the celebration over the next six months with articles in the *Herald*, promotional videos and other web-based media. There will also be opportunities to publicise the event at the General Assembly in Belfast and the Special Assembly in Coleraine.

20. The group hopes to have the bulk of its work done before the summer and then to make the event as widely known as possible throughout the church and the wider community.

21. It is our hope and prayer that FAITH AT THE CROSSROADS will inform, inspire and enthuse and will be a fitting celebration of the doctrines of grace which, as heirs of the Reformation, we gladly affirm and joyfully proclaim.

DAVID JOHNSTON, Convener

HISTORICAL ARCHIVING TASK GROUP

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

23. Strong Room - Further progress has been made on transferring appropriate material from the Strong Room on the ground floor of Assembly Buildings to the care of the Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland (PHSI). All the boxes belonging to congregations which have given permission have been opened and appropriate contents transferred to the care of the PHSI, along with Education Board minutes. It is intended to transfer copies of 'The Witness' newspaper soon.

24. Board and Committee records – Old Board and Committee minutes and other records are stored in various rooms on the first floor of Assembly Buildings in a haphazard and uncatalogued manner which means that it very difficult to find this material when necessary. Each department in Assembly Buildings has been asked to review this material with a view to identifying relevant Board and Committee minutes and other material that ought to be retained. This material will then be stored and recorded in such a way as to facilitate future reference.

25. Advice for Presbyteries – Advice has been drawn up and distributed to Clerks of Presbytery on the archiving of material.

JIM STOTHERS, Convener

MEMORIAL RECORD

The Rev George McKinney Eagleson, BA, BD, DMin, Minister Emeritus, First Donaghadee, died on 28th May 2016, in the eighty-ninth year of his age and the sixty-first year of his ministry. He was born at Belfast on 6th May 1928, one of four children (two boys and two girls) to William James Eagleson, a plant attendant, and his wife, Mary Anne McKinney. The family belonged to the congregation of Donegall Pass. Dr Eagleson attended McClure Street Primary School, Ormeau Road, and Botanic Gardens Primary School. On leaving school, at age fifteen, he worked for four years as a Junior Clerk with the Belfast and County Down Railway, and, for a year, as a Meteorological Assistant with the Air Ministry. With the tutelage of his minister, the Rev J J Mulligan, he prepared for further study at Trinity College, Dublin, graduating BA in 1951, and, later, in 1962, he graduated BD from the University of London. He was licensed by the Presbytery of Belfast on 30th May 1954, and served his assistantship in the congregation of Knock with the minister, the Rev R C Elliott. He was ordained and installed in the congregations of Cavanaleck and Aughtaine on 28th March 1956 by the Clogher Presbytery. In 1962 he moved to Strean, Newtownards, where he was installed on 15th February of that year. This was a time of population growth and extensive housing development in the town, so, to cater for the spiritual welfare of the people of the West Winds housing estate, Scrabo Church Extension congregation was established, opening in February 1972 under the care of Dr Eagleson, since the area lay within the parish boundaries of Strean. During his ministry, a new suite of halls was built at Strean, much of it with voluntary labour, and these were opened on 1st May 1975. New road development necessitated the demolition of the 'Brooklands' manse, and a new manse was erected on the glebe ground. After a ministry of twenty two years in Strean and twelve in Scrabo, he was installed in the congregation of First Donaghadee on 12th December 1984 from which he retired on 10th May 1993. Before retiring he researched and published a history of the congregation in 1992, in time for the celebration of the three hundred and fiftieth anniversary of its founding. His thirst for knowledge, and commitment to life-long learning, led him to study for, and qualify as, a Doctor of Ministry. In the wider Church, he served as Moderator of the Synod of Armagh and Down, 1968, as Convener of the Union Commission, 1969-1978, and of the Appointments to Boards Committee, 1981-1984. In all of these spheres Dr Eagleson evidenced diligence, grasp of detail and humanity, ever conscious of the honour of the Lord whom he served. Dr Eagleson married his wife, Helen McLaren Hutchison, on 7th September 1954, who proved to be a constant helpmeet and companion over the years, playing her part in congregational life and witness, despite struggling with health problems in later years. She died in 2006. Dr and Mrs Eagleson leave behind three children, Rosemary, Colin and Heather, to whom, along with Dr Eagleson's remaining sibling, Eric, and the wider family circle, we extend our sympathy, giving thanks to God for the faith, witness and service of our brother, to Christ and His Church.

The Rev Barbara Ann McDonald, BEd, DipTh, Minister Emeritus, Caledon and Minterburn, died on 29th May 2016, in the sixty-seventh year of her age and the twenty-sixth year of her ministry. She was born at Belfast, on 23rd July 1949, the second of three daughters, to William James Kennedy,

pharmacist, and his wife Marion, née Murphy. The family were members of the Church of Ireland. Mrs McDonald attended Orangefield Primary School, and Strathearn Grammar School (1961-1968) where she was made Head Girl. Deciding on a career in education, she trained at Stranmillis Teacher Training College, 1979-1981, and taught in Sydenham Infant School, Belfast, for fifteen years. By this time, she and her sister, Maureen, had joined Bangor West Presbyterian congregation, where they were both actively engaged in the life and fellowship of the church, and their giftedness was recognised in their election and ordination as elders, in 1979 and 1983 respectively. Some years later, Mrs McDonald felt called to the ordained ministry, and pursued theological study at the Union Theological College, Belfast. She was licensed on 24th June 1990 by the Presbytery of Ards, and served as Assistant to the Rev Albert Sleith, Cregagh congregation, Belfast, where she was ordained to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament on 27th January 1991. In 1993 she was called to the linked charge of Caledon and Minterburn and installed as Minister on 19th March 1993. Her lively, warm, outgoing personality commended her to the people and a wide circle of friends, and her deep Christian faith and soul-care blessed the lives of those around her. She settled happily to ministry in this rural area and found personal happiness in her marriage to Robert McDonald, a local farmer, on 15th July 1996. Mrs McDonald retired on 31st August 2010. Sadly, she developed an aggressive form of cancer against which she fought bravely, but succumbed to the illness. Mrs McDonald did so in faith, believing in Him who was with her in this life and had prepared a place for her in the life of the eternity which He has promised. We give thanks for her ministry and commend her husband, Robert, sisters, Maureen and Jean, and wider family circle, to the care and comfort of Almighty God.

The Rev Edward Thompson Conn, BA, Minister Emeritus Second Donegore, died on 11th August 2016, in the ninety-first year of his age and the sixty-first year of his ministry. He was born at Belfast on 27th February 1926, the second of two sons, to David Thompson Conn, a grocer and fruiterer, and his wife, Martha Ann. The family were members of Mountpottinger congregation, East Belfast. Mr Conn attended Belfast High School, 1939-1944, where he enjoyed rugby, cricket and badminton. On leaving school he worked as a Clerk in the Shipping Office of the Ulster Weaving Company Ltd. Obeying the call of God to train for the Christian ministry he undertook further study and entered Magee University College, Londonderry, in 1948, and graduated BA from Trinity College, Dublin, in 1953. He completed his course in theology at the Assembly's College, Belfast, and was licensed by the Presbytery of Belfast on 2nd June 1955, serving as Assistant to the Rev James Andrew McQuitty, Minister of Dundonald congregation. He was called to the joint charge of Maguiresbridge and Lisnaskea, where he was ordained by the Presbytery of Clogher on 27th June 1956. He moved to the congregation of Second Donegore in 1965 where he was installed by the Presbytery of Templepatrick on 24th February. Mr Conn was an assiduous pastor to his people and held in great affection by them. Born with a hearing defect, and a cleft palate which required several corrective surgeries, and his experience of loss in the passing of his older brother, David Alexander, in his nineteenth year, through leukaemia, were setbacks which equipped him with a depth of understanding and empathy in his ministry to others. His pastoral gifts

were utilised in wider ministry as Convener of the Templepatrick Presbytery's Divine Healing ministry, through which many others in the wider area came to know and to appreciate his prayerful Christian compassion and humanity. He served as Presbyterian Chaplain to Holywell Hospital, Antrim, from 1968-1991. He was elected Moderator of the Synod of Ballymena and Coleraine for the year 1989-90, and served on the Board of Education of the General Assembly. He married Maud Stewart, a nurse in the Belfast City Hospital, on 3rd April 1967, and they had four children. Mrs Conn was a constant support to her husband in his ministry, but, sadly, in later years was invalided by a stroke. Mr Conn cared for his wife with exemplary dedication until her death on 18th February 2003. Through the years, Mr Conn kept up his interest in sport and enjoyed gardening, current affairs and politics. He retired on 30th September 1991 and settled at Donaghadee. We extend our prayerful sympathy to Mr Conn's children, Joan, Liz, David and Andrew and the wider family circle, in the assurance of faith that '...to live is Christ and to die is gain.' (Philippians 1:21)

The Rev John Douglas Mark, BA, MA, BD, Minister without Charge, died on 19th September 2016, in the sixty-eighth year of his age, having served in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland for almost twenty-eight of those years. He was born at Armagh on 20th May 1948, one of three children, two boys and a girl, to the Rev John Mark, minister of First Keady, and his wife Elizabeth, née McCarter. He was educated at Keady Primary School, 1952-1959, and the Royal School, Armagh, 1959-1967. Convinced of a call to the ordained ministry, he studied at Trinity College, Dublin, 1967-1971, graduating MA, and proceeded to New College, Edinburgh, to study theology, 1971-1974, from which he graduated with a BD. Returning home, he completed his studies at the Assembly's College, Belfast, and he was licensed on 15th June 1975 by the Presbytery of Armagh, and assigned as Assistant to the Rev James McAllister, minister of Megain Memorial, Belfast, where he was ordained on 4th January 1976 by the Presbytery of East Belfast. His first charge was the congregation of First Killyleagh where he was installed on 10th March 1978 by the Presbytery of Down and served until 31st October 1981, when he left to go to the United States of America, to join a collegiate ministry at Raeford, North Carolina. He returned in 1986, to the charge of Ballyhenry congregation, Belfast, where he was installed on 30th May 1986 by the Presbytery of North Belfast. He ministered there until he resigned on 31st August 1996, to take up a post with *Open Doors* international ministry serving persecuted Christians and churches. In all of his work and witness Mr Mark exhibited a deep love for Christ and His Word, with a focus on preaching the Gospel and making disciples in fulfilment of the Lord's Great Commission. He cared for people, young and old alike, initiating a pastoral care ministry while in Ballyhenry. Mr Mark was married to Alison, née Black, on 6th July 1974. They had six children, Jonathan, Catherine, Olwyn, Andrew, Ruth and Peter, to whom, along with his brother, Jim, sister Pamela, and wider family circle, we extend our sympathy and prayers, giving thanks to God for the life and ministry of our brother.

The Rev John Terence McCullough, BA, Minister Emeritus, Toberdoney and Croaghmore, died on 25th September 2016, in the eighty-second year of his age and the fifty-second year of his ministry. He was born at Belfast on

10th September 1935, the middle child of a family of three boys and two girls (Stewart, Ruth, John, Brian and June) to John McCullough, a clerk, and his wife, Jean Caroline, née Colgan. He was raised in the family church of Oldpark, and, through the influence of a Sunday School teacher and his membership of the Life Boy section of the Boys' Brigade, he gave his life to Christ while attending Portstewart CSSM at the age of eight. He attended Carr's Glen Primary School followed by the Royal Belfast Academical Institution. On leaving school he went to Technical College and Art College for two years, intending to pursue a career in architecture. However, responding to the call of God to the ordained ministry, he was received by the General Assembly in 1957 as a student for the ministry and proceeded to study at Magee University College, Londonderry, and Trinity College, Dublin, graduating BA, in 1961. This was followed by theological study at the Assembly's College, Belfast. He was licensed on 18th October 1964 by the Presbytery of North Belfast and assigned as assistant to the Rev James Sheppard Woods, Whiteabbey, and ordained there on 12th May 1965 by the Presbytery of North Belfast. He was called by the congregation of Mosside and installed there on 24th August 1967 by the Presbytery of Route. His ministry was gospel-centred, presenting the claims and challenge of Jesus as Lord and Saviour especially to young people in the Crow's Nest fellowship. In the wider community he established a good relationship with the Moycraig Young Farmers Club. After six faithful years, he moved to the congregation of Strand, Belfast, where he was installed on 18th January 1973, by the Presbytery of East Belfast, where, with characteristic grace, he led his people through a period of renewal and change, including renovations to the church building and grounds in preparation for the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the congregation in March of that year. Four years later he moved to the congregation of Ballee, where he was installed on 23rd June 1977 by the Presbytery of Ballymena. He gave himself energetically to the building up of this church extension charge, culminating in the granting of full congregational status in 1986. In that year he moved to the united charge of Toberdoney and Croaghmore where he was installed on 27th March 1986 by the Presbytery of Route. Mr McCullough's gifts were called on more widely throughout these years. He served as Moderator of the Presbytery of Route 1970-1971, and as Convener of Live Wires, the General Assembly's church extension programme. For ten years he led the Portstewart CSSM. He also conducted coffee bar missions, and adult missions up and down the country. In these ways he strongly influenced young lives for Christ who have gone on to render Christian service in myriad ways. His year at Art College found fruit in his illustrations in many pieces of literature to which he was asked to contribute. He married Morag Wordrop Wilson Kerr of Hamilton, Lanarkshire, on 14th October 1961, whom he first met at a BB camp in Ayr in his teens, and who fully supported him in his ministry over the years, predeceasing him in 2010. They had three children, Martin, Morag Jean, and Moreen. To them, and Mr McCullough's surviving sister, June, we convey our sincere sympathy, and record our tribute to the life and witness of our brother who believed in giving only the best to the Saviour who gave his best for him.

The Rev Robert Nelson Stewart, BA, BD, Minister without charge, died on 12th November 2016, in the eighty-eighth year of his age. He was born at Belfast on 26th July 1929, the eldest of two children, (a sister Margaret) to James

Stewart, a Clerk, and his wife, Mary, née Nelson. The family were members of Bloomfield congregation, and Mr Stewart was educated at Strandtown Primary School, and Sullivan Upper Grammar School, Holywood. He studied Philosophy at the Queens University, Belfast, from 1947 to 1951, graduating BA, and, convinced of a call to the ordained ministry, he attended the Assembly's College, Belfast, from 1950, graduating BD in 1953. Assistantships in High Street, Antrim, and Strand, Belfast, gave him practical experience of ministry, and he was licensed by the Belfast Presbytery on 29th May 1953. On 26th June 1953, he married Georgina May Jardine, and they had two children, Peter, (now deceased) and Alison. Having a heart for overseas ministry, he was ordained by the Presbytery of Belfast on 20th September 1953, as a missionary to India, under the Foreign Missions Board of the Presbyterian Church. In November, he and his wife sailed for the State of Gujarat, in north-west India, to spend two years in language study at Parantij, before ministering to the congregation there, as well as to the people at Himmatnagar, to the north east. In 1956, he moved east, to the city of Serampore in the State of West Bengal, north of Calcutta, and ministered there until early 1959. Returning home in May 1959, he was called by the united congregations of Knowhead, Fahan, and Inch, and installed by the Presbytery of Derry on 11th June of that year. Having a particular interest in religious education, he applied successfully for the post of Senior Lecturer in the subject, at Stranmillis College, Belfast, and resigned his charge on 31st August 1961. Three years later he returned to his former congregations and was installed on 28th May 1964. After another four years, he was appointed as Sabbath School Organiser of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, and, on demitting charge of his congregations, he was installed in the post on 3rd September 1968. In addition to his congregational work, for some years, from 1962, he acted as a Chaplain to the Territorial Army. Mr Stewart resigned as Sabbath School Organiser in September 1971 and took up an appointment in the state education sector. We give thanks to God for our colleague's varied ministry at home and abroad and assure his wife, Georgina, daughter Alison, and wider family circle, of our prayers for them in their bereavement.

The Rev David Clarke Caskie BA, MA, Minister Emeritus, Dun Laoghaire, died on 10th November 2016 in the eighty-third year of his age and the forty-seventh year of his ministry. He was born at Limavady on 5th June 1934 to Robert Caskie, a Farmer, and his wife, Anna, née Gray, the youngest of five brothers, James, Glenn, Earnie and Tom. The family attended Derramore congregation, Limavady, where Mr Caskie was fully involved, in later years becoming a teacher in the Sunday School. He was educated at Killybreaday Primary School and Limavady Grammar School. On leaving school he worked in his brother Tom's drapery shop in Limavady. He married Mabel Cochrane who also belonged to Derramore, on 13th January 1962, and they had four children, Paul, Robert, Siobhan and Aisling. Responding to the call of God to the ordained ministry he successfully applied to be received as a student by the General Assembly in 1960 and studied at Magee College, Londonderry, and Trinity College, Dublin, graduating BA in 1964. This was followed by theological study at New College, Edinburgh, finishing at the Assembly's College, Belfast, 1968-1969 and culminating in his licensing in Derramore 1st June 1969 by the Presbytery of Limavady. He was assigned as Assistant to the Very Rev Dr

Alfred Martin, minister of Lowe Memorial, Finaghy, where he was ordained 28th December 1969 by the Presbytery of Belfast South. In 1972 he received a call to the congregation of Kingstown (which became known as Dun Laoghaire after the General Assembly of June 1973) where he was installed on 12th May 1972 by the Presbytery of Dublin and Munster. Here he was to remain for his entire ministry. His love for Christ as Lord inspired his own love for people and his belief in the church as a loving Christian community. A warm-hearted pastor he and Mrs Caskie operated an open-door policy at the manse and gave help and support to many, both spiritual and practical. Mr Caskie retired on 17th May 2000 to the family home, 'Mullane', Limavady. He enjoyed music, singing, reading and gardening. We extend our sympathy to Mrs Caskie, and the wider family circle looking to the Lord through whom is the assurance of eternal life in the place of many mansions.

The Rev William James Brown, BA, BD, Minister without Charge, died on 31st December 2016 in the eighty-ninth year of his age. He was born at Dunseverick, Bushmills, on 1st of April 1928, one of two children to William James Brown, a farmer, and his wife, Margaret, née McCurdy. The family were members of Bushmills congregation and Mr Brown attended Dunseverick Primary School, and then Bushmills Grammar School. He worked for a time on his father's farm, but, feeling called to the ordained ministry, he attended Magee College, Londonderry, followed by Trinity College, Dublin, 1955-1959, graduating with a BA. He studied theology at the Assembly's College, Belfast, 1959-1961, graduating BD. He was licensed by the Presbytery of Route on 4th June 1961, and served his assistantship under the Rev Samuel Eaton, minister of McQuiston Memorial, Belfast, who, previously, had been minister of Bushmills 1950-1959. He also taught part-time at the College of Technology, Belfast. Two years later, he was called to be minister of the church extension charge of Craigie Hill, Larne, and was ordained and installed there on 23rd May 1963 by the Presbytery of Carrickfergus. During his ministry, the charge was erected to full congregational status in January 1965, the manse was built, and a church hall was opened in 1967. Mr Brown resigned from the charge on 30th September 1968 to take up a post in Religious Education, and moved to live in Holywood. Mr Brown married Phyllis Margaret Freeborn, née Harron, on 4th July 1961. They had two children, Roger and Alistair. To them, Mr Brown's sister, Jean, and the wider family circle, we extend our sympathy and prayers and give thanks for the ministry of their loved one.

The Rev John Hume, BA, Minister Emeritus, Dunluce, died on 22nd January 2017, in the ninety-second year of his age and the sixty-fifth year of his ministry. He was born at Gracefield, Ballymaguigan, County Londonderry, on 13th May 1925, only child of William Hume, a carpenter, and his wife Mary, née Gilmour. The family moved to live in Belfast, where they became members of Westbourne congregation in the east of the city. Mr Hume was educated at Mountpottinger Primary School, followed by Methodist College. He went on to study at Magee University College, Londonderry, and graduated BA from Trinity College, Dublin, in 1948. Responding to a sense of call to the ordained ministry he studied theology at New College, Edinburgh, and the Assembly's College, Belfast, 1949-1950. He was licensed by the Presbytery of Belfast on 26th May

1950, and served his assistantship with the Rev Eric Moses Borland in the congregation of Hamilton Road, Bangor. He was ordained in his first charge of Donagheady on 13th March 1952, by the Presbytery of Glendermott. After twelve happy and fruitful years there, he accepted a call to Dunluce and was installed on 17th September 1964, by the Presbytery of Route, where he ministered for nearly twenty-seven years until his retirement on 31st March 1991. Mr Hume assiduously fulfilled the traditional calling and duties of a Christian minister, visiting his people regularly, preaching the whole counsel of God, and providing pastoral care to young and old alike, with compassion and good humour, and playing his part in community life. Off duty, Mr Hume enjoyed playing golf and was interested in photography. For most of his ministry he was assisted and supported by his wife, Frances Olivia Waddell from Seskinore, Omagh, whom he married on 2nd August 1957, and who made her own considerable contribution to congregational life and work. They had four children, Mark, Jamie, Christopher and Lindy. We give thanks to God for our brother's long ministry and we offer our condolences and prayers to Mrs Hume and her family, as they mourn the loss of their loved one.

The Very Rev William Magee Craig, BA, MA, BD, DD, Minister Emeritus, First Portadown, died on 10th February 2017 in the ninety-ninth year of his age and the seventy-second year of his ministry. He was born at Comber on 1st August 1918, to Samuel Craig, a builder, and his wife, Margaret, née Magee. His father died of a fall from a ladder when William was only six weeks old, after which his mother returned to her family home at Carrickmannon, Ballygowan, to live with her brother and three sisters. Dr Craig was raised in the congregation of Ballygowan and educated at Carrickmannon Primary School and the Royal Belfast Academical Institution, 1931-1937. He went to Queen's University, Belfast, in 1937, to study Classics with the prospect of becoming a teacher, but, following personal conversion to Christ as Lord and Saviour, he decided to study for the ministry. He completed his studies in classics, graduating BA in 1941 and went on to the Assembly's College, Belfast, to read theology, graduating BD in 1944. He was licensed by the Presbytery of Comber on 21st May 1944 and assigned assistant to Dr William Corkey, minister of Windsor, Belfast. He was called by the congregation of Ebrington, Londonderry, where he was ordained on 22nd March 1945, and, the following year, he married Maud Macrory in Newtownards on 1st May 1946. Hearing good reports of his ministry, the, then vacant congregation of First Portadown made out a call, and, after a short delay, due to the birth of his daughter, Olive, he was installed as minister on 18th March 1948 by the Presbytery of Armagh. Dr Craig was a noted evangelical preacher and teacher, applying his classical studies and love for New Testament Greek to open the Scripture text Sunday by Sunday to his people with power in presentation and graciousness of spirit. The congregation grew numerically and spiritually as many responded to the preacher's winsome invitation to trust in Christ as Saviour and Lord. He accepted many invitations to preach and to conduct evangelistic missions far and near, though careful not to neglect his first responsibility to his own people. Many of his hearers can trace the beginning of their walk with Christ through hearing Dr Craig proclaim the Master's 'unsearchable riches'. Similarly, many can testify to his encouragement and support to study for the ministry and to take up missionary service. During his ministry no less than fourteen members of First Portadown

served shorter or longer periods as missionaries in many parts of the world. During the later 1970s controversy grew concerning the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's membership of the World Council of Churches (WCC), in particular about the political involvement of some of its agencies committed to 'liberation' theology. The murder of six Elim Pentecostal missionaries in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), some of whom were from Northern Ireland, touched a raw nerve at a time of political violence and controversy in the Province. As a member of the Campaign for Complete Withdrawal from the WCC, with others, Dr Craig spoke in the Assembly in support of the campaign, which led to the suspension of our Church's membership of the WCC in 1978 and withdrawal in 1980. He was Moderator of the Presbytery of Armagh 1976-1977 and Moderator of the Synod of Armagh and Down twice, in 1956 and 1969. In 1979 he was elected Moderator of the General Assembly and was awarded a DD by the Presbyterian Theological Faculty, Ireland. Dr Craig shared the commitment of others in the wider evangelical community to present believers mature in Christ, and, so became an ardent supporter of the Portstewart Convention held each June in a large marquee in the seaside town. He attended all the meetings of the convention annually and was a valued member of the Committee which he first joined in 1950, becoming Chairman in 1976 and serving until 1991. He was one of the speakers in 1971, 1974, and 1980, and a guest preacher at the Keswick Convention, Cumbria, in 1970 and 1973. Dr Craig retired on 31st December 1983. In retirement he completed his MA studies and graduated in 1987. He survived his daughter, Olive, and his wife, Maud, who predeceased him. We give thanks to God for our brother who has fought '...the good fight of the faith...' who is now '...absent from the body but present with the Lord,' and we extend our sympathy and prayers to his son Brian, son-in-law William, and the wider family circle.

The Rev Robert William Wylie (Bill) Clarke, BA, MA, Minister Emeritus, Trinity, Omagh, and Gillygooley, died on 12th February 2017, in the ninety-third year of his age and the sixty-eighth year of his ministry. He was born at Dunmaurice, Ballybay, County Monaghan, on 18th October 1924, the youngest of three children, (a brother Tom and a sister Nancy) to Robert William Clarke, a jeweller and clock maker, and his wife, Margaret, née Johnston. Robert, senior, was a well-known player of the bagpipes and of the uilleann pipes. The family belonged to Second Ballybay congregation, and Mr Clarke was educated at Hall Street National School, Ballybay, and, following the death of his father when he was nine, at the Masonic School, Dublin, 1936-1941. He studied English and French at Trinity College, Dublin, 1941-1945, graduating BA. Convinced of a call to the ministry, he studied theology at Edinburgh University, 1945-1947, taking his final year at the Assembly's College, Belfast, and was licensed by the Presbytery of Monaghan on 6th May 1948. He served his assistantship in McQuiston Memorial, Belfast, with the Rev Dr John Brooks McIlroy. During his time there, he met Alice Elizabeth McKee whom he married. They had a son, Liam, who became a well-known and successful journalist. In 1949 Mr Clarke was called to the congregation of Dundalk (united with Castlebellingham in 1926) with Carlingford, where he was installed by the Presbytery of Monaghan on 13th October 1949 as minister. He moved to Omagh in 1971 and was installed on 12th May, by the Presbytery of Omagh, in the congregation of Trinity, Omagh, which had been united with the congregation of Gillygooley on 1st October the previous

year. In the years following, a new organ was installed, and Mr Clarke oversaw the building of an extension to the church hall. During these years, Omagh and district were caught up in the division and violence of the Troubles which affected Northern Ireland as a whole. Mr Clarke played his part in promoting good community relations becoming involved in inter-denominational work, while also serving as a Chaplain at Lisanelly army camp. He was a member of several school Boards of governors, and of the Western Education and Library Board. In the Presbytery he was involved with the Ministry of Prayer for the Sick, bringing a pastoral and prayerful ministry to the lives of many who were burdened. From 1977 to 1978 he served as Moderator of the Synod of Derry and Omagh. Both his wife and son predeceased him. He retired on 30th April 1992. We extend our sympathy to his daughter-in-law Kathryn and wider family circle.

The Rev David Selwoode Graham, MBE, BA, DipEd, BD, MA, Minister Emeritus, First Magherafelt, died on 22nd February 2017, in the seventy-ninth year of his age, and the fifty-first year of his ministry. He was born at Belfast on 9th April 1938, the younger of two brothers, to David Graham, a cashier, and his wife, Emily Alice, née May. The family were members of May Street congregation. He was educated at Rosetta Primary School, and Annadale Grammar School, 1950-1956. He continued his education at the Queen's University, Belfast, graduating BA in 1959, when he returned to Annadale Grammar to teach French and German. He undertook further academic study, qualifying with a DipEd, in 1962. Responding to the call of God to the Christian ministry he entered the Assembly's College, Belfast, in 1963 to study for the ministry, finishing in 1966 with a BD. Mr Graham was licensed by the Presbytery of East Belfast on 5th June 1966 and assigned as Assistant to the Rev Dr John F Park, minister of Stormont congregation, where he was ordained on 11th December 1966. Shortly after his licensing, he married Joyce Rosemary Arlow, on 5th July 1966, and they had three children, Nicholas, Timothy, and Louise. A few years later, in 1970, he received a call from the congregation of First Magherafelt and was installed on 8th September 1970 by the Presbytery of Tyrone. There he remained until retirement, sharing his faith, preaching Christ, and exercising a compassionate ministry of pastoral care to his people as also to patients in the Mid-Ulster Hospital where he was a part-time chaplain. Mr Graham loved the Presbyterian Church and was extensively involved in the wider work of the Church. He was Convener of the Manpower Committee, 1973-1980; Moderator of the Synod of Derry and Omagh, 1978; Co-convener of the Central Ministry Fund, 1980-1983; Convener of the Union Commission, 1983-1990; Convener of the Church House and Assembly Hall Committee, 1994-1996; Convener of the Assembly Buildings Committee 1996-1997; Convener of the Board of Ministry and Pensions 1997-2003. In the wider community he sought to promote good relations across the religious and political divide, and he gave committed service as a member of the Board of Governors of the Rainey Endowed School, of which he became Chairman, as also of the North Eastern Education and Library Board, which he later served as Chairman. In 2007 he was awarded an MBE in recognition of his services to education. We give thanks for the witness and service of our brother so willingly given to Christ and His Church, and commend his wife, Rosemary, and their children, brother Derek, and wider family circle, to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the prayers of God's people.

GENERAL COUNCIL

SECTION 2

Wednesday - 3.30pm

PRIORITIES COMMITTEE

1. As reported to the 2016 General Assembly, the Priorities Committee had drawn up a programme of work, for the period June – December 2016, to enable the Committee to fulfil its remit to assist the General Assembly in the prioritising of its work.

2. The Priorities Committee is made up of the Conveners and Secretaries of the General Assembly's Councils, along with a number of 'non-aligned' Ministers and elders of the Church. Facilitated by Mr Maurice McNicholl (an Elder in Cullnady congregation), the Committee held a day-long meeting in June 2016, along with a two-day overnight meeting in October 2016, a further day-long meeting November 2016 and a 'normal' meeting in early February 2017.

3. Through this series of meetings members of the Committee have sought to listen to one another and to the Lord, seeking together to discern the priorities for the work of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland at General Assembly level, as delivered through its Councils, Committees and Panels. This has meant a significant commitment both by the members of Committee and by their facilitator and has produced the recommended priorities outlined in Priorities Appendix 1, set in the context of the remits of the General Assembly Councils, as outlined in the Code Pars 272-279.

4. These priorities were approved by the General Council at its meeting in March 2017, and are now presented to the 2017 General Assembly for consideration. If adopted by the Assembly, they are intended to shape the direction of travel of the Assembly's Councils over the next number of years. Some of the priorities will directly relate to a particular Council, based on the remits the General Assembly has given to its individual Councils as outlined in the Code. Other priorities will, however, have a direct relevance to more than one Council. In all of this, both the Priorities Committee, and more directly its Priorities Reference Panel, will continue to have an ongoing active role, as well as a watching brief, in the outworking of this process. Ultimately United Appeal allocations should reflect the General Assembly's priorities, balanced of course by the underlying requirement to deliver the remits also set by the General Assembly.

APPENDIX 1

THE PRIORITIES FOR THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND ITS COUNCILS

Introduction

The Committee identifies the following five priorities for the work of the General Assembly and its Councils, in the delivery of their remits.

These priorities statements are offered in absolute and prayerful dependence upon God who, in guiding us through his Word is our strength and life.

They are made, affirming our collective commitment to act together as a General Assembly under the guidance of God, establishing relationships of trust, and seeking to collaborate in the outworking of our mutual calling.

The Committee believes these priorities to be essential if the General Assembly is to respond effectively to Christ's call to mission and ministry in today's world, and it is convinced that the wide acceptance of these priorities will enable the General Assembly and its Councils to allocate their collective resources wisely.

1. **Leadership:** To develop effective leadership according to biblical patterns and expectations, in every sphere of the activities of the General Assembly and its Councils.
2. **Fruitfulness:** To invest in the revitalisation and fruitfulness of the Church's life and witness, in changing and challenging times.
3. **Discipleship:** To support local congregations in enabling their members to live as followers of Jesus in every relationship, everywhere they are and in every circumstance of life.
4. **Mission:** To become more fully an all-Ireland gospel-centred church, by taking opportunities to establish, nurture and resource reformed witness in areas where it is lacking.
To develop and nurture global partnerships which are consistent with the General Assembly's priorities.
5. **Community:** To engage with those from all backgrounds and beliefs, and to be active as a blessing in the community in practical caring initiatives.
To equip and support Congregations, Presbyteries and the denomination as a whole, to speak helpfully and effectively when the Church's voice needs to be heard in the public square.

TREVOR D GRIBBEN, Convener

DIALOGUE AND RESOURCES TASK GROUP

5. Since the 2016 General Assembly the Dialogue and Resources Task Group has held a series of regional workshops in November and February for ministers (in active service), full-time youth leaders and licentiates, with the

Rev Sam Allberry as the facilitator. The format of each workshop was the same, comprising a presentation by Sam Allberry, followed by round table discussion and Q&A.

6. What the Task Group found striking about all of the workshops was the tone of the debate in which they were conducted – it was pastoral, open and honest. A list of resources and a copy of Sam’s book *Is God anti-Gay?* were made available to all who attended. The overall attendance at the workshops was approximately one third of ministers. The March edition of the Presbyterian Herald carried a brief article by the Task Group Convener outlining both a description of the workshops and some of the key lessons.

7. In answer to the question “What next?” the Task Group is beginning to explore the possibility of putting together a course, similar in format to the Handling the Word Course, which could be available to Kirk Sessions who wish to be better equipped to offer pastoral support to individuals and families who are seeking to understand same-sex attraction in light of their faith in Christ. It will take the rest of the life of the Task Group to see such a project materialise.

8. In respect of transsexuality, so far the Task Group has only been able to give the issue some initial consideration and is therefore not in a position to make a substantive report. During the incoming year the Task Group, either directly, or perhaps through a more specialist sub-group, will be considering this matter.

ROBERT L CRAIG, Convener

MODERATOR’S ADVISORY COMMITTEE

9. The Moderator’s Advisory Committee met on two occasions during the year and transacted the business outlined below.

APPOINTMENT OF ASSESSORS

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

THE POSITION OF MINISTERS EMERITI (RELEASED)

11. The 2016 General Assembly decided that when a Minister Emeritus is released from the responsibilities of full membership of Presbytery (either at their own initiative or at the Presbytery’s initiative) they are also automatically released from the responsibilities of full membership of the General Assembly. The Code was also changed to reflect this position.

12. This ‘dual releasing’ was not challenged either at the General Council or at the General Assembly. However, subsequently a number of retired Ministers have queried if in fact it could be permissible for a Minister Emeritus (Released) to simply be released from the responsibilities of full membership of Presbytery but remain a full member of the General Assembly.

13. While this is logically possible, (simply requiring a further amendment to the Code, chiefly adding Minister Emeritus (Released) into the membership of the General Assembly at Par 97), it ‘has never been done before’. Full Ministerial

members of the General Assembly have always been full Ministerial members of a Presbytery. Though this is of course not the case for perhaps most full ruling elder members of the General Assembly.

14. The Committee considered if it should recommend to the General Council that this matter be revisited at the 2017 General Assembly, or should the 2016 position remain unaltered. The Committee agreed that a report should go to the next meeting of the General Council for full discussion, with the following two options before the Council:

(a) That overtures be drawn up for presentation to the 2017 General Assembly to enable Ministers Emeriti (Released) to remain full members of the General Assembly.

OR

(b) That the position regarding Ministers Emeriti (Released) should remain as agreed by the 2016 General Assembly.

15. The General Council at its meeting in October 2016 overwhelmingly adopted option (b), therefore deciding not to revisit this matter at the 2017 General Assembly.

IMPLICATIONS OF A GRANT APPLICATION FROM THE YOUTH COUNCIL OF A CONGREGATION:

16. The Clerk, the Rev Trevor Gribben reported that guidance was being sought from the a Congregation within the Presbytery of Colerain and Limavady (and from the Presbytery itself) regarding a proposed application for a significant capital grant from the Department of Education (NI). This would necessitate the setting up of a Youth Council linked to the Congregation and the leasing of Congregational property to that Youth Council, which would then be the body applying for the grant. The Clerk also reported that he had requested the General Assembly Solicitor to use his best efforts to draw up a Draft Constitution for such a Youth Council and a Draft Lease, which would both protect the interests of the Congregation and equate as far as possible to what is permitted within the law of the Church. These draft documents were tabled and considered by the Committee. During discussion it was noted that in the past a number of congregations have used a similar process, without necessarily being as thorough in seeking to protect the interest of the congregation. Following detailed discussion the following was agreed:

(a) That the Clerk will forward to the congregation the Draft Constitution and Draft Lease drawn up by the General Assembly's Solicitor and recommend to the Presbytery concerned that permission could be granted for this application.

(b) That the Clerk will instruct the General Assembly's Solicitor to look at the matter regarding necessary amendments to the Code to facilitate such grant applications and ensure necessary safeguards.

THE POSITION OF MINISTERS AND LICENTIATES WITHOUT CHARGE

17. At its meeting in September 2016, the Committee considered the position regarding the retention, or otherwise, of Ministers and Licentiate

without charge. It was noted that the Code was clear in Par 219, namely:

219(3) (a) *On accepting a full-time appointment which is not under the jurisdiction of the Assembly, a licentiate or minister without charge shall be deemed to have resigned from his position in the Church, except as hereafter provided; his resignation shall be reported by his Presbytery; and his name shall be removed from the Church's current records.*

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- (ii) *The Presbytery shall exercise its jurisdiction over such licentiates and ministers in association with the appropriate Assembly Council, as prescribed in the Code, paragraph 74.*
 - (c) (i) *Should the Presbytery see reason for his retention as a recognised licentiate or minister without charge they shall seek authorisation of this from the Council for Training in Ministry or their appropriate committee.*
 - (ii) *It shall be a condition for retention as a recognised licentiate or minister without charge that he reports regularly to Presbytery as required, not less than annually, on his life and work, especially involvement in congregational life and Church work, in preaching, administration of the sacraments and conduct of marriages.*
 - (iii) *On this basis Presbyteries shall report each year to the Assembly through the Council for Training in Ministry on the circumstances of each licentiate or minister without charge under their care and the Assembly shall be asked to resolve on the retention on the Church's current records of those who should be continued as recognised licentiates or ministers without charge.*

18. During discussion it was recognised that in some cases, at least, the correct balance is generally not being struck between Par 219(3)(a) and 219(3)(c) (i). Some Presbyteries by their practice seem in fact to be reversing the position as outlined in the Code, by normally recommending that Ministers or Licentiates without Charge are retained as such unless there are exceptional reasons not to do so. Therefore, it was agreed to clarify the matter, by presenting the following resolutions to the General Council for decision:

- a) *It is recommended that a Minister without Charge who is in a "full-time appointment which is not under the jurisdiction of the Assembly" be deemed to have resigned from his/her position in PCI unless there are exceptional reasons to act otherwise.*
- b) *It is further recommended that the Council for Training in Ministry produce:*
 - (i) additional guidance for Presbyteries on reporting annually on Ministers without Charge;
 - (ii) a pro forma to be used by Ministers without Charge to report to Presbytery;
 - (iii) an amended form to be used by Presbyteries in their annual report, making it explicit that ministers without charge will normally be removed from the record unless presbytery has an exceptional reason for them to be retained.

- (iv) similar material to that stated in i-iii concerning licentiates without charge, but that in addition it be made clear that, if any is continuing actively to seek a call, that will qualify as an exceptional reason to retain him or her.

19. The General Council, at its meeting in October 2016, adopted these recommendations and transmitted them to the Reception of Ministers and Licentiates Committee for implementation.

20. At its meeting in February 2017, the Clerk brought to the Committee the issue of Ministers without charge, this time in relation to the Memorial Record and Memorial Roll of the General Assembly. It was noted that when a minister becomes a Minister without charge, he or she has by definition resigned their charge. Up until now it has therefore not been the practice, on the death of a Minister without charge, to include their name in the General Assembly's Memorial Record or Memorial Roll. However, family members may not be aware of this. After a full discussion, it was agreed to recommend to the General Council:

- (a) That in future, the General Assembly's formal Memorial Record (and Roll) will include the names of those who die as a Minister in active service, a Minister Emeritus, a Minister Emeritus (Released), a Minister without charge, or a Minister without charge (Retired).
- (b) That in future the Clerk's Office will, when notified with confirmation that a Minister without charge or Minister without charge (Retired) has died, send an email to ministers to inform them of the fact, but that the name would not be included in the Church Record page of the Herald.

The General Council, at its meeting in March 2017, adopted these recommendations.

REQUEST FOR USE OF ASSEMBLY HALL

21. The Clerk reported that a request to use the Assembly Hall in 2018 has been received by the Masonic Order's Provincial Grand Lodge of Antrim. He referred to copies of: the letter making the request; a clarifying email; reports on Freemasonry to the General Assemblies of 1992 and 1995, all of which had been previously circulated. The events in 2018 are to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the lodge. The Committee noted resolution 2 on page 34 of the 1992 General Assembly Minutes: 'That the General Assembly in the light of the Doctrine Committee's report on the beliefs and practices of Irish Freemasonry, disapprove of communicant members of the church being involved in Freemasonry. After discussion it was agreed to advise that the request by the Provincial Grand Lodge of Antrim to use the Assembly Hall be declined.

OVERVIEW OF THE 'MODERATOR'S DIARY'

22. It was agreed that the General Council be requested to set up a Task Group to review how the Moderator's time might best be used during their year in office and at the General Council meeting in March 2017, the following Task Group was appointed (to begin work after the 2017 General Assembly and report to the General Council in autumn 2017): Moderator, Clerk (Convener); Very Rev Drs Rob Craig and Frank Sellar; Rev Drs Liz Hughes and Trevor McCormick and Rev Uel Marrs; Revs Stuart Finlay and Robert Buick.

PUBLISHING LETTERS IN THE *HERALD* RELATING TO JUDICIAL CASES

23. It was noted by the Committee that a particular issue has arisen concerning certain letters that have been submitted to the *Herald* for publication relating to judicial cases which were either before, or had been before, a court of the Church. Up to this point it has been the position that letters written by a party to a judicial case should not be published when that case was before a court of the church.

24. After discussion, it was agreed that it be confirmed that correspondence to the *Herald* concerning a judicial case, including a formal preliminary inquiry, should not be published while the matter is before a court of the church; nor should any correspondence be published in the *Herald* that challenges or directly references a particular judicial decision of a court of the church. (This would not preclude correspondence regarding issues of general principle or policy being published.) The General Council affirmed this position at its meeting in March 2017, for implementation with immediate effect.

POSSIBLE PAPAL VISIT TO IRELAND IN 2018

25. The Committee had some initial discussion regarding the likelihood that the Pope would visit Ireland in 2018. The Clerk outlined possibilities being considered by the Roman Catholic Church for elements that this visit might contain. At the moment no proposals have been firmed up and indeed no visit had been confirmed. While it was premature to adopt a position regarding, for instance, a response to an invitation to the then Moderator to meet the Pope, any such matter would be brought to the Moderator's Advisory Committee at an appropriate time.

ISSUE OF LACK OF PROVISION FOR A CORRESPONDING ELDER OPPOSITE A MINISTERS EMERITUS

26. The Committee considered a letter which had been received from the South Belfast Presbytery. This addressed the fact that there are no corresponding elders against retired ministers in the General Assembly, or in Presbytery, which the Presbytery feels leads to an imbalance between elders and ministers. After discussion and report to the General Council, the Council agreed to accept the Committee's recommendation:

- That in the light of other proposed changes under consideration regarding those in attendance at the General Assembly, that the issue raised by the South Belfast Presbytery should not be progressed, recognising that the Presbytery could bring the matter forward to a subsequent General Assembly, at its own volition.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INCOMING MODERATORS OF MOVING THE PTFI GRADUATION DATE

27. The Clerk considered a letter which had been received from the Council for Training in Ministry, indicating that from 2018, for academic reasons, the Presbyterian Theological Faculty, Ireland, intends to hold its Graduation Service at the end of June. This means that an incoming Moderator would not receive an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree before their installation, but rather a few

weeks later. After discussion and report to the General Council, the Council agreed to accept the Committee's recommendation:

- That the academic reasons for moving the time of the PTFI Graduation to late June be supported, and the implications for the timing of the conferring of an honorary DD on an incoming Moderator be noted.

ISSUE OF RETROSPECTIVE GRANTING OF MINISTER EMERITUS STATUS

28. The Clerk explained the background to this matter, which has been raised by the North Belfast Presbytery. Ministers who retire directly from a congregation gain the status of Minister Emeritus of that congregation. Some Ministers finish their ministry in a congregation before retirement through being loosed, or on health grounds. At that point they become a Minister without charge and on retirement become a Minister without charge (retired), rather than a Minister Emeritus of a congregation. Often this is after decades of service in a congregation, and within a few years of retirement. Therefore in some cases a Minister, Presbytery or Congregation may wish the status of Minister Emeritus to be conferred. It was noted that there appear to be three particular categories of Minister to whom this might apply: loosed; resigned on health grounds; resigned for other reasons. After discussion and report to the General Council, the Council agreed to accept the Committee's recommendation:

- That a Task Group be set up by the Council in the autumn of 2017 to look into this and other related matters (reporting through the General Council to the 2018 General Assembly).

TREVOR D GRIBBEN, Convener

GENERAL COUNCIL

SECTION 3

Wednesday - 4.30pm

SUPPORT SERVICES COMMITTEE

1. At the time of writing the Support Services Committee had met on two occasions. Both meetings considered reports from its Finance, Human Resources, Property and Creative Production Panels, and from its IT Task Group.

FINANCE PANEL

2. At its October meeting, the Committee discussed and agreed the recommendations of the Finance Panel for rates of assessment for 2017 (see Support Services Appendix 1) having taken into account the projected end of year accounts of the various assessment funds for 2016 and budgets for 2017. Through adjustments to various rates of assessment, the Committee was able to maintain the same overall rates of assessment for 2017 as in 2016. This was despite an increase of £100k in the assessment for the Church House Repairs Fund which is intended to compensate for the less than projected income from retail lettings in the Mall and the current overdrawn balance on the refurbishment works. The agreed allocations to the various Assessment Funds are also set out in Support Services Appendix 1, with the details of the allocations through the Incidental Fund set out in Support Services Appendix 2. The Committee also agreed that the assessment rate for the PCI Pension Fund should remain at 24% to reflect the employer's pension contribution rate.

3. In regard to stipends, the Committee agreed increases to the Sterling and Euro Basic Ministerial Minimums of 1.5% and 1.0% respectively, having taking into account the annual inflation figures in each jurisdiction and current levels of assessable income. The Basic and Appropriate Ministerial Income rates for 2017 are as set out in Support Services Appendix 3. Similar percentage increases were agreed to the levels of Family Grants and to the levels of grants from the Retired Ministers Fund, the Widows of Ministers Fund and the Prolonged Disability Fund.

4. The Committee welcomed draft guidance approved by the Finance Panel outlining the annual reporting requirements to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. These requirements will apply for the year ended 31 December 2017 and will have to be submitted by 31 October 2018. Following a briefing session in Assembly Buildings in late October 2016, to which three representatives of each Presbytery were invited, the guidance was issued to Presbyteries for onward transmission to congregations.

5. At its March meeting the Committee reviewed the year end accounts of the various assessment funds and recommended their approval to the General

Council, noting that outturns for 2016 were generally better than those projected. It considered that the position of all Funds to be satisfactory. The Committee approved recommendations on the 2017 budgets for Recharged Support Services and also confirmed that the current expenses arrangements and rates for attendance at the General Assembly, Councils and Committees. It was agreed to undertake a review of these for 2018.

6. During the year the Panel approved the application of three Ministers to the Prolonged Disability Fund. The Committee also agreed an amendment to the rules of the Fund to reduce the deferred period (i.e. the period during which no benefit is payable) from twelve to three months, subject to the approval of the General Assembly. This change reflects the situation of some Ministers who find themselves in poor health and who do not wish to burden their congregations with payments due under the Prolonged Illness Guidelines but would prefer to allow their congregations to be free to issue a new call. Also in connection with the Fund, it was agreed that the definition of a Qualified Minister should be extended to allow beneficiaries of the Prolonged Disability Fund to retain their entitlement to the former annual bonus, if otherwise eligible, on retirement – under the current rules such Ministers are not deemed to be Qualified Ministers. A resolution covering these matters is attached and the updated Rules are included in Appendix 4.

7. At its April meeting, the Panel received a comprehensive report from the Financial Secretary on the draft unaudited Report and Accounts of the General Assembly for 2016. The auditors were expected to complete their work prior to a meeting with Church officers on 12th April: to date no substantive issues had emerged and no major changes had been sought. At the time of writing, the Panel therefore expects the Auditors to confirm that they are willing to state that the Accounts give a ‘true and fair view’.

8. The draft Report and Accounts for 2016 have been prepared in accordance with relevant Accounting Standards and are in a format that should satisfy the requirements of the Charity Commission, although formally the submission of the first set of new Accounts is scheduled for the 2017 financial year. Based on a combination of the Auditors’ work to date, the report of the Financial Secretary and the analysis undertaken by the Panel, the Panel recommended the approval of the 2016 Accounts to the General Council in their capacity as Charity Trustees and their submission to the General Assembly. This was agreed by the General Council at its April meeting.

9. The Panel noted the Summary of Congregations Annual Statistical Returns collated by the Financial Secretary’s Department for inclusion in the General Assembly Reports (see Support Services Appendix 5). In regard to membership, the statistics show a continuing decline in the number of “Families” and “Persons of All Ages.” Despite this decline, figures for congregational assessable income showed an increase of 1.5% in Northern Ireland and a slight decline of 0.4% in the Republic of Ireland. The Statistics include for the first time a split between the “Number on Rolls in Sunday School and Bible Classes” and “Attending Non-Uniformed Organisations for Children” – 17,500 and 20,628 respectively. The panel also noted the Summary of Presbytery Annual Financial Returns for 2016, with, at the time of writing, information still awaited from four Presbyteries (see Support Services Appendix 6).

10. The Committee agreed that approval should be given to the pre-65 retirements of the Revs D Chapman (Second Islandmagee), B McManus (Cloughwater), S J Hanna (Glendermott), H Robinson (Downshire), and A Bill (Saintfield Road, Belfast). In the case of the Rev D Chapman and Rev S J Hanna approval was granted by the General Council as both ministers retired prior to the General Assembly. An appropriate resolution is attached. Since the last General Assembly the following were granted leave to retire at or over age 65, by their Presbyteries; Rev S J Faris (Aghada and Cork), Rev J Gibson (Kingsmill and Jerrettspass), Rev Issac Thompson (First Cookstown), Very Rev Dr D I McNie (Trinity, Ballymoney), Rev D B Knox (Lambeg, Harmony Hill), Rev K A McBride (Orangfield) and Rev S A Finlay (Annalong).

11. The Committee discussed a change to the current arrangements for the appointment of Members Nominated Trustees to the PCI Pension Scheme (2009). At present, in accordance with arrangements agreed by the General Assembly in 2010, five of the twelve Scheme Trustees are Member Nominated: three are Ministers; one is a member of staff; and one is a deaconess, Irish mission worker or missionary. In order to ensure that all five places are taken up, the Committee agreed to a proposal for flexibility in the membership so that if one of the constituencies fails to nominate a member that it may be filled by an MNT from one of the other constituencies. With the agreement of the General Council a suitable resolution is appended.

12. The Panel considered a paper from the Financial Secretary on the implications for the PCI as an employer of the planned increase in the state pension age to 66 for both men and women. The new retirement age is to be phased in over the period December 2018 to October 2020. (A further increase to 67 is planned to be introduced between 2026 and 2028, but the government has indicated its intention to review the timing of this.) In 2010 the General Assembly passed a resolution: "That the General Assembly agrees the normal pensionable retirement age be kept in line with the male State Pension Age (Northern Ireland)". With hindsight this resolution could have been better worded as it is unclear how this would impact on a member's pension accrual, if at all, after December 2010. Meanwhile members are continuing to accrue pension benefits on the basis of retirement at age 65. The Panel agreed, subject to the approval of the General Council (which was granted), to advise the Pension Trustees of the employer's wish to increase the scheme pensionable retirement age to the state retirement age of 66 by October 2020.

13. As a separate matter the Panel considered the present requirements in the Code regarding the retirement of ministers. At the Panel's request, the General Council agreed to appoint a Task Group to undertake a review of references to the retirement of ministers in the Code and bring recommendations to the Council, along with necessary Code changes, for submission to the 2018 General Assembly.

14. The Committee endorsed a proposal from its Finance Panel to recommend to the General Assembly that the merits of adopting a 31st August financial year end rather than 31st December should be explored further. A change would ensure the financial year reflects the "church year" in terms of many church activities and it would also facilitate the preparation of Trustee Reports as part of the annual reporting arrangements. It is assumed the General Assembly will continue to meet in June. The General Council accepted a proposal for a period

of consultation with a further report to the 2018 General Assembly. Any change would not come into effect before 2020. A resolution seeking approval to explore this matter further, followed by a period of consultation, is attached.

15. Finally, the summaries of the annual statistical returns from Congregations and the finances of Presbyteries for 2016 are appended in Support Services Committee Appendices 5 and 6.

HUMAN RESOURCES PANEL

16. The Committee endorsed a recommendation from the Panel at its October meeting for an increase in the sterling and euro salary scales of administrative and executive staff of 1.5% and 1.0% respectively – the same increases as in the Basic Ministerial Minimum. An overview of current staffing is outlined in Support Services Appendix 7.

17. At its March meeting the Committee noted the Panel's agreement to a proposal from the Council for Social Witness to an increase in salaries designed to maintain the current monetary differentials between CSW posts in residential homes, given the increase in the National Living Wage to £7.50 in April 2017. This increase will place further financial pressure on our residential homes.

18. Throughout the year the Committee noted that work had progressed on the development of administrative and executive level "task lists" associated with the planned introduction of a new staff appraisal system.

19. The Committee also welcomed progress in developing a Tender proposal document for HR (and Health and Safety) support services to the Church to replace the existing current contract at the appropriate time.

PROPERTY PANEL

20. Much of the work of the Property Panel during 2016/17 has concerned the implementation of the General Assembly's decisions in 2016 on the improvement of conference facilities in Assembly Buildings involving the refurbishment of the ground floor and the associated closure of the Spires Shopping Mall. The Committee welcomed progress, including the appointment of Design Teams for the Mall and for the new exhibition space in the current reception area. Planning approval has been obtained and appropriate notices have been issued to Mall tenants. At the time of writing, six contractors had been shortlisted for tendering (with a seventh in reserve), following an advertisement in local newspapers and the completion of a Pre-Qualification Quality Assessment Report. A tender report should be available in early May and the Project is currently on schedule. Meanwhile discussions are to take place with Council Secretaries over the opportunities presented by the changes to the ground floor.

21. There have been positive responses with regard to potential funding sources, especially with reference to the planned Visitors Exhibition in the Reception area and the possible provision of accommodation for the Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland. The general delay in setting a 2017-18 budget for Northern Ireland Departments and Agencies has meant that, at the time of writing, no grant aid had been committed.

22. At its April meeting, the Panel received an update from the Assembly Solicitor on compensation for tenants in the Mall. It endorsed the proposed settlement of a compensation claim from one of the longer standing tenants. It

noted that discussions were continuing with other tenants, which were unlikely to result in substantial claims. The Panel was unable to agree the Service Charge Budget for 2017, given the planned closure and changes to the Mall. Further discussions are to be held to explore the staffing and services required in the future and the associated financial implications for the Service Charge Budget. The retail units affected by the closure should all be vacated by early July 2017.

23. At its March meeting the Committee noted the Panel's review of the accounts of the Retired Ministers House Fund for 2016 and received a satisfactory update on the work of the Fund. At its April meeting the Property Panel agreed an increase in rents of 1.5% for the Retired Ministers House Fund properties, effective 1 April 2017.

24. Finally, the Committee was pleased to note a positive report on income from Assembly Buildings conference facilities and room hire, plus future bookings.

CREATIVE PRODUCTION PANEL

25. The Committee welcomed the appointment of the new Panel and its early work in devising organisational values for PCI, together with the identification of important messages for key audiences. At its March meeting the Committee endorsed new policies prepared by the Panel in respect of Press and Media and Social Media. Work is continuing on other policies, including a draft Magazine Policy.

IT TASK GROUP

26. The Committee welcomed the two reports it received from its IT Task Group. It noted that video recording and live streaming facilities had been permanently installed in the Assembly Hall and that work had been completed on a number of high priority projects. The Committee agreed at its March meeting that the time had come to replace the Task Group with an IT Panel. It agreed the remit of the Panel and the appointment of Mr Alan Meban as its Convener.

JOHN HUNTER, Convener

SUPPORT SERVICES

APPENDIX 1

2017 ASSESSMENT RATES AND ALLOCATIONS

The proposed rates of Assessment for 2017 are:

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

(Note: the above is unchanged from 2016)

It is proposed that amounts collected through the assessment system are allocated on the following percentages:

Assessment Fund	Projected Allocation for 2017 £	Projected Allocation 2017 %	Actual Allocation 2016
Central Ministry Fund	£1,800,000	41.76%	38.78%
Retired Ministers Fund	£400,000	9.28%	17.10%
Widows of Ministers Fund	£425,000	9.86%	6.84%
Prolonged Disability Fund	£25,000	0.58%	0.57%
Incidental Fund	670,000	15.55%	15.96%
Church House Repairs Fund	470,000	10.90%	8.44%
Special Assembly	25,000	0.58%	0.57%
Ministerial Development Fund	100,000	2.32%	2.28%
Sick Supply Fund	15,000	0.35%	0.34%
Students' Bursary Fund	380,000	8.82%	9.12%
TOTAL	4,310,000	100.00%	100.00%

SUPPORT SERVICES**APPENDIX 2****2017 INCIDENTAL FUND BUDGET**

PAYMENTS TO OR ON BEHALF OF COUNCILS		£
(i) General Council		
General Work	2,500	
Assembly Arrangements	20,000	
Church Relations Committee		
- Irish Council of Churches	22,200	
- Irish Inter-Church Meeting	11,000	
- Conference of European Churches	5,100	
- Comm Protestant Churches Europe	1,300	
- World Comm Reformed Churches	13,000	
- General Church Relations (expenses)	<u>1,500</u>	76,600
(ii) Council for Public Affairs		
General Work incl conferences		500
(iii) Council for Congregational Life and Witness		
General Assembly Priorities	5,000	
Good Relations Panel	<u>—</u>	5,000
(iv) Linkage Commission		
General Work	6,500	
Church Architecture Committee	<u>8,500</u>	15,000
(v) Other Expenditure		
Moderator expenses allowance		28,000
Printing for General Assembly		9,000
Postage, admin and other		12,500
Insurance		5,000
Travel General Assembly and Councils etc.		9,500
Allowance to Congregations re Conveners		9,500

GENERAL COUNCIL

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Legal fees	25,000
Costs of General Secretary's Department	332,682
Support Services Charges	101,000
Education Grants	9,600
UK Borders Agency	500
Presbyterian Historical Society	22,250
Youth Link	10,500
Churches Legislation Advisory	2,500
Peninsula Employment Law and Health and Safety	<u>17,300</u>
TOTAL	<u><u>691,932</u></u>

SUPPORT SERVICES**APPENDIX 3****2017 RATES AND ALLOWANCES****(a) Basic and Appropriate Ministerial Minimum**

	Northern Ireland		Republic of Ireland	
	2017	2016	2017	2016
	£	£	€	€
Basic Ministerial Minimum	25,659	25,280	39,165	38,777
After 1 years' service	25,916	25,533	39,557	39,165
After 2 years' service	26,173	25,786	39,949	39,553
After 3 years' service	26,430	26,039	40,341	39,941
After 4 years' service	26,687	26,292	40,733	40,329
After 5 years' service	26,944	26,545	41,125	40,717
After 6 years' service	27,201	26,798	41,517	41,105
After 7 years' service	27,458	27,051	41,909	41,493
After 8 years' service	27,715	27,304	42,301	41,881
After 9 years' service	27,972	27,557	42,693	42,269
After 10 years' service	28,229	27,810	43,085	42,657
After 11 years' service	28,486	28,063	43,477	43,045
After 12 years' service	28,743	28,316	43,869	43,433
After 13 years' service	29,000	28,569	44,261	43,821
After 14 years' service	29,257	28,822	44,653	44,209
After 15 years' service	29,514	29,075	45,045	44,597
After 16 years' service	29,771	29,328	45,437	44,985
After 17 years' service	30,028	29,581	45,829	45,373
After 18 years' service	30,285	29,834	46,221	45,761
After 19 years' service	30,542	30,087	46,613	46,149
After 20 years' service	30,799	30,340	47,005	46,537

(b) Family Grants

	2017	2016
Birth to 10 yrs	£362(€1,049)	£357(€1,039)
11 to 15 yrs	£546(€1,658)	£538(€1,642)
16 yrs and over		
– At school	£820(€3,066)	£808(€3,036)
– At university	£2,728(€5,115)	£2,688(€5,064)
Bands (joint incomes), Reductions		
– Nil up to	£29,160(€43,856)	£28,729(€43,422)
– Up to (£1 for every £5)	£39,230(€58,989)	£38,650(€58,405)
– Above (£1 for every £2)	£39,230(€58,989)	£38,650(€58,405)

(c) Retired Ministers, Widows of Ministers and Prolonged Disability Funds

Retired Ministers Fund maximum retirement pension for 2017 is £12,242

Widows of Ministers Fund maximum annuity for 2017 is £6,732

Prolonged Disability Fund maximum grant for 2017 is £12,130

SUPPORT SERVICES

APPENDIX 4

REVISED RULES FOR THE PROLONGED DISABILITY FUND

Ministers' Prolonged Disability Fund
(Initially adopted by the 2003 General Assembly, amended in 2006 and 2011, and the current version approved by the 2017 General Assembly)

RULES

The provision of benefits under these Rules, and their alteration and withdrawal, are entirely at the absolute discretion of the General Council (the Council) of the General Assembly (the Assembly) acting through the Support Services Committee (the Committee) or such committee or officers as the Council, with the approval of the Assembly, may determine; and, on appeal at the absolute discretion of the Judicial Commission.

No Minister or Licentiate who may, in accordance with these Rules, fulfil the criteria to be eligible to benefits shall be entitled as of right to do so.

These Rules are subject to the absolute discretion of the Council and, as the case may be, on appeal to the absolute discretion of the Judicial Commission, and should be so read and interpreted.

1. The Object

The object of the Ministers' Prolonged Disability Fund (the Fund) is to provide benefits according to these Rules to approved eligible Ministers and Licentiates of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) who are unable to fulfil their calling due to prolonged sickness or disability.

2. Property and Assets

The property and assets of the Fund shall be held by (and on behalf of) the Trustees of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (as defined in Par 122 of the Code).

3. Administration

The administration of the Fund shall be supervised by the Council acting through the Committee or such committee or officers as the Council, with the approval of the Assembly, may determine. The expenses of setting up and administering the Fund shall be paid out of it.

4. Resources of the Fund

- (a) The Fund shall be made up of contributions assessed on congregations and agencies, bequests, donations, endowments and other income received for the benefit of the Fund.
- (b) Each congregation or agency of the Church shall pay a contribution to the Fund in respect of each eligible Minister and Licentiate serving in that congregation or agency at a rate which shall be determined annually by the Assembly on the advice of the Council.
- (c) If, in the judgement of the Assembly, the Fund shall no longer be required to meet the object in Rule 1 above, any remaining assets shall be transferred to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Pension Scheme (2009) or, at the request of the Council, such other Fund as the Assembly shall decide.

5. Rules of the Fund

The Rules of the Fund are made by the Assembly and no amendment shall be made unless notice of such amendment has been received by the preceding Assembly and the proposed amendment is thereafter approved by the Assembly.

Amendments required as a matter of urgency may be submitted to the Assembly for adoption as an Interim Act under the Code Par 112(9).

6. Eligibility to apply for Benefits

Ministers or Licentiates who are contributing members of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Pension Scheme (2009) and are under 65 years of age are eligible to apply for benefits from the Fund provided that, due to prolonged sickness or disability, they

- (a) resign or offer to resign any chaplaincy or other remunerated post (Code Par 221(1)); and
- (b) resign and are received as Ministers Without Charge under the care of the Presbytery (Code Par 220(4)).

An individual will cease to be eligible on the earliest of the following:

- (a) The date on which they cease to be a Minister of the PCI;
- (b) the date of their 65th birthday;
- (c) the date they die;
- (d) in the case of an applicant receiving benefits from the Fund, the date they undertake any other work without the knowledge and written consent of the Committee;
- (e) the date they retire and receive benefits from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Pension Scheme (2009).

BENEFITS**7. Incapacity Benefit**

- (a) An Incapacity Benefit will be paid to approved applicants. The rate(s) of Incapacity Benefit shall be fixed each year by the Council on the recommendation of the Committee, but will not be related to the applicants' previous PCI remuneration or other emoluments but will reflect whether a post is full or part time.
- (b) Where approved applicants would, if they had not become eligible under Rule 6 above to apply for benefits, have qualified for Family Grants under Par 315(4) of the Code, the Committee, with the approval of the Council, may pay a Family Benefit to approved applicants. The rate(s) of benefits shall be fixed each year by the Council on the recommendation of the Committee and shall take account of Total Family Income.

8. Pension Contributions and Life Assurance Cover

Contributions to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Pension Scheme (2009) will be paid by the Fund on behalf of approved applicants who are in receipt of the Incapacity Benefit from the Fund. The level of income upon which the contributions will be based shall be fixed each year by the Council on the recommendation of the Committee made in the light of monies available in the Fund or reasonably to be expected; and

Life Assurance Cover will be maintained under the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Pension Scheme (2009) for those applicants in receipt of the Incapacity Benefit from the Fund subject to such cover in respect of the particular applicant or claimant continuing to be available at reasonable cost.

9. Deferred Period

- (a) The deferred period (the deferred period) is one during which no benefits will be payable to an approved applicant. The deferred period will run until the latest of:
 - (i) 3 months from the first day of incapacity;
 - (ii) the applicant resigning their charge due to prolonged sickness or disability and having been received as Minister Without Charge under the care of the Presbytery (Code Par 220(4)); and
 - (iii) the cessation of any payment to the applicant during their incapacity by the congregation, Central Ministry Fund or any other source within the PCI.
- (b) The deferred period will normally be a period of continuous absence, but the Committee may link periods of absence of at least 4 weeks' duration through incapacity from the same cause provided that the deferred period is completed within two years of the commencement of the first absence due to that incapacity.

10. Payment of Benefit

The Benefits become payable to an approved applicant on the first day after the end of the deferred period. The Incapacity Benefit is paid in arrears in equal calendar monthly instalments. A proportionate payment will be made for a period of less than a month.

The Benefits will be paid to an approved applicant for the duration of their incapacity, as long as the individual remains eligible and is under 65 years of age.

The Incapacity Benefit is payable in pounds sterling to the beneficiary's account in the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland. If a beneficiary requests payment in Euro, this will be based on the rates of exchange ruling on the dates of payment.

11. Notification of Changes

Anyone in receipt of the Benefit from the Fund must notify the Committee immediately of any change in their condition or circumstances, which would, or might, affect payment of benefit. For example, changes that must be notified would include:

- (a) the beneficiary taking on any work or employment whether paid or not
- (b) any change in the beneficiary's health, medical condition or prognosis

12. Proportionate Benefit

If a beneficiary, with the written approval of the Committee, is able to carry out any work on a reduced basis, they are entitled to a Proportionate Benefit.

The amount of Proportionate Benefit in any calendar year shall be calculated as follows:

$$\frac{(\text{Basic Ministerial Minimum minus Actual Earnings}) \times 100}{\text{Basic Ministerial Minimum}} = \%$$

In this Rule: 'Basic Ministerial Minimum' means the amount set under Code Par 314; and 'Actual Earnings' means all income from any work.

13. Linked Benefits Claims

In the event of a beneficiary returning to work and then being absent from work within 26 weeks of their return, the Benefits will resume from the date of the resumption of incapacity provided that the Committee is satisfied that both periods of incapacity are due to the same or a related cause.

14. Benefits during Retraining

Where, with the agreement of the Committee, a beneficiary undertakes retraining, the Benefits will continue to be payable for as long as the Committee at its discretion deems appropriate.

CLAIMING BENEFIT

15. Notification of Absence

An applicant or prospective applicant is required to notify the Committee, in writing, of their prolonged absence, due to incapacity, at least 6 weeks before the end of the deferred period. This will ensure that the process of claiming can commence. No Benefits will be paid for any period of time before written notice of the incapacity is received by the Committee.

16. Making a Claim

Claims must be submitted in the form requested by the Committee and must be made at least 4 weeks before the expected end of the deferred period. Benefits arising from approved claims will be paid from the end of the deferred period or the date of approval, if later due to late submission of claims.

17. Evidence Required

An applicant must provide the Committee with all information requested at any time by the Committee to enable their claim to be investigated and/or to be reviewed from time to time. The information requested shall include the following:

- (a) Proof of age.
- (b) Medical evidence to substantiate incapacity and continuing incapacity, including –
 - (i) evidence that the impairment is of sufficient severity and duration to satisfy the test of incapacity in Rule 18
 - (ii) evidence that the applicant/prospective applicant is under the continuing care of an appropriate medical practitioner
 - (iii) evidence which demonstrates to the satisfaction of reasonable medical opinion that all currently available appropriate treatment options have been thoroughly investigated and appropriately explained to the applicant/prospective applicant.

The applicant or beneficiary may be required to undergo medical examination by such medical practitioners or consultants at such times and places as the Committee may determine. The applicant will provide samples for any tests, including blood and saliva tests, if required. The Committee shall be entitled to accept responsibility for the cost of any medical examination and the costs incurred by the applicant or beneficiary in attending the examination.

Failure to comply with the provisions of this paragraph will entitle the Committee to decline a claim or cease the Benefits or take such other steps as it deems appropriate in the circumstances.

18. Eligibility for Benefits

Subject to the provisions of Rules 6, 9 and 17 an applicant will be deemed to be eligible for the Benefits if the Committee is satisfied that:

- (a) they are unable, by reason of illness or injury, to fulfil the material and substantial duties of their office in the PCI, and

- (b) they are unable, by reason of illness or injury, to follow any occupation for which they are reasonably fitted by virtue of their training, education or experience (whether as a Minister or Licentiate or otherwise).

19. Appeal

- (a) Any appeal against a decision regarding the grant, alteration, refusal or termination of Benefits from the fund shall be lodged within twenty-one days with the Convener of the General Council, who shall refer the appeal to the Judicial Commission, whose decision shall be final.
- (b) The notification of appeal shall state the grounds thereof and shall be accompanied by documentary evidence. Any party shall if requested by the Judicial Commission submit any additional documentary evidence.
- (c) The decision of the Judicial Commission on appeal shall be final and binding.

20. Administration and other Rules

- (a) Payments in respect of incapacity are made without any admission of legal liability in respect of such incapacity on the part of the PCI or any of its congregations or agencies
- (b) All correspondence in respect of this Fund shall be sent to:
The Financial Secretary,
Assembly Buildings,
2-10 Fisherwick Place,
Belfast BT1 6DW.

21. Interpretation

Headings are for ease of reference only.

SUPPORT SERVICES COMMITTEE
APPENDIX 5
ANNUAL STATISTICAL RETURNS

TABLE ONE

PERSONS AND AGENCIES

	2015	2016	Increase	Decrease
Retired Ministers	236	240	4	0
Ministers in Active Duty	380	371	0	9
Retired Missionaries	15	16	1	0
Missionaries in Active Duty	40	39	0	1
Total Ministers and Missionaries	671	666	0	5
Licensings during year	19	12	0	7
Congregations	539	538	0	1
Total Families	97,731	95,895	0	1,836
Persons of All Ages	225,228	224,069	0	1,159
Contributors to FWO or Stipend	75,321	73,391	0	1,930
Baptisms	1,429	1,336	0	93
Admitted to Lord's Table				
for First Time	1,806	1,575	0	231
Communicants	98,674	97,943	0	731
Attended at Least One				
Communion during year	60,794	59,738	0	1,056
Ruling Elders in Kirk Session	6,039	5,903	0	136
Number on Rolls in Sunday				
School and Bible Classes (Note 1)	42,062	17,500	0	24,562
Attending Non-Uniformed				
Organisations for Children (Note 2)	0	20,628	20,628	0

Note 1. From 2011 to 2015 includes numbers enrolled in children's and youth ministries under control of Kirk Sessions. From 2016 only Sunday School and Bible Classes included.

Note 2. Only reported from 2016

TABLE TWO
CONGREGATIONAL INCOME

	2015		2016		% Difference	
	£	€	£	€	N.I.	R.of I.
Assessable Income (gross)	35,438,668	3,870,382	35,972,865	3,852,720	1.5%	-0.5%
Building Fund etc	16,634,008	1,057,501	16,754,333	1,348,702	0.7%	27.5%
Missions and Charities	7,525,324	524,321	7,515,712	479,513	-0.1%	-8.5%
Raised from other sources	6,760,124	784,191	6,257,829	1,411,461	-7.4%	80.0%
Organisational Income	6,015,307	247,004	5,914,038	238,001	-1.7%	-3.6%
Total Receipts	72,373,431	6,483,399	72,414,777	7,330,397	0.1%	13.1%

TABLE THREE
CONGREGATIONAL EXPENDITURE

	2015		2016		€	% Difference N.I.	R.of I.
	£	€	£	€			
Paid to ministers, other salaries and wages, allowances to ministers and others	18,253,221	1,576,085	19,060,597	1,588,296		4.4%	0.8%
Payments under Assembly Assessments	6,743,170	772,452	6,094,203	670,493		-9.6%	-13.2%
Building, Repairs etc.	16,527,363	1,208,836	14,362,399	971,513		-13.1%	-19.6%
United Appeal Schemes	3,209,481	254,934	3,162,260	235,729		-1.5%	-7.5%
Supplementary Schemes							
Other Religious and Charitable Objects	7,421,670	700,931	6,955,035	717,044		-6.3%	2.3%
Organisations	5,855,896	207,414	5,822,025	365,716		-0.6%	76.3%
General Expenses	11,100,315	1,386,515	10,752,713	1,497,291		-3.1%	8.0%
Total Payments	69,111,116	6,107,167	66,209,232	6,046,082		-4.2%	-1.0%

TABLE FOUR
CONGREGATIONAL FUND BALANCES

	Opening 2015		Closing 2015		% Difference	
	£	€	£	€	N.I.	R. of I.
Unrestricted Funds	25,453,423	2,364,960	27,075,211	2,919,068	6.4%	23.4%
Restricted Funds	83,563,138	7,629,850	90,044,237	8,382,106	7.8%	9.9%
Total Fund Balances	109,016,561	9,994,810	117,119,448	11,301,174	7.4%	13.1%

TABLE FIVE**MINISTERS' INCOME AND ALLOWANCES (SEE NOTES)**

	2015	2016	
	£	£	% Difference
Total Ministerial Income (active Duty - Note2)	11,490,633	11,607,735	1.0%
Stipend Paid	9,873,163	10,340,800	4.7%
Allowances			
Light, Heat, etc			
Ministerial Duties			
Total	2,671,236	2,630,561	-1.5%

Note 1. Figures for the Republic of Ireland have been converted into £STG using the average value of the Euro for the relevant year (£1/€1.2248)

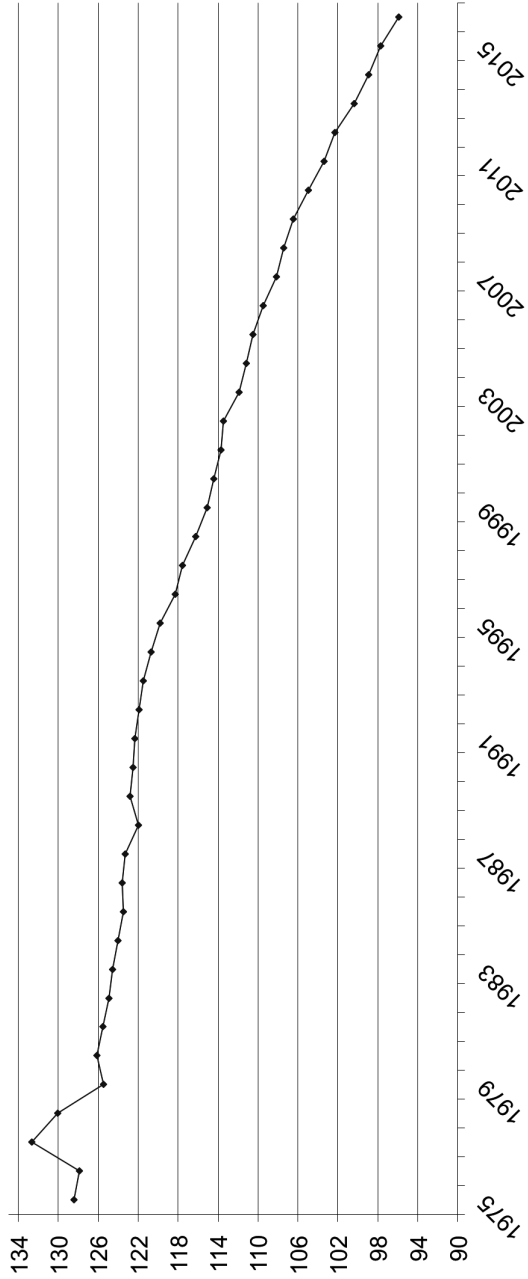
Note 2. This refers only to 344 ministers in charge of congregations, excluding Assistants, Chaplains, Missionaries, Professors, Administrative Officers and Ministers in recognised service in special work.

TABLE SIX**PERSONS**

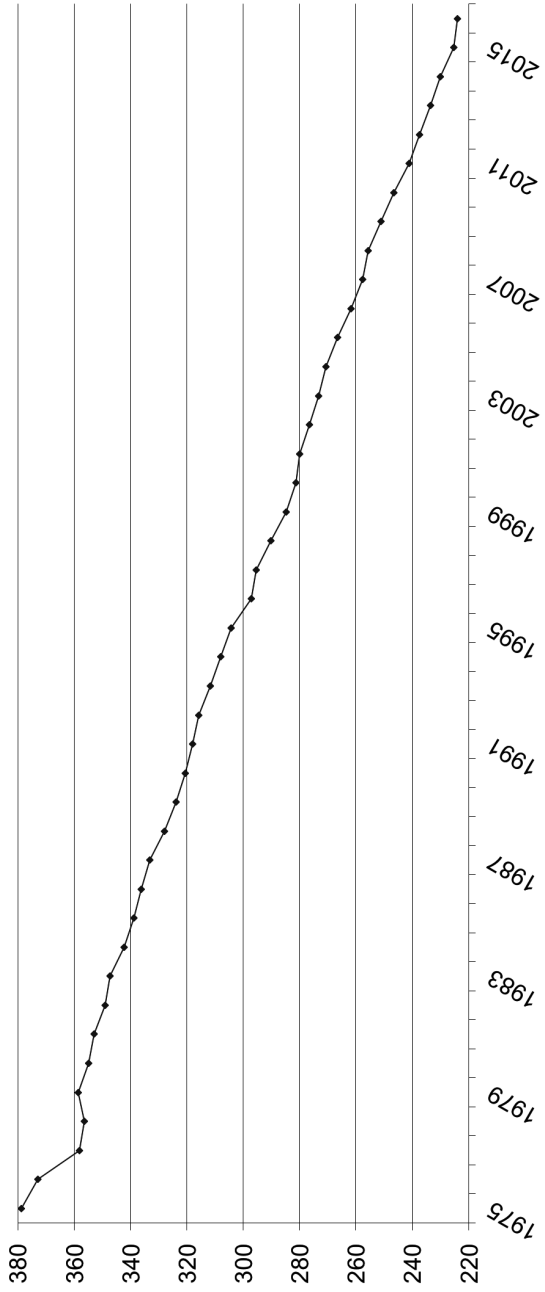
	2015	2016
Persons who are aged 18 and under	40,324	39,959
Average attendance at Sunday Worship - Morning	73,276	71,250
- Evening	17,317	17,035
Average attendance at Bible Study/Fellowship (Note1)	-	20,347

Note 1. Only reported from 2016

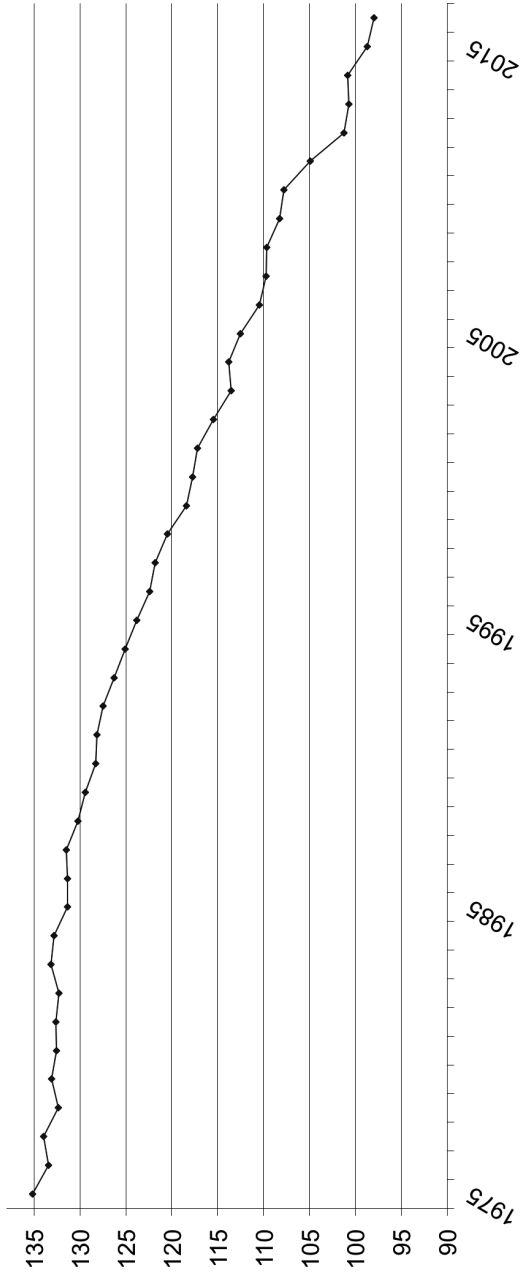
FAMILIES ('000)



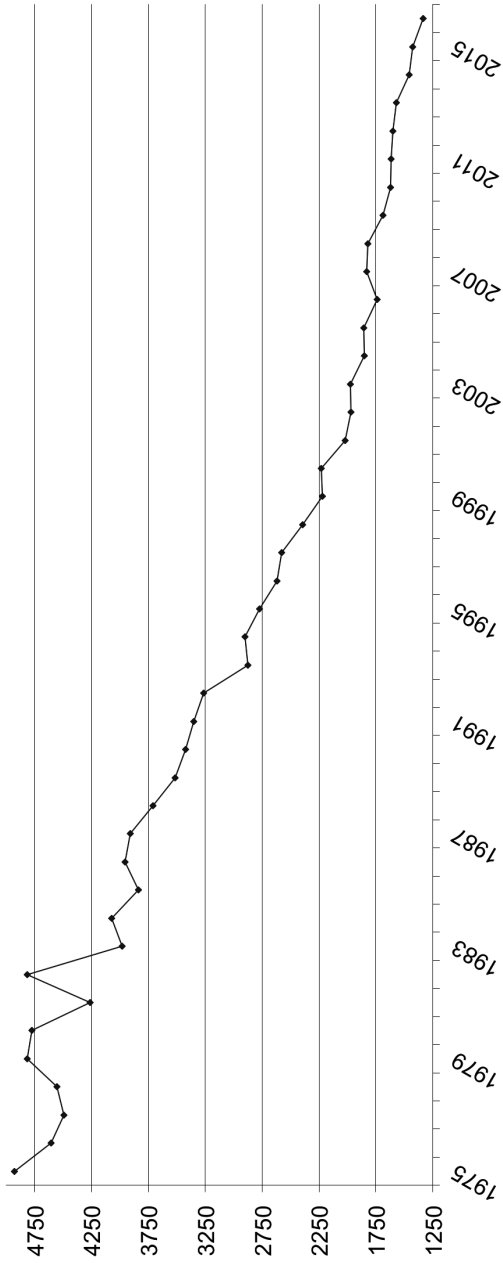
PERSONS ('000)



COMMUNICANTS ('000)



BAPTISMS



SUPPORT SERVICES

APPENDIX 7

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT STAFFING

STERLING SALARY SCALES OF STAFF IN POST IN ASSEMBLY BUILDINGS ON 1 JANUARY 2017

EXECUTIVE POSTS

Scale 1 (£24,260 - £28,823)

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

Scale 2 (£27,397 - £32,957)

Property Support Officer (0.8 post) (FSD)
Children's Development Officer (CL&W)
Finance Manager (FSD)
Creative Production Support Officer
(including Editorial Responsibilities) (CPD)
Women's Ministry and PW Development Officer (CL&W)
Finance Manager (FSD)
Creative Production Support Officer (Press and Web) (CPD)
Payroll and Assessment Manager (FSD)
Personnel Support Officer (PD)
Youth Development Officer (CL&W)
"Taking Care" Programme Co-ordinator
Discipleship Development Officer (CL&W)
Mission Support Officer (Partnership) (MD)

Scale 3 (£30,654 - £37,361)

Assistant Residential and Supported Services Manager (CSW)
Mission Support Officer (Member Care) (MD)
Head of Creative Production (CPD)
Programme Development Officer (CL&W)
Public Affairs Officer (GSD)
Training Development Officer (CL&W)
Building Manager (PSD)
Mission Development Officer (CL&W)

Scale 4 (£33,786 - £42,210)

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

Scale 6 (£40,125 - £48,884)

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

Scale 7 (£45,527 - £58,562)

Clerk of Assembly and General Secretary
 Financial Secretary

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RELATED POSTS**Scale 1 (£13,808 - £15,947)**

Telephonist (0.4 post) (PSD)

Scale 2 (£14,857 - £17,182)

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

Scale 3 (£16,672 - £19,277)

Administrative Assistant (Sales Ledger) (job share 0.4 post)
 Senior Personnel Assistant (Job Share) (PD)
 Senior Administrative Assistant (job share 1.2 post) (CSW)
 Senior Administrative Assistant (0.5 post) (MD)
 Deputy Buildings Manager (PSD)
 Senior Administrative Assistant, PW (CL&W)
 Information Officer/Receptionist (0.6 post) (PSD)
 Senior Administrative Assistant (Partnerships)
 Senior Administrative Assistant (Member Care) (MD)

Scale 4 (£18,890 - £21,754)

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

Scale 5 (£20,668 - £23,861)

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

Scale 5 (Enhanced) (£22,825 - £26,093)

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

Scale 5 (Enhanced pt 25-33) (£22,825 - £27,397)

Senior Personal Assistant and Office Supervisor (GSD)

**STERLING SALARY SCALES OF STAFF IN POST
 IN OTHER LOCATIONS ON 1 JANUARY 2017**

EXECUTIVE POSTS**Scale 2 (£27,397 - £32,957)**

College Registrar/Bursar, Union College
 College Librarian, Union College
 Minister/Ministry Co-ordinator, Kinghan Church (CSW)
 Chaplain in Residence (MD)
 University Chaplain UUI, (MD)
 Lecturer in Historical Theology, Union College
 Lecturer in Biblical Studies, Union College

Scale 4 (£33,786 - £42,210)

Dean of Ministerial Studies and Development (T in M)

Scale 5 (£37,361 – £45,527)

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

Scale 6 (£40,125 - £48,884)

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

Scale 7 (£45,527 - £58,562)

Principal of Union Theological College

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RELATED POSTS**Scale 1 (£13,808 - £15,947)**

Clerical Officer (5 p/t) OPS (CSW)
 Receptionist (Term Time), Union College

Scale 2 (£14,857 - £17,182)

Clerical Officer - Carlisle House (part time) (CSW)
 Clerical Officer, (1 FT and 3 PT) OPS (CSW)
 Clerical Officer, Kinghan Church (part time) (CSW)
 Custodian, Union College (T in M)
 Library Assistant (part time), Union College

Scale 3 (£16,672 - £19,277)

Marriage and Guidance Co-ordinator (CL&W)
 Administrative Assistant (part time), Union College
 Senior Clerical Officer (part time), Carlisle House (CSW)
 Senior Secretary, Union College (0.6 post)

Scale 4 (£18,890 - £21,754)

Administrator, Derryvolgie (MD)
 Senior Secretary, (2 posts) Union College
 Deputy Librarian, Union College

Scale 5 (Enhanced) (£22,825 - £26,093)

Assistant Chaplain, QUB (CSW)
 Resident Manager, Tritonville Close (Euro Scale) (CSW)

UNITED APPEAL COMMITTEE

1. The committee met on the following dates:
 - Friday 9 February – to review 2016 accounts, response to the Appeal and grants to Councils
 - Friday 31 March – to prepare for meetings with Councils in relation to their 2018 grants requests
 - Monday 3 April – to meet with Councils and discuss their budget submissions and then to consider recommendations to the General Council for the 2018 Appeal.

The 2016 Appeal

2. The Committee wishes to express its thanks to the Congregations who supported the United Appeal in 2016. When contributions for the 2016 Appeal were closed at the end of January 2017, £3,218,252 had been received from congregations towards the Appeal Target of £3,400,000, a shortfall of some £181,748. Once late contributions for the 2015 Appeal, trust fund income and donations were taken into account the shortfall against budgeted income was £53,984.

3. During 2016 the Council for Congregational Life and Witness returned previously allocated grants of £255,700. This was primarily due to timing of staff appointments to that Council following the restructuring from Boards to Councils.

4. In 2016 406 congregations (2015:361) met or exceeded their target of honour, 121 congregations (2015: 174) did not achieve their target and 8 congregations (2015: 8) had made no contribution when the accounts for 2016 were closed. The Committee would remind these congregations of their obligation under the Code Par 42.

5. The Committee was pleased to be able to pay in full the proposed allocation of grants of £3,527,600 to Councils for 2016.

6. Last year the Committee appealed to congregations, through Presbyteries, to remit the Appeal donations as they were received. While some Presbyteries clearly responded to this request the Committee have to report that 59% of 2016 donations (2015: 66%) were received by the Financial Secretary's Department in December 2016 and January 2017. Congregations should be aware that the United Appeal is distributed to the Mission Councils on a regular basis, spread throughout the year. In order for the Committee to meet its obligation to fund the running of the Mission Councils and prevent them from going into overdraft, a substantial United Appeal cash-flow reserve has to be maintained. A lesser reserve would be necessary if Congregations did not hold on to United Appeal donations until the year end. The Committee again appeal to Congregational Committees to please remit United Appeal donations as they receive them.

7. A number of years ago the United Appeal Board took the decision to introduce a phased reduction in the use of reserves but this was deferred pending the restructuring of Boards to Councils. Reserves have reduced by around £1m in the last 10 years. In 2016 reserves were reduced by £143,824 which was greater than the budgeted release of £89,600. The Committee realises it will not be

possible to continue to use reserves at this rate and is now seeking to bring the level of the Appeal and grants to Councils into line over the next few years.

Promotions

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

9. The Committee expresses its thanks to the Creative Production department for its help in producing promotional material.

The 2017 Appeal

10. The General Assembly has already agreed to an Appeal of £3,460,000 for 2017 and this is outlined in Schedules I and II of this report.

The 2018 Appeal

11. The United Appeal Committee met on two occasions, once to complete some preparatory work and once to meet with the Councils and consider the 2018 budget requests submitted. Having given careful consideration to the budget requests and each Council's presentation the United Appeal Committee drew up the allocations outlined in Schedule IV, which were agreed by the General Council for submission to the General Assembly.

12. The Appeal is to be allocated to Presbyteries on the basis of 50% contributing families and 50% assessable income and for 2018 this is outlined in Schedule III. The Committee is aware that while the Appeal increase in recent years has been of an inflationary amount, the impact on Presbyteries and Congregations (if Presbytery use the same method of allocation) means that a Presbytery/Congregation allocation can vary from the previous year not only by the increase in the Appeal but also by the movement in its assessable income and contributing families in relation to other Presbyteries/Congregations. The Committee intends to review the method of allocation during this year and will report back to the General Council and General Assembly in 2018.

13. Grants to Councils will continue be allocated on the basis of 7.5% each month with 10% withheld pending the response to the Appeal.

14. The Committee is aiming to bring the level of grants awarded into line with the Appeal and reduce the use of reserves over the next few years and has budgeted accordingly for 2018 with £77,000 to be released. The Council for Congregational Life and Witness has indicated that it intends to return a further £150,000 of unused grants in 2017 and the Committee is proposing to add this to reserves but, and in addition to the £77,000, to release it over the next three years to help ease any impact on Council grants.

15. The Committee would thank the Financial Secretary's Department for its assistance in every area of the United Appeal's work.

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

DAVID IRVINE, Convener

UNITED APPEAL COMMITTEE**SCHEDULE I**

Presbytery	Contributing Families 2015	Assessable Income 2015 £	United Appeal 2017 £
Ards	7,093	3,466,868	320,134
Armagh	3,625	2,137,937	180,215
Ballymena	6,857	3,486,081	315,584
Belfast North	4,389	2,132,682	197,524
Belfast South	2,881	1,834,866	149,382
Belfast East	5,084	3,258,737	264,552
Carrickfergus	4,472	1,967,026	191,918
Coleraine and Limavady	5,149	2,558,534	234,292
Derry and Donegal	4,803	2,064,667	203,949
Down	4,323	1,852,402	183,298
Dromore	4,554	2,236,518	206,023
Dublin and Munster	1,131	1,332,905	86,424
Iveagh	3,390	1,624,879	151,550
Monaghan	1,048	629,171	52,604
Newry	2,735	1,259,081	119,917
Omagh	3,184	1,516,832	141,919
Route	3,372	1,466,683	143,963
Templepatrick	3,794	1,650,366	161,985
Tyrone	3,437	1,672,010	154,767
	75,321	38,148,245	3,460,000

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

UNITED APPEAL COMMITTEE**SCHEDULE II**

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

UNITED APPEAL COMMITTEE**SCHEDULE III**

Presbytery	Contributing Families 2016	Assessable Income 2016 £	United Appeal 2018 £
Ards	6,770	3,596,194	322,848
Armagh	3,559	2,148,429	181,298
Ballymena	6,897	3,517,370	322,337
Belfast North	4,110	2,148,167	194,425
Belfast South	2,670	1,819,601	145,341
Belfast East	4,880	3,383,452	268,231
Carrickfergus	4,370	1,954,699	191,941
Coleraine and Limavady	5,040	2,622,172	237,876
Derry and Donegal	4,708	2,074,805	205,390
Down	4,207	1,857,065	183,672
Dromore	4,413	2,247,262	206,098
Dublin and Munster	1,086	1,556,759	95,772
Iveagh	3,331	1,633,305	152,740
Monaghan	1,066	687,679	56,286
Newry	2,674	1,271,119	120,817
Omagh	3,253	1,539,345	146,663
Route	3,254	1,484,969	144,246
Templepatrick	3,692	1,714,431	164,989
Tyrone	3,411	1,730,944	159,030
	73,391	38,987,767	3,500,000

50% of the allocation for 2018 has been based on contributing families and 50% on Assessable Income. Assessable Income for Congregations in the Republic of Ireland have been converted to euro on the basis of the average exchange rate for 2016 of 1.2248.

UNITED APPEAL COMMITTEE**SCHEDULE IV**

	2018
	£
MISSION IN IRELAND	1,050,000
GLOBAL MISSION	1,050,000
TRAINING IN MINISTRY	370,000
CONGREGATIONAL LIFE AND WITNESS	720,000
SOCIAL WITNESS	245,000
CREATIVE PRODUCTION	230,000
	<hr/>
	3,665,000
Income from donations etc.	-38,000
Release from reserves	-127,000
	<hr/>
Appeal to Congregations	3,500,000
	<hr/>

CHARITY REGISTRATION TASK GROUP

1. The Task Group continued to meet as required, monitoring progress regarding charity registration in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

2. The Task Group noted that the Charity Regulatory Authority in the Republic of Ireland (CRA) had called forward and registered the General Assembly centrally along with those individual congregations that already had a separate CHY number. The bulk of congregations, along with the Presbyteries, will be called to register at a later stage, with no time-scale yet set by the CRA.

3. The Task Group are aware that in the Republic of Ireland there was no religious designation in charity legislation. As a result, the Task Group plans to engage with the CRA regarding issues such as the removal of charity trustees, the role of bodies supervising congregations (i.e Presbyteries and the General Assembly) etc. These matters have been successfully resolved in Northern Ireland, but the Republic of Ireland's laws are different in some significant areas.

NORTHERN IRELAND

4. The Task Group noted that congregations had been registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's (CCNI), along with the General Assembly, and that, at the time of writing, the process of registering Presbyteries was ongoing.

5. It was noted that an appeal by an elder of a congregation against the CCNI's decision to call his congregation for registration, had been dismissed by the Charity Tribunal. The elder in question had himself submitted a trustee declaration but still felt it necessary to challenge the basis of the entire process through this appeal. Not only did this result in a significant amount of work for the General Assembly Solicitor, for which the Task Group and the General Council itself are extremely grateful, but the appeal will have cost the public purse a significant amount of money.

6. The Task Group noted that the Finance Panel of the Support Services Committee had issued, to all Presbyteries in Northern Ireland, detailed guidance notes for the use of congregations in making their annual financial returns to CCNI. The first of these returns will be relating to the 2017 financial year and so while some Presbyteries have already passed this guidance material onto their congregations, most will be doing so over the coming months.

7. The Task Group has agreed to engage with CCNI regarding other, non-financial, aspects of the annual examination of accounts by the congregation's appointed independent examiner, or, where appropriate, auditor. Further guidance will be issued to all congregations on these matters, including the need for the independent examiner to have sight of appropriate minute books.

JOHN HUNTER, Convener

USE OF CONGREGATIONAL PROPERTY BY OUTSIDE BODIES TASK GROUP

1. The Task Group was appointed at the April 2016 meeting of the General Council and has met five times.

2. The General Assembly authorised the General Council to receive the Task Group's report with power to implement its recommendations. It should be noted that at this stage, only the situation in Northern Ireland has been addressed and all the documentation should be read in that light. It is intended to address the situation in the Republic of Ireland soon.

3. Having received instructions from the General Council at its October 2016 meeting, the Task Group reported to the April 2017 meeting as follows.

4. Equality Policy (NI)

The Task Group finalised the Equality Policy for Northern Ireland. The title was amended to '*Equality Policy for Licensing the use, by Bodies other than the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, of Church Halls and other properties used for Direct Mission or Ministry Purposes.*' On 1st of November, 2016, the amended document was sent to Kirk Sessions on behalf of the Council, with an instruction to adopt the policy by no later than 31st January 2017 and to report that they have done so to the February 2017 meeting of their presbytery.

5. Adoption

It is recognised that some Kirk Sessions had difficulties in adopting this policy. The Clerk has received several queries about this and on 17th November, 2016, issued a 'Questions and Answers' document to try to address some of those difficulties. At the time of writing, all Kirk Sessions have adopted the Equality Policy.

6. Policy for Presbyteries

As an Assembly Hall Equality Policy already existed, a copy of this was sent to Presbyteries with a note that, if it owns property directly, it needs to adopt this policy, amending the title as appropriate.

7. Guidelines for Licensing (NI)

Guidelines for Licencing the Use of Congregational Premises were finalised by the Task Group. The title was amended to '*Guidelines for Licensing the use, by Bodies other than the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, of Church Halls and other properties used for Direct Mission or Ministry Purposes.*' On 1st November, 2016, the amended document was sent to Kirk Sessions in Northern Ireland for consideration and action.

8. Licence to Occupy (NI)

Licence to Occupy templates for both single and recurring use have been finalised by the Task Group and distributed to Kirk Sessions in Northern Ireland.

9. Equivalent Documentation for the Republic of Ireland

There are still some matters on which the Task Group is taking advice before issuing equivalent documentation for congregations in the Republic of Ireland.

T J STOTHERS, Convener

HOLDING TRUSTEE TASK GROUP

1. During the year, Presbyteries have been collating information from congregations regarding their holding trustees, title deeds and any investments in the name of Presbytery Education Boards. The Holding Trustee Task Group is grateful to office-bearers in congregations and Presbytery Clerks for undertaking this exercise.

2. For some, the exercise has presented challenges. In some cases, mainly due to changes in Presbytery bounds or uncertainty about the location of documents, legal assistance was sought to provide the information required and this led to a delay in completing the pro-forma. Some congregations have begun processes to resolve issues that have arisen through their participation in the exercise, for example, the appointment of additional named trustees or replacement of lost deeds.

3. At the time of writing this report, questionnaires were received from 449 congregations with 94 remaining.

4. The main reason for carrying out this survey was to ascertain the number of congregations with Presbytery Education Boards as their holding trustees. From the information received, it appears that approximately 40% of the 1,560 properties are held by Presbytery Education Boards. Some Education Boards also hold congregational investments with a total value of approximately £2.5m. This information will provide the context for the Task Group to examine the question that has been raised by Presbytery Clerks, often the Secretaries of Presbytery Education Boards, as to whether Presbytery Education Boards are fit for purpose as holding trustees of congregational properties and to seek advice regarding alternatives.

5. During the exercise, questions have been asked about the relationship between charity trustees and holding trustees, the appropriate 'body' to issue instructions to holding trustees, responsibilities and liabilities of holding trusteeship (both named individuals and Presbytery Education Boards). These issues will be raised with the Task Group when it meets to consider its main task.

ROBERT HERRON, Convener

GENERAL COUNCIL

SECTION 4

Thursday – 3.30pm

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER DENOMINATIONS TASK GROUP

INTRODUCTION

1. At the 2016 General Assembly there was debate regarding the principles by which the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) relates to other denominations, or indeed alters its relationship with other denominations. During this debate, it was noted that the Council for Global Mission had undertaken to produce a report regarding the principles to be followed in deciding whether to establish, or maintain, a missional partnership with another denomination. It was recognised that while this was an important type of relationship that PCI had with other denominations, it was not the only kind of denominational relationship which PCI may wish to enter into or maintain. The Clerk of Assembly therefore gave a commitment at the General Assembly that a two-strand approach would be followed during the 2016-17 year, namely:

- (a) A Task Group of the Council for Global Mission would produce a report on 'Principles for Global Mission Partnerships', which would be presented to that Council for consideration and approval. That report would then be forwarded to the Clerk of Assembly and would form part of a wider report on 'Relationships with other Denominations'.
- (b) The General Council would set up a 'Relationships with other Denominations Task Group' to produce that wider report regarding the principles by which the Presbyterian Church in Ireland relates to other denominations, or indeed alters its relationship with other denominations.

2. At the October 2016 meeting of the General Council, the following Relationships with other Denominations (ROD) Task Group was appointed:

Moderator, Clerk (Convener), Very Rev Dr Rob Craig; Rev Jonathan Boyd, Rev John Brackenridge, Very Rev Prof Stafford Carson, Prof John Gillespie, Rev Dr Liz Hughes, Rev Lorraine Kennedy-Richie, Rev David Leech, Very Rev Dr John Lockington, Rev Nigel McCullough, Very Rev Dr Trevor Morrow, Very Rev Dr Ivan Patterson, Rev Mairisine Stanfield, Miss Anne Taylor, Mr Robin Tweed.

3. The Task Group has met on four occasions and has commissioned papers from some of its members to assist in carrying out its remit. The Task

Group is particularly indebted to the Very Rev Drs Stafford Carson and Trevor Morrow and the Rev Jonathan Boyd for their hard work in drawing up a range of both individual and collaborative papers. The Task Group also had before it reports from the Church Relations Committee and from the Clerk giving an overview of the current position regarding inter-church relationships both generally and specifically.

4. The Task Group has sought to establish some key foundational principles on which to base its work. These have focused firstly on an understanding of the reformed doctrine of the Church and secondly on the necessary commitment to both unity and truth with regard to inter-church relations. This important foundational work is summarised in ROD Appendix 1 - The Reformed Doctrine of the Church and Its Implications. (It would be useful if ROD Appendix 1 was read in full at this stage.)

5. The remainder of this report is based on the foundational thinking outlined in Appendix 1 and attempts to chart a way forward in regard to four significant matters:

- Recommendations regarding the different categories of inter-church relationship which PCI should use;
- Recommendations regarding Global Mission partnerships;
- Recommendations regarding the Inter-Church bodies to which PCI should belong;
- Specific recommendations regarding the Church of Scotland and the Free Church of Scotland.

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING CATEGORIES OF INTER-CHURCH RELATIONSHIP USED BY PCI

6. It is noted that, while a number of denominations consulted were considering this matter, none in fact have up to date and relevant categories used in relating to other denominations.

7. The General Assembly decided a significant number of years ago that no longer should ministers of any other denomination have direct access to the ministry of PCI i.e. there are no arrangements for direct interchangeability of ministry with any other denomination.

8. It is recognised that relationships with other denominations on the island of Ireland will always be more directly relevant and significant in nature to any other inter-church relationship. This is as a direct result of the presence of PCI congregations 'on the ground' in the same, or neighbouring, communities as congregations of other denominations.

9. It is further recognised that direct global mission partnerships again will always be different in nature to other inter-church relationships. This is as a direct result of these normally being a formal agreement in missional partnership. (See relevant sections of the report drafted by the Council for Global Mission, included in Appendix 2.)

10. **It is therefore recommended that** the following categories should be used by PCI in describing its relationships with other denominations:

- (a) Fraternal and/or Missional relationship in Ireland;
- (b) Direct Global Missional Partnership (outside of UK and Ireland);

- (c) Fraternal / Historic relationship (in GB, Europe and worldwide)
 - (i) Confessional
 - (ii) Other

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING GLOBAL MISSION PARTNERSHIPS

11. As indicated in the introduction, thanks are due to the Council for Global Mission for its work on drawing up a paper on 'Principles of Partnership in Global Mission'. This paper was received and affirmed by the Task Group without amendment and, although included in ROD Appendix 2, the credit for it is due to the Council for Global Mission.

12. **It is recommended** that the framework and principles contained in the report drafted by the Council for Global Mission (see ROD Appendix 2) be adopted.

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE INTER-CHURCH BODIES TO WHICH PCI SHOULD BELONG

13. PCI currently relates to a significant number of other denominations through its membership of several Inter-Church bodies, as follows (inc. 'membership fees' where appropriate):

- (a) In Ireland:
 - (i) The Irish Council of Churches (ICC) – Protestant and Orthodox
 - (ii) The Irish Inter-Church Meeting (and Committee) – the ICC Churches meeting with the Irish Episcopal Conference of the Roman Catholic Church
 - Membership fee for ICC (inc work of IICM and IICC) – £32,800 (2016)
 - These bodies enable PCI to relate, at a denominational level, to a number of larger and smaller churches on the island of Ireland and increasingly have had a positive agenda.
- (b) Outside of Ireland:
 - (i) The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) – confessional
 - Membership fee for WCRC – £13,300 (2016)
 - WCRC provides an important forum for relationship with a significant number of denominations, many of whom share much in common with the emphases of PCI. This is true both in WCRC's European and 'developing world' dimensions.
 - However, some aspects of the overall direction of WCRC, both in its processes and its decisions, have proved difficult for PCI.
 - (ii) The Conference of European Churches (CEC) – Protestant and Orthodox
 - Membership fee for CEC – £5,100 (2016)
 - WCRC provides a forum for relationship with a significant number of denominations across Europe, though increasingly it seems focussed on the European Institutions and its work seems more and more distant from PCI.

- The ICC, as the National Council of Churches, also relates directly to CEC, though in a non-voting capacity.
- (iii) The Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) - Protestant
- Membership fee for CCPE - £1,300 (2016)
 - PCI is one of the 98 churches have signed the Leuenberg Agreement since 1973, with some other Churches in other related forms of membership. Though CPCE claims to represent some 50 million Protestants, its ongoing work is more and more distant from PCI.
- (c) Other:
- (i) PCI, or its General Assembly Councils, relates to a number of denominations through shared membership of other bodies e.g. Development Agencies; YouthLink (NI); Safeguarding Bodies; etc.
- (ii) PCI, or its General Assembly Councils, relates to, and works in partnership with, a number of ad-hoc bodies and parachurch agencies and independent fellowships with an inter-church dimension e.g. CARE; Evangelical Alliance; Life (NI); etc.

14. It is recognised that while none of these inter-church bodies are perfect (and some indeed could be viewed as being quite remote from PCI, even at denominational level), nonetheless they provide a forum for relationship with a significant number of denominations, many of whom share much in common with the emphases of PCI. This is true in Ireland but also, as noted above, in WCRC, both in its European and 'developing world' dimensions.

15. There are other 'world confessional bodies' to which PCI could relate, most prominent among them being the World Reformed Fellowship (WRF), which could in some senses be viewed more in keeping with theological position of PCI. Some denominations maintain membership of both WCRC and WRF.

16. Links to other bodies, of an 'umbrella' or para-church nature, enable PCI to relate to and work alongside a number of smaller denominations, either directly or through the involvement of key leaders.

17. It is therefore recommended, in the light of the points outlined above, that:

- (a) PCI maintains its membership of the formal Irish inter-church bodies listed in 13(a) above;
- (b) PCI continues its membership of WCRC and concurrently explores membership of the World Reformed Fellowship, with a report coming to the 2018 General Assembly;
- (c) PCI reviews its membership of both CCPE and CEC (recognising that it could associate with CEC through the Irish Council of Churches), with a report coming to the 2018 General Assembly;
- (d) The General Assembly's Councils be encouraged to continue to develop strategic partnerships, often on an ad-hoc or project basis, with other denominations and parachurch organisations.

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND AND THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

18. Church of Scotland:

See Background Paper at ROD Appendix 3.

Based on ROD Appendix 3, it is recommended that the following practical steps towards mutual reform be taken:

- (a) That the General Assembly clearly and graciously state its own position in regard to human sexuality and marriage – for the benefit of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland as a denomination and the integrity of PCI’s witness (see Appendix 3(A)).
- (b) That for 2018, the General Assembly accept any invitation for the Moderator and delegation to attend the Church of Scotland General Assembly, asking the Moderator to convey the Presbyterian Church in Ireland’s painful concern in a loving manner which calls the CofS along with PCI to ongoing reformation in obedience to the scriptures.¹ (See footnote below)
- (c) That the General Assembly show their commitment to reform within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland by being open to the Church of Scotland raising areas where PCI has been less than faithful to the Scriptures in the pursuit of justice or in the practice of grace.
- (d) That the General Assembly encourage all meetings between the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Church of Scotland, including at Council and/or Committee level, to have intentionality in terms of mutual encouragement to reform and greater obedience to Christ.
- (e) That the General Assembly encourage members of the Task Group to hold informal discussions with those within the Church of Scotland who are working for its reform and renewal, and coming from the ‘traditionalist view’, in order that the PCI might offer constructive support.
- (f) That the Relationships with other Denominations Task Group remain active for a further year and brings to the 2018 General Assembly a report which:
 - (i) considers further the outworking of its 2017 report and recommendations;
 - (ii) reviews the ways in which the Presbyterian Church in Ireland formally collaborates, or could in the future formally collaborate, with the Church of Scotland and what common ground is necessary for such collaboration;
 - (iii) Indicates the progress made towards mutual reform.

¹ The General Council, at its meeting on 13th April 2017, did not adopt recommendation (b) in paragraph 18, relating to the Church of Scotland. The appended resolution therefore reflects the mind of the Council, rather than the Task Group, in this matter.

19. Free Church of Scotland:

See Background Paper at ROD Appendix 4.

Based on ROD Appendix 4, **it is recommended:**

- (a) That the General Assembly encourage the development of a formal fraternal relationship with the Free Church of Scotland, through areas of mutual interest in the Councils of the respective Assemblies, with specific reference to the following:
- Church Planting
 - ETS and PCI College
 - Discipleship
 - Church Revitalisation
 - Global Mission

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER DENOMINATIONS

APPENDIX 1

THE REFORMED DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE CHURCH

The Nicene Creed defines the attributes of the church as “one, holy, catholic and apostolic”.

Viewing the church from the perspective of the gospel helps us to see how these attributes fit together. The saving truth of the gospel is to be believed and proclaimed to the nations. The gospel is also to be lived, because holiness, no less than truth, is a mark of the Spirit’s work. Further, this believing, proclaiming and living of the gospel takes place within a community. Those who are in Christ are joined together in an organism. There is a holy, spiritual order to God’s community.²

1. The church is **apostolic**, because it is founded on the apostolic gospel and called to fulfil the apostolic mission. The community of faith bears faithful witness to the apostolic message. This is a sacred trust. It is this that gives it continuity with the universal (catholic) church both in its sense of identity and its present mission. A reformed ecclesiology refuses to identify apostolicity with an on-going office of apostleship, with regard to the papal claims of Rome or the charismatic ministry of self-proclaimed prophets. A true church is recognised by its continuity with the apostolic proclamation of the gospel.

2. The holiness of the church means that life, as well as truth, marks Christ’s church. The behaviour of Christians in the world must be remarkable

2 Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church* (Downer’s Grove: IVP, 1995) Chapter 6.

enough to cause grudging admiration, astonished curiosity or threatening hostility (I Peter 2:12; 3:16; John 15:18). By God's election, redemption and calling, both individually and corporately, we are holy in Christ. God's people, who have been set apart from the world, are to be holy as God is holy not least in their pursuit of justice, the expression of their sexuality and in their practice of grace.

3. The **unity** of the church requires a new community, joined in common faith and life. The vital union of Christians with Christ demands our unity. Jesus' prayer in John 17:20-21 is crucial. It applies in two important respects:

- (a) The fragmentation and consequent lack of fellowship, harmony, and cooperation which appear on the ecclesiastical scene are a patent contradiction of unity exemplified in that to which Jesus referred when he said, "As you, Father, are in me and I in you."
- (b) The purpose stated in Jesus' prayer – "that the world may believe that you have sent me" – implies a manifestation observable by the world. Jesus prays for a visible unity that will bear witness to the world. The mysterious unity of believers with one another must come to visible expression so as to be instrumental in bringing conviction to the world.

We should not think of the unity for which Christ prayed apart from the unity in the bond of truth. Verse 21 must not be dissociated from verse 20. To divorce the unity for which Christ prayed from all that is involved in believing upon him through the apostolic witness is to separate what Christ placed together.

4. The unity and **catholicity** of the church are interdependent themes. The catholic character of the church flows from the fact that the church is a colony of heaven; it cannot conform to the social castes and sectarian goals that divide a fallen world, for it is the beginning of the new humanity in Christ. The principalities and powers of this present evil age seek to control our desires and hopes by dividing us according to its false catholicisms. In Christ every barrier that defines this present age – racial, socio-economic, generational, and political – disintegrates as the light of the age to come penetrates our darkness. The community of the church may be expressed in terms of the old and new covenants or the cultural diversity of the new humankind in Christ. Denominations were unknown for the first 400 years A.D. "*There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all*" (Ephesians 4:4-6). The reformers of the 16th century saw themselves as reformed catholics. Calvin consistently expressed his desire not to be schismatic nor sectarian. "He never stopped claiming his unshakeable attachment to the unity of the Catholic Church which he did not want to replace but restore".³ He is keen to show continuity with the historic visible church of Christ whom he describes as his mother

According to the Heidelberg Catechism (Q54), to affirm "one, holy, catholic and apostolic" church means "*I believe that the Son of God, through his Spirit and the Word, out of the entire human race, from the beginning of the world to its end, gathers, protects, and preserves for himself a community chosen for eternal life and united in true faith. And of this community I am and always will be a living member.*"

3 Alexandre Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, Edinburgh, T. and T. Clarke, 1987.

THE MARKS OF THE CHURCH

Because some traditions offered different definitions of these attributes of the church (*attributa ecclesiae*), the Reformed recognised that, although necessary, these four attributes were insufficient to enable proper judgments to be made about the claims of other churches. Reformed theologians responded by articulating the doctrine of the ‘marks of the church’ (*notae verae ecclesiae*) in order to seek to explain how the true church could be recognised.⁴

During the Reformation period, Calvin discusses the *notae* in his *Institutes* and observes two such identifying marks, namely ‘the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ’s institution’.⁵ In Calvin’s debate with Cardinal Sadoletto he wrote ‘there are three things upon which the safety of the Church is founded, namely, doctrine, discipline, and the sacraments’.⁶ Calvin was clear about the function of the *notae*:

*For, in order that the title ‘church’ may not deceive us, every congregation that claims the name ‘church’ must be tested by this standard as by a touchstone.*⁷

These marks Calvin saw present in the Roman Catholic Church. To the Bishop of Naples he wrote “We indeed, Sadoletto, do not deny that those over which you preside are true churches of Christ but we maintain that the ‘Roman Pontiff’ (and the bishops) are savage wolves.”⁸ By this Calvin did not mean that he recognized individual believers within the Roman Catholic Church but in a letter to Socinus, he says, “When I say that remnants of the church remained in the Papacy, I do not restrict that to the elect who are dispersed therein, I judge that ruins of the broken church still exist there.”⁹

In the post-Reformation period, the Westminster Confession of Faith identifies the visible church as consisting of ‘all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children’ (25.2; Cf. WLC 62).¹⁰ The Confession also employs the marks of the true church, describing them as: (1) teaching and embracing the doctrine of the Gospel; (2) the administration of ordinances; and (3) the performance of public worship (25.4).

Like Calvin, the divines insist that no church is perfect: ‘The purest Churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error’ (25.5). Consequently, there are varying degrees of ‘more or less’ pure churches (25.4). The Confession also gives voice to the tragic reality that some churches no longer display these marks

4 P. D. L. Avis, “‘The True Church’ in Reformation Theology”, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 30 (1977), pp.319-45.

5 Calvin, Inst. 4.1.8.

6 John C. Olin, ed., *A Reformation Debate: John Calvin and Jacopo Sadoletto* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p.63.

7 Calvin, Inst. 4.1.11.

8 ‘Reply to Sadolet’, John Calvin, *Theological Treatises*, Library of Christian Classics, XXII, 241

9 ‘Letter to Socinus’, John Calvin, *Corpus Reformatorum*; Johannes Calvini Opera, XIII, p.487

10 Within the Reformed tradition there is significant debate over how the terminology of the visible and invisible church is to be understood. See for example: John Murray, ‘The Church: Its Definition in Terms of “Visible” and “Invisible” Invalid’ in *Collected Writings of John Murray, Volume One: The Claims of Truth* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1976), pp.231-36.

in any meaningful sense: they are so deeply compromised as to have become 'synagogues of Satan' (25.5).

THE OBJECTIVE VISIBLE CHURCH

In reformed ecclesiology, the church in which these attributes and marks are to be expressed is objective and visible.

- Insofar as the Lord alone knows who are truly his, the only church to which we are to relate is visible and is a mixture of 'wheat and tares'. Behind all evidences of visible unity in the body of Christ lies the original and largely hidden unity of that body in God's eternal election.
- This church needs organization. The church as an organism needs structure and accountability. The New Testament therefore prescribes church government.
- This visible church will be present in a place or territory in the world. The emphasis on a national church, the creation of parish boundaries, the role of those in civil society, and the application of the word of God to all of life contributes to this perspective.

In the 17th century, when the Westminster divines were summoned by 'The Long Parliament' the invitations were sent to members of the one Church of England. They were Erastians, Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Independents, but all part of the one church. The Scots came from the one Church of Scotland. Their first responsibility was to determine how the one visible church on these islands was to be governed.

Presbyterians in Ireland have essentially functioned within this ecclesiology. The first Presbyterian ministers in the North of Ireland were either chaplains from the national Church of Scotland or sought to become accepted into the Church of Ireland in the period known as *prescopalianism*. The divisions within the church, which subsequently led to denominational identity, were over authority. When Presbyterians believed that they were not free to practice their faith within the one national church, to preserve their integrity, they believed they had no option but to establish a distinct witness as a movement for reform.

Hence:

- The creation of presbyteries rather than accepting monarchical episcopacy without denying the validity of any such ordinations.
- The mission intent to provide places of worship for those with Presbyterian convictions, which explains the demography of the Presbyterian presence on the island.
- The rationale of the Irish Mission which was to make the scriptures known to Irish people and 'so permeate the whole mass with evangelical truth and so bring about a spiritual revolution from within'.
- The almost unanimous decision of the General Assembly, after the 1859 revival, not to re-baptise Roman Catholics who had chosen to become members of Presbyterian churches.
- The code of the PCI reflects this reformed understanding of the church.

SECTION 1 – THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

- (i) The one catholic and universal Church of Jesus Christ is both invisible and visible.

- (ii) The invisible Church consists of all those who have been, are being or shall be gathered into one under Christ, the Head.
 - (iii) (1) The visible Church consists of all those throughout the world who profess to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation and to live obedient to God's Word, together with their children.
 - (iv) (2) The visible Church was established by the Lord Jesus Christ for the glory of the Father and the advancement of His Kingdom in the world. These great purposes are to be accomplished by the proclamation of the Gospel, by witness-bearing to the truth as it is in Jesus Christ and by the promotion of Christian fellowship and mutual edification among all believers.
 - (v) (1) Many particular Churches are included in the visible Church. Each of these consists of a congregation of persons who are associated for the administration and observance of ordinances according to the Scriptures or a number of such congregations under a common government.
 - (iv) (2) The Presbyterian Church in Ireland is thus a particular Church of the visible catholic or universal Church of Jesus Christ.
- We speak of the PCI as a branch of the visible church.
 - After the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, the PCI showed its commitment to interchurch mission through the visible church by becoming founding members of the Irish Council of Churches.

CURRENT ISSUES FOR THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND

1. The need for a more robust and reformed doctrine of the church.

Before we can begin to consider issues affecting our relationships with other churches, we need to have a clear understanding of the doctrine of the church to which we are committed. Currently it seems that within PCI there are different ecclesiologies which are held and which lead to a variety of practices and understandings about the mission and calling of the church and by implication denominations the PCI ought or ought not to be in fellowship with. This arises in part from a tension between the evangelical emphasis on a conversion experience and the expectation of evidence of regeneration as a criterion for church membership over and against the Reformed basis for church membership as a credible profession of faith.

Our first task must be a clear and practical articulation of what it means to be the Church of Jesus Christ in Ireland today.

In doing that, our Subordinate Standards are extremely helpful, and particularly Chapter XXV of the Westminster Confession of Faith. A careful consideration and explanation of this chapter is a necessary and helpful step in the task of educating our ministers, elders and members as we seek to be vibrant and transformative communities of Christ and work for the reform of the one holy, catholic and apostolic church.

The Westminster Confession of Faith affirms that the church is visible, universal and covenantal. It is also described as the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God. Following Cyprian, Augustine, the medieval church and the Reformers, the confession concludes that outside the church “there is no ordinary possibility of salvation”. A family, a household and a kingdom all require membership and identity with the larger group. We need to teach and affirm this high doctrine of the church and explain clearly the benefits, privileges and responsibilities of church membership, as well as encouraging the effective and fruitful exercise of the “ministry, oracles and ordinances of God for the gathering and perfecting of the saints”.

As a Reformed church, covenant theology is the ‘architectonic principle’ of our subordinate standards and it is fundamental to our confessional identity.¹¹ Consequently Reformed ecclesiology requires a proper understanding of the covenantal nature of the church. Hence the Confession insists upon identifying the visible church as consisting of “all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children” (XXV, 2; WLC 62).

The notion of God’s people in the old covenant that were marked with the sign and seal of circumcision, and how within it were reprobate idolaters so that only a few of those redeemed from Egypt entered the promised land, is not normally how we think of the church visible. John Calvin’s view that Christ’s one, holy, catholic and apostolic church was preserved in its darkest hour through the covenant sign and seal of baptism does not seem to resonate with us. It may also seem odd that he would begin his massive work on ‘the Church’ by saying “*There are many wolves within and many sheep without*”.

The visible church is not composed only of the regenerate; it is the covenant community where the Spirit brings to repentance and faith “those who are near (i.e. “you and your children”) and “all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself” (Acts 2:39). We expect the baptized to grow up into Christ, coming to faith and maturing in that faith, within the communion of saints. Our criterion for church membership is “a credible profession of faith”.¹² In our desire to be genuinely evangelical and reformed, we should not ask for more than that.

11 B.B. Warfield, ‘The Westminster Assembly and Its Work’ in *The Works of B.B. Warfield* (Baker:1981) 6.56.

12 The officers of the church are the judges of the qualifications of those to be admitted to sealing ordinances As God has not endowed any of these officers with the power of reading the heart, it follows that the qualifications of which they are the judges are simply those of competent knowledge, purity of life, and credible profession of faith. [By “credible” is meant not that which convinces, but that which can be believed to be genuine.] It is their duty to examine the applicant as to his knowledge, to watch and inquire concerning his walk and conversation, to set before him faithfully the inward spiritual qualifications requisite for acceptable communion and to hear his profession of that spiritual faith and purpose. The responsibility of the act then rests upon the individual professor, and not upon the session, who are never to be understood as passing judgment upon, or as indorsing the validity of his evidences. A.A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, pp.645-646.

2. The need to maintain a commitment to both unity and truth.

Unity is intrinsic to the truth of the gospel. Unity and truth are not alternatives. The unity of the church is a unity in truth, the truth that is in Jesus Christ, as revealed in Holy Scripture. To confess Christ, therefore, is to confess the unity of his church and to be impelled to pray and work for its visible unity.

The process of comprehending this truth needs to be done “together with all the saints” (Ephesians 3:17-19). Understanding the truth is limited by history, culture, situation and experience, and is often distorted by sin. Divisions in the body of Christ impoverish our understanding of the truth. In conversation with others, we seek to become clearer in our understanding of God’s revelation and to walk more consistently, humbly, and joyfully in its light.

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has a clear understanding of where the truth of the gospel is to be found: in the Bible as the supreme standard, and in the Westminster Standards as articulating fundamental doctrines which are founded on and agreeable to the Word of God. The PCI, as a part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, is committed to a public confession of apostolic faith. Unfortunately, the notion of Sola Scriptura has often been distorted so that Protestantism has been cut off from its own theological and ecclesiological history.

Holding to an understanding of truth as stated in a creed or confession allows for the clear, public expression of what we believe Christ has said and continues to say by the Holy Spirit through the scriptures. The public nature of such confessions and creeds serves the interests of transparency and integrity in our interchurch relations.

In a helpful book, *The Creedal Imperative*,¹³ Carl Trueman includes a chapter entitled “The Cultural Case against Creeds and Confessions”.

“Modern culture has not rendered creeds and confessions untrue; far less has it rendered them unbiblical. But it has rendered them implausible and distasteful. They are implausible because they are built on old-fashioned notions of truth and language. They make the claim that a linguistic formulation of a state of affairs can have a binding authority beyond the mere text on the page, that creeds actually refer to something and that that something has significance for all of humanity ... They [creeds and confessions] go directly against the grain of antihistorical, antiauthoritarian age. Creeds strike hard at the cherished notion of human autonomy and of the notion that I am exceptional, that the normal rules do not apply to me in the way they do to others.

Confessional Protestantism has a historic, creedal integrity; it takes history seriously; it refuses to assume that the latest pulp evangelical primer on postmodernism is an adequate basis for ditching the whole of its tradition; and it wants to take seriously what the church has said about the Bible over the centuries ..Reformed Orthodoxy, for example, has theological moorings in an intelligent interaction with, and appropriation of, the best theological and exegetical work of the patristic and medieval authors, as well as the correctives of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In fact, as I repeatedly tell my

13 Carl R. Trueman, *The Creedal Imperative* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012).

students, if you hold to Reformed Orthodoxy, you can quite legitimately interact with and appropriate the best theology, West and East, from the Apostolic Fathers down to the present day, in your articulation of a truly catholic orthodoxy.”¹⁴

Passion for the truth of Christ impels us to reach out to the people of God everywhere. We are not a separatist church. We would like to be seen to be in partnership with our brothers and sisters in Christ who are part of the one, visible church of Christ on this island and around the world. We are committed to fellowship and mission together especially with those branches of the church that share our reformed and evangelical convictions. We will also seek to show solidarity in ministry, as far as possible, with those communities, who as part of the church catholic, bear witness to Jesus Christ as Lord, as expressed in the historic creeds of the church and with whom we share a common baptism.

We have been influenced by the voices that call for separation, but which fail to recognize and value the unity of the church. Our passion for the truth of Christ also calls us to reject any expressions of unity that dilute our unequivocal witness to Jesus Christ.

3. The need to recognise degrees of connection with other Christians.

A possible model for our interconnectedness in unity and truth is to base our network of relationships on those truths, which are a bond of fellowship and expresses our oneness in Christ as those who are catholic, evangelical and reformed.

- The historic creeds of the church provide an umbrella of *catholicity* both historically and with the visible church. This would be the basis of mutual acceptance and affirmation.
- Closer ties would be formed with churches that are *evangelical* and who embrace the material and formal principles of the reformation in terms of the doctrines of grace and the authority of scripture.
- Our most immediate and first relationships would be in practice with those churches which are *reformed* in theology and ecclesiology as expressed in their post reformational confessions.

While we value our historic links with other denominations in Ireland and Britain and believe that they are testimony to the unity of the church, we should also welcome the possibility of new relationships both at home and abroad and especially in the global south, which may re-energise and re-vitalize the ministry and witness of the PCI.

¹⁴ See more at: www.reformation21.org/shelf-life/is-the-reformation-over.php#sthash.bvegvf66.dpuf

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER DENOMINATIONS

APPENDIX 2

PRINCIPLES OF PARTNERSHIP IN GLOBAL MISSION

1. PREAMBLE

Historically PCI's global mission partnerships have encompassed a wide range of activities and have had a broad geographical spread as PCI has sought to work with partner churches, mission agencies, and institutions around the world.

The current task is to draw up a set of principles or norms for denominational partnership in global mission. These principles have been developed and applied over many years of global mission engagement but now are being articulated with greater clarity. This will be helpful as PCI considers new or reviews existing partnerships.

The principles need to be sufficiently clear such that if a significant doctrinal or moral issue arises in the context of one of PCI's global mission partnerships, these principles will provide guidance should a review of the partnership be required. It is recognised however, that it is not possible to be definitive in terms of every potential issue that may surface, that there are numerous matters of conscience, and everyone tends to desire liberty on their particular issue.

2. CLASSIFICATIONS OF GLOBAL MISSION PARTNERSHIP

PCI, working through its Global Mission Council, has developed a broad range of missional relationships over the years with churches, agencies and institutions in the overseas context. Where these relationships lead at some point to the placement of PCI mission personnel and/or the provision of funding, the relationship is normally referred to as a **global mission partnership**. This form of engagement distinguishes the relationship from others that might be described as development, fraternal, confessional, historical, geographical, or ecumenical, whether arising from bilateral or multilateral, formal or informal relationships:

- **Development:** Where PCI relates to development agencies or NGO's with a view to dealing with social issues and alleviating global poverty, and where the main focus is on the provision of funding
- **Fraternal:** Where long-standing friendship is expressed through informal conversations between churches or agencies on a broad range of topics. These are often in the context of a communion of churches or agency network e.g. The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), Global Connections
- **Confessional:** Where churches get together because they subscribe to the same confessional statements and may wish to meet to celebrate or discuss matters relating to their common heritage
- **Historical:** Where for whatever reason two or more churches have a shared history of relating or serving together to tackle a common concern

- **Geographical:** where churches meet together to consider matters common to those sharing the same land mass. Eg. Irish Council of Churches
- **Ecumenical:** Where churches, especially those aware of their differences, have come together to discuss and work towards better understanding and unity in Christ

3. PARTNERING AS A DENOMINATION

Traditionally PCI, through its Global Mission Council, has initiated global mission partnerships at the denominational level, often relating to the largest Presbyterian/Reformed denomination in a country overseas. This is undertaken in the understanding that the most fruitful missional partnership takes place when PCI, its General Assembly, Presbyteries and Congregations, work together as a denomination. It involves Global Mission Council representatives initiating relationships along the lines of best practice guidelines on partnering. It relies upon such relationships having broad appeal in the wider church at home such that vision for global engagement is caught at all levels of church life. Congregations and presbyteries are then able to share in the partnership through prayer, giving to the United Appeal, hosting visitors from the partner, resourcing projects, 'serving as senders' of mission personnel and teams, and developing twinning relationships.

It should be noted, however, that the following partnership principles have been drawn up primarily with denominational partnering in global mission in mind. A further piece of work would be required to develop these for partnership in other contexts. e.g. A presbytery to presbytery, or congregation to congregation partnership/twinning.

4. PRINCIPLES OR NORMS OF PARTNERSHIP

It is recognised that when there is confidence in the gospel, there should be liberty in relating to people and Jesus is our example in this regard. When it comes to partnering there are very many opportunities around the world for engaging alongside like-minded partners in locations where we might make a difference. It is important, therefore, that there is a process of discernment when PCI comes to enter into partnership.

The following principles or norms may be looked at as a potential sieve or filter through which existing partnerships could be evaluated and new partnership opportunities processed.

- (a) PCI **normally** partner with other churches, agencies and institutions:
 - (i) In the Presbyterian or Reformed tradition. Those who subscribe and hold to the Westminster Confession or other Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th Centuries. So PCI asks, does the partner share PCI's Reformed tradition and practice?
 - (ii) Who see the Scriptures as the Supreme Rule of Faith and Order
 - (iii) Who are like-minded and with whom we have a sense of family. This is expressed through shared values, priorities and resources so that the partnership can be seen to have potential for mission. IE. To be going places with a focused missional agenda that has been prayerfully discerned. So together PCI seek God's mind as to what He is saying, keeping in focus:

- Common **values** of being honest, available, committed, patient, versatile, open to negotiation and change, accountable, transparent, and adopting an holistic approach
 - Common **priorities** such as reaching the unreached, discipling for transformation, leadership development, conflict resolution, poverty alleviation etc.
 - Opportunities for the sharing **resources**, including personnel, finance, and expertise
 - Possibilities for developing ongoing congregational and presbyterial mission involvement
 - Whether there are members of the overseas partner church already living, working and witnessing in Ireland
- (b) Where the nature of global mission partnership means that it can be just for a season and focussed on a particular task or short-term project. Normally, however, it is understood that missional partnerships take time to develop so PCI does not rush in to or jump out of partnership as a matter of course. It is seen as being more akin to family, where relationships ebb and flow, sometimes in focus and at other times less so.
- (c) With an emphasis on effective communication, not least through visits and consultations. This is enhanced for PCI when English is a shared language.
- (d) With a desire to avoid unhealthy, long-term, dependence of one partner upon the other, rather working towards genuine reciprocal relationships and inter-dependency where partners help each other to fulfil their calling. So, PCI asks, what is the likelihood of reciprocity and avoiding dependency?
- (e) Giving consideration to any other international partners that the potential partner already has, either through multilateral or bilateral relations.
- (f) Listening, learning, and receiving being seen as important as speaking, teaching and giving
- (g) Seeing the importance of being open to diversity, difference, and complementarity that will feed positively into the partnership so that partners can be stronger from working together. Encountering diversity and difference in this context should not require PCI to compromise on stated doctrinal beliefs. On occasions PCI may partner in the understanding that PCI would not be supportive of the partner's endorsement of practices not acceptable to PCI's interpretation of Scripture e.g. The receipt of lottery funding
- (h) Accepting one another just as we are as partners, yet recognising there is a learning from one another, sometimes through prayerful wrestling to find a way forward and with mutual admonishing and correcting that furthers transformation towards Christlikeness.
- (i) Recognising PCI may face a set of circumstances in a potential partner that would lead us not to enter into a new partnership, yet if the same set of circumstances arose in a longstanding partnership, while PCI may not approve of what had happened, but given liberty to serve and for the sake of the Kingdom potential in the partnership, PCI may choose

to continue in that relationship for a season, albeit carefully monitoring progress

- (j) PCI's focus primarily should be on mission and engaging in missional activities that PCI are invited and free to engage in through the partnership, not on activities that the partner may be engaged in that PCI may not approve of, though neither should these be ignored. An important question at this point is, "Does PCI's partner or potential partner fully understand and clearly value PCI for what it is, not simply for what PCI can bring or do?"
- (k) PCI and its personnel should be accepted for who they are and able to work with PCI's subordinate standards to the fore and with complete freedom. Any loss of such liberty may not only render service ineffective but the partnership untenable.
- (l) While serving under the authority of a partner church's leadership, PCI mission personnel should be honestly representing PCI in their day to day work, free to maintain and declare PCI's clearly held position on a particular matter, even if it is contrary to the view of partner, yet balancing this with their responsibilities when serving under the authority of the partner. Where PCI may differ with a certain position or activity of the partner, discernment will be needed in the context, not least where mission personnel are involved, so as to be able to say:
 - (i) "PCI disagree but have been given freedom to continue working unhindered"
 - (ii) "PCI disagree but find there is space for discussion and compromise"
 - (iii) "PCI disagree and can no longer work in this context"
 - It is recognised that the partner will likely have a view of a particular position adopted by PCI and as a result may wish to review or discontinue the partnership and/or the role of PCI personnel. In such circumstances, especially when a missionary's role is placed in jeopardy, PCI must keep to the fore our pastoral responsibilities for mission personnel.

IN CONCLUSION

This section of the report has sought to highlight that Global Mission Partnership is one way in which PCI relates to the wider Church. It also sets out norms, developed over many years, by which such partnerships are able to move forward with both the liberty and focus of the gospel. It is recognised that partnerships are more likely to be invested in deeply and thrive when these norms are clearly owned and shared. All global mission partnerships should be entered into, reviewed and developed on behalf of the General Assembly through the prayerful work of the appropriate Committees, Panels and Task Groups of the Council for Global Mission.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER DENOMINATIONS

APPENDIX 3

RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND (CofS)

DECISION OF THE 2016 GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND ITS FOLLOW-UP

1. The 2016 General Assembly received a report of a meeting held in Belfast in February 2016 between representatives of the PCI and the CofS. Following lengthy debate and after several amendments, the following resolution was passed:

“That the General Assembly note the worthwhile meeting which has taken place between representatives of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Church of Scotland; that the natural ongoing contacts and collaborations between Councils, Conveners and staff be maintained where appropriate; and that representatives of both denominations’ Church Relations Committees be encouraged to meet in the autumn of 2016 to discuss ongoing relationships.” (2016 General Assembly Minutes, page 92)

2. The proposed meeting took place on Monday, 5th December 2016 in Edinburgh, when the two Churches were represented by the following delegations:

- PCI: Very Rev Drs Rob Craig (General Council Convener) and Ivan Patterson (Church Relations, Chair); Revs John Brackenridge (Church Relations, Convener) and Trevor Gribben (Clerk)
- CofS: Very Rev John Chalmers (Principal Clerk), Rev Alison McDonald (Ecumenical Relations Convener), Rev Dr John McPake (new Interim Ecumenical Relations Officer) and Rev Derek Browning (Assembly Arrangements Convener, now also Moderator Designate)

3. The decisions of the 2016 PCI General Assembly were explained and discussed. It was noted that in light of the decisions, PCI was able to ‘maintain’ the natural ongoing contacts and collaborations between Councils, Conveners and staff, where appropriate, but that the General Assembly rejected the proposition that these be ‘encouraged and developed’. It was also noted that PCI had begun a process to agree the principles by which the PCI relates to other denominations, or indeed alters its relationship with other denominations.

4. While the CofS reps regretted the decisions taken by the PCI General Assembly they understood something of the depth of feeling in PCI. The CofS reps were encouraged by the wider process that PCI had entered into. It was recognised that though a PCI delegation would not be attending the 2017 CofS General Assembly, a CofS delegation would be invited to attend the 2017 PCI

General Assembly. There was some discussion relating to how welcome the CofS delegation would be, clear assurances given and general agreement that there was value in the normal CofS delegation coming.

5. PCI reps raised the issue of need to find a way to enable the PCI General Assembly to make its 'concern/disappointment' known to the CofS in a way that will both be clear and gracious, enabling the possibility of the 'annual symbolic decision to not send the Moderator' to no longer be necessary. This could give an 'outlet' for PCI to express its concern/disappointment and then to re-establish more normal relationships. The CofS reps indicated they understood, from the perspective of many in PCI, of the need to find some way of doing this. They indicated that the CofS would obviously receive anything that PCI wished to communicate, however it could produce a 'response' from a number within the CofS who were on the more 'radical wing'.

SOME IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

An open rebuke is better than hidden love! Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy. Proverbs 27:5–6 NLT-SE

The need for a Reformed catholicism

6. It has already been established that unity and truth are not alternatives with competing agendas. This is not a new idea in the Reformed tradition. The very word 'Reformed' is a reminder of the importance of pursuing truth constantly renewing our focus on apostolic teaching, the gospel itself and indeed all that God has revealed in Scripture. So when the Reformers continued as churches outside the Roman institution they did not abandon the word 'catholic' or write off the Roman church as a false church – they recognised that there were vestigia of the true church present but because they were not permitted to pursue the reformation and renewal of the church according to the scriptures they refused to succumb to papal authority. As Reformed catholics they held unity and truth together, rather than in tension.

7. In the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's (PCI's) relationship with other Christian communities, it could easily lose sight of what it means to be catholic, denigrating those churches deemed to be less pure, treating them as false churches or a dangerous influence threatening to drag us into error. To be reformed requires not being content with simply recognising vestigia in another community of faith. Instead, as those who claim to be reformed and ever reforming, PCI ought to be pursuing a greater purity, a greater faithfulness to Christ – and so fan into flame the embers of renewal both within PCI and in others.

8. PCI has historically adopted an approach of Reformed catholicism in its inter-church relations including the way it has related to other denominations which we considered to be in serious error. For instance when the Presbyterian Church in North America, with the support of men like Charles Hodge and RL Dabney, voted to defend the practice of slavery, Presbyterians in Ireland were appalled. They saw the slave trade as a systemic evil and contrary to the word of God. Nevertheless, they maintained a relationship with that church in the hope of reform. PCI has also been the recipient of patience and grace from other denominations during its own difficulties such as struggles with sectarianism and nationalism during 'the Troubles'.

9. This is a reminder of the need for what David Buschart calls the ‘humble recognition that all traditions of Christianity contain an admixture of truth and error, wisdom and weakness.’¹⁵ Error and weakness are often better identified from outside, meaning that others benefit from PCI being in relationship with them, as fellow Catholics, to help with their reform. Equally that PCI needs others to help it reform. Comparing dialogue and fellowship between denominations to sharing a meal in each other’s house, Kevin Vanhoozer writes, ‘We should check for pests in our own houses before pointing out the termites in those of our neighbours. Even better would be a situation where each house looked out and worked for the betterment of its neighbours.’¹⁶

Trajectories in the Church of Scotland (CofS)

10. The current debate in PCI over inter-church relations has been precipitated by what the CofS General Assembly has labelled the ‘Revisionist’ trajectory in relation to decisions about homosexuality (opposed by a ‘Traditionalist’ position). However, there is another, less publicised, trajectory of increasingly evangelical and reformed convictions that has not been reflected in the activity of the institution, particularly the decisions of the General Assembly, and consequently has been less visible to those who do not have relationships with people within the CofS.

(a) The Revisionist trajectory

- (i) **Holiness:** The presenting issue in the tensions that have arisen between PCI and the CofS is the ordination of people in same-sex relationships. PCI’s understanding of the Bible is that such relationships are outside of God’s good purposes for humankind and are sinful. The scriptures show that sexual immorality is a serious issue: it is one of the few things the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 absolutely prohibited and there are repeated warnings in the epistles and Revelation. While not seeking to hold a hierarchy of sin, the sanctioning and practice of this lifestyle by those in leadership publically undermines the witness of the church and its call to holiness. To quote NT Wright:

*the Church cannot sanction or bless same-sex unions; second, since the ordained ministry carries a necessarily representative function for the life of the Church, those who order their life in this way cannot be ordained.*¹⁷

- (ii) **Apostolicity:** Revisionists claim this disagreement is about interpretation, not authority. However, in 2013 the CofS General Assembly decided to ‘affirm the Church’s historic and current doctrine and practice in relation to human sexuality’ but ‘nonetheless permit those Kirk Session who wish to part from that doctrine and practice to do so.’ While the truth of the Bible was

15 David Buschart, *Exploring Protestant Traditions*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), p.28.

16 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority After Babel*, (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016), p.225.

17 N. T. Wright, ‘Rowan’s Reflections: Unpacking the Archbishop’s Statement’ in *Fulcrum*, 30th July 2009.

upheld, its authority was undermined. Some ministers are known to have publicly, in the presence of senior officials in the CofS, denied fundamental truths such as the resurrection, the uniqueness of Christ and that Christ died for our sins.

- (iii) **Unity:** The CofS itself is deeply divided over this issue. While the General Assembly has also largely voted consistently for Revisionist approaches there are significant numbers of ministers and elders who are dismayed at the direction the church is taking. Some have had enough and left. In his 2015 book *A Sad Departure*, Rev. David J. Randall lists 40 such ministers and 21 new congregations that have been established outside the denomination.
- (iv) **Catholicity:** Traditionalists on the 2011 Special Commission on Same-sex Relationships and the Ministry warned that,

As our ministry is answerable to the whole church, it would cause grievous damage to ecumenical relations were the Church unilaterally to ordain practising homosexuals. Were the Church to alter its rule on the ordination of ministers it would distance itself from the reality of what it means to be part of the Holy Catholic, or Universal, Church.

Following this, the Russian Orthodox Church has cut off ecumenical relationships while the Moderator of the Australian Presbyterian Church, after visiting the CofS General Assembly in 2015, reported that,

the malaise of the Church of Scotland is wider and deeper than this one issue. The majority has rejected the authority of God Himself in admitting to Christian ministry those living in such relationships ... I see no point in symbolically representing the Presbyterian Church of Australia at such an Assembly, when the basis of our fellowship, the Lordship of the risen Lord Jesus Christ, is so disregarded.¹⁸

The actions of the CofS are potentially schismatic, distancing it from the church catholic.

- (v) **Administration of the Word:** Herman Bavinck argues that the church is identified by the gathering of believers rather than the discernment of sincere faith in individuals. Because the gathering is marked by the administration of the Word, it 'must be considered the foremost mark of the church [and] also includes the application of ecclesiastical discipline.'¹⁹ When false teaching is not dealt with by the institution and the General Assembly explicitly permits congregations and individuals to ignore what it has declared to be true teaching and practice, then ecclesiastical discipline is seriously compromised and this mark of the church is fading.

18 David Cook, www.presbyterian.org.au/index.php/resources/moderator-s-comments/8-the-church-of-scotland, posted 21st May 2015, accessed 27th February 2017.

19 Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics Volume 4: Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. J. Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), pp.313-4.

(vi) **The Objective Visible Church:** While the Church is more than an institution, it is the institution which defines the boundaries and provides the collective, visible witness of its members – and it is the institution to which PCI relates as a denomination. While many members and elders in the CofS hold similar doctrinal and ethical views to PCI, the CofS General Assembly voted against a counter-motion to ‘Affirm the Church’s historic and current position that, according to God’s revealed will in Scripture, marriage between one man and one woman is the only right and proper context for sexual relations’ in 2014, then voted in 2015 to authorise congregations to depart from ‘the Church’s historic and current position’ by calling a minister in a same-sex civil partnership and also in the same year to extend approval to ministers in same-sex marriages.

(b) The evangelical and reformed trajectory

- (i) **Apostolicity:** The CofS has been for generations a predominantly theologically liberal church. When Eric Alexander began his ministry he reckoned one could have put all the evangelicals in a telephone kiosk. Despite this, those committed to reform and renewal such as Tom Allan, James S Stewart and William Still exercised ministries of infiltration within the CofS, because of their commitment to the national Kirk. Significantly, while the institution has become more liberal in its ethical judgements, there are signs that the church as an organism has become more theologically conservative. It has elected some more conservative moderators and at present ‘The Covenant Fellowship’ within the CofS reckons that one third of the 1,200 ministers in the Kirk are orthodox, reformed or evangelical.
- (ii) **Holiness:** On the issue of homosexuality, there are a significant number who disagree with the Revisionist trajectory. A consultation within the CofS in 2009 revealed that 2,160 elders, 307 members of Presbytery and 3 Presbyteries viewed the issue of ordaining someone in a committed same-sex relationship as a matter of heresy on a par with denying the resurrection while a further 6,273 elders, 802 Presbytery members and 24 Presbyteries said that carrying out such an ordination, while not heresy, would be ‘unjustifiable’.²⁰ When ruling elders were asked about whether homosexual activity was acceptable, and whether it would make a difference to who can be in a leadership role in the church the 22,000 who responded were divided 50:50. At the Presbytery level, individual members voted in a 3:2 ratios for various Traditionalist positions whereas the Presbyteries themselves voted 2:3, preferring Revisionist positions. While some have left, a greater number remain, sharing PCI’s views, ministering faithfully, hoping for reform and looking for support.

²⁰ Reported in the CofS 2011 General Assembly ‘Special Commission on Same-sex Relationships and the Ministry’, pp.5–12.

- (iii) **Unity:** While the Revisionist trajectory has moved the church far, there is now a sense that the changes have been too much for some and damaging to the church. Further change is currently opposed. If the trajectory of renewed orthodoxy continues the Revisionist trajectory may be reversed.
- (iv) **Catholicity:** A renewal of orthodoxy in some areas is evident in the CofS's interactions with other denominations through the World Communion of Reformed Churches. Like PCI, the CofS has argued against an unequivocal acceptance of the Joint Declaration on Justification by Faith issued by Lutherans and Roman Catholics and has done so on the basis of the classic reformed understanding of justification.

Tensions within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland

11. In response to the decisions in the CofS General Assembly, the PCI General Assembly has voted for the last two years to decline invitations to send the Moderator to their Assembly. This is a contentious issue within PCI. If the denomination is to move forward with consensus on this issue then it is necessary to understand the different convictions driving the debate and consider how to constructively deal with concerns on both sides.

(a) Concerns expressed by some about not taking a stand

There are concerns that *continuing as usual* with the CofS will:

- (i) embolden those who might want to change PCI's position on homosexuality;
- (ii) confuse congregations within PCI;
- (iii) compromise PCI's faithfulness and witness;
- (iv) go against the will of the PCI General Assembly that has been established over the last two years by not sending the Moderator to the CofS General Assembly;
- (v) be hurtful for those who have already left the CofS over this issue, sometimes at great cost.

(b) Concerns by some about withdrawing from relationship

There are concerns that minimising PCI's relationships with the CofS will:

- (i) encourage a new and increasingly separatist ecclesiology within PCI;
- (ii) be interpreted by those within PCI who struggle with same sex attraction as a sign that their struggles cannot be spoken about within PCI and that the denomination wants to distance itself from the CofS;
- (iii) encourage a sense of self righteousness as a denomination, that 'we are better than others';
- (iv) prevent PCI from hearing different voices who could expose flaws that PCI is blind to, holding back necessary reform;
- (v) leave Traditionalists who have remained in the CofS abandoned.

(c) Summary

With a high view of the church, it is difficult to justify the existence of any denomination, including PCI, on exegetical grounds from scripture.

Writing about denominations, Kevin Vanhoozer, although recognising ‘that we do not have a satisfying account of what a denomination is,’²¹ distinguishes between three types:

- (i) Weak denominationalism where ‘some denominations become so nondoctrinal that they lose the gospel altogether, at which time faithful congregations are faced with the decision to remain as salt and light or to associate with some other group.’
- (ii) Radical denominationalism wherein people are tempted by ‘a sinful desire to hoard the marks of the one true church for one’s own congregations only,’ and ‘may be more inclined to exercise the nuclear option ... and push the proverbial button if doing so could make certain other denominations disappear.’
- (iii) Strong denominationalism which provides ‘a contextualization of the gospel’ and wherein people ‘are confident enough in their own skins to cooperate with other denominations.’²²
- (iv) These definitions capture a great deal of the varied concerns in PCI: that the CofS has a weak denominationalism that threatens its existence as a true church; and that PCI itself is moving towards a radical denominationalism that mirrors the factionalism and separatism of sections of American church life which has more in common with a baptist ecclesiology than anything Calvin and the Westminster Divines would recognise.

Principles for pursuing mutual reform

12. Ideally both the CofS and PCI would have a strong denominationalism so that the gospel would be faithfully proclaimed and both denominations would be comfortable dialoguing about difficult issues.

13. Dealing with radical denominationalism requires an allowance for differences and even error while still maintaining relationships. The alternative is to fall into the Donatist folly and develop a separatist attitude. Similarly, PCI needs to humbly recognise that the church visible is always and everywhere in need of reform and needs to be open to hearing the challenge and rebuke of others, including a call to reform from voices in the CofS who may see error in PCI that those looking from within are blind to.

14. This also includes how conversations about perceived doctrinal error and ethical concerns are conducted within PCI. They must always take place in a spirit of grace and humility that assures people that they are being heard. One way to do this as a denomination is to articulate and recognise the concerns people have about the pastoral implications of withdrawing from this relationship.

15. Dealing with weak denominationalism, there is the danger of thinking that no church or denomination can judge another unless they themselves are perfect. Ironically, like Donatism, this depends on the implicit assumption that perfection is possible. Churches and denominations need to lovingly confront and rebuke each other – even when those challenging their brothers and sisters are aware of their own sinfulness.

21 Vanhoozer, p.188.

22 *Ibid.*, pp.189–190.

16. The nature of weak denominationalism means that the institutions are not always necessarily the best place to engage in dialogue and encourage reform. Conversation and co-operation do not always have to happen on an institutional level. As Vanhoozer observes, 'we need to distinguish between ecumenical unity – visible unity of an organizational kind – and evangelical unity, where the focus is on the gospel, which both unites (in Christ) and divides (cf. Luke 12:51).'²³ There are individuals and fellowships within the CofS with whom PCI is in theological and ethical agreement and who are in a position to work for reform from within.

17. PCI is well placed to engage with the CofS in a way that enables this process of mutual reform. Both denominations share a confession and a great deal of history and have cultural similarities, geographical proximity and a multi-dimensional existing relationship through denominational structures and personal friendships. This provides both the opportunity and the obligation to pursue unity and truth through mutual encouragement and loving rebuke.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER DENOMINATIONS

APPENDIX 3(A)

A SUMMARY OF THE POSITION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND (PCI) REGARDING HUMAN SEXUALITY AND MARRIAGE

1. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) affirms that while a person's sexuality is a very important part of their lives, it does not define who they are.
 - (a) People are more than their sexuality – they are first and foremost individuals both created and loved by the living God.
 - (b) Further, it is the clear position of PCI that same sex attraction (homosexual orientation) is in itself not sinful. However, PCI is equally clear that an active homosexual lifestyle is contrary to Scriptures and conflicts with the will of God for men and women. (1979 Assembly Reports.)
2. To assist the Church, PCI has produced pastoral guidelines in these matters (2006 Assembly Reports).
 - (a) These guidelines, along with the more recent seminars and resources for Ministers (and those planned for elders and other leaders) do not contradict or change PCI's clear biblical and theological position. Rather they seek to assist Ministers, leaders and congregations, while holding firm to that position, to also provide a loving and grace filled welcome and support to all people, irrespective of sexual orientation.
 - (b) The deep pain and struggle felt by individuals and their loved ones in respect of the relationship between same sex attraction and a faithful

biblical lifestyle, is freely acknowledged. It is recognised that PCI has room for improvement as it seeks to develop more sensitive and effective pastoral care, both generally and with specific reference to those with same sex attraction and their families.

3. With regard specifically to marriage, PCI affirms that since the beginning of creation God, in his gracious purpose, provided marriage as the accepted way in which a man and a woman may come together as husband and wife.

- (a) PCI therefore accepts this as the only basis on which marriage can take place within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.
- (b) This position is consistent with both the teaching of Scripture (the Church's supreme standard) and the Westminster Confession of Faith (the Church's sub-ordinate standard – see Chpt 24:1).
- (c) PCI therefore supports the current legal definition of marriage within the law of Northern Ireland and opposes any redefinition of marriage.

4. Recognising that PCI affirms the biblical and confessional position of marriage as being exclusively between one man and one woman, the General Assembly has directed:

- (a) that Ministers and Licentiates of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland shall not conduct, nor assist in leading, services of marriage for same sex couples and that Presbyterian Church in Ireland premises shall not be used by others for such services;
- (b) that Ministers and Licentiates of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland shall not conduct, nor assist in leading, services of blessing, or any similar services, for same sex couples involved in either a civil partnership or civil marriage and that Presbyterian Church in Ireland premises shall not be used by any others for such services.

5. Implications for the qualification for leadership

- (a) All Candidates for the Ministry within PCI (as well as those Ministers seeking to transfer from another Church) are required to affirm the church's standards in these matters, as in others, before being received.

The applicant's form asks:

In 1979 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland received a report which stated:

“Christian teaching declares that the divine or holy use of the human sexual relationship lies in the marriage of a man and woman and in family life. Any other practice, whether heterosexual or homosexual, whether of persons married or unmarried, is a shortcoming or abuse.”

Do you adhere to this position?

Yes/No

- (b) PCI has made clear, on biblical and theological grounds, that an active homosexual lifestyle is contrary to Scripture. Those in ordained leadership are especially expected to model the Christian lifestyle as PCI understands it to be taught in the Scripture - the only infallible standard of faith and practice, guiding the Church in this as in all other issues.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER DENOMINATIONS

APPENDIX 4

RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

DECISION OF THE 2016 GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND ITS FOLLOW-UP

1. The 2016 General Assembly received a report of a meeting held in Belfast in December 2015 between representatives of the PCI and the Free Church of Scotland (Free CofS). Following debate the following resolution was passed:

“That the General Assembly note the worthwhile meeting which has taken place between representatives of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Free Church of Scotland and welcome a natural development of a relationship with the Free Church of Scotland through areas of mutual interest in the Councils of the respective Assemblies.”
(2016 General Assembly Minutes, page 47)

2. The proposed meeting took place on Tuesday 6th December 2016 in Edinburgh, when the two Churches were represented by the following delegations:

PCI: Very Rev Drs Rob Craig (General Council Convener) and Ivan Patterson (Church Relations, Chair); Revs John Brackenridge (Church Relations, Convener) and Trevor Gribben (Clerk)
Free CofS: Rev. David Meredith, Mission Director; Rev. Alasdair M. Macleod, Mission Board Chairman; Rev. Malcolm Macleod, Assistant Clerk of Assembly; Rev. Iver Martin, ETS; Rev. John Nicholls, Moderator of the General Assembly.

3. Representatives of both churches reported on recent significant events in their respective denomination and the challenges of ministry in their respective contexts.

The Free CofS reps reported on the following areas of ministry and developments in the denomination:

- Church Planting
- The importance of discipleship
- New congregation's joining from other denominations, in particular arising from recent developments in the Church of Scotland
- Developments in global mission
- Developments in Edinburgh Theological Seminary and links with Glasgow University
- Membership of **International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC)** – www.icrconline.com
- Membership of **World Reformed Fellowship**: <http://wrfnet.org>

PCI Reps summarised developments and significant issues in Ireland.

4. Follow-up:

The decision of the 2016 PCI was explained and discussed. The Free CofS reps welcomed the PCI decisions which were very much in line with their own thinking.

The meeting noted the mutual benefit of the discussion and agreed the following matters as areas of common interest as the basis for the natural development of relationships between both denominations:

- Church Planting
- ETS and PCI College
- Discipleship
- Church Revitalisation
- Global Mission

SOME BACKGROUND CONSIDERATIONS

1. The Free Church was a relatively small denomination, with approx. 12,000 members in 110 congregations in Scotland, arranged in 5 Presbyteries.

2. PCI has an ongoing relationship with the Church of Scotland but it is recognised that this should not preclude a parallel relationship with the Free Church i.e. such relationships for PCI would not be mutually exclusive.

3. While PCI had a clearly stated theological position regarding ordination, in that both men and women were eligible for ordination on the same basis to both the ruling and teaching eldership, in the Free Church only men were eligible for ordination. It is recognised that for some in PCI this poses a difficulty though it was acknowledged that PCI already related to other denominations with similar theological positions as the Free Church took on this issue.

4. PCI is a member of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), while the Free Church was not. The Free Church was however a member of the World Reformed Fellowship and the International Conference of Reformed Churches. Some denominations in these bodies were also connected to WCRC.

5. The Free CofS wished to widen its ecumenical reach and pursue meaningful relations with churches in the UK and beyond, especially churches from within our Presbyterian tradition. The Free Church 2015 General Assembly had agreed to instigate and pursue ecumenical relationships with the Presbyterian Church of Ireland.

6. It would not be appropriate to consider full interchangeability of ministry between the two denominations as PCI did not have that form of relationship with any other denomination and also the issue of ordination of women in PCI would make that undesirable from the Free Church's perspective.

7. Invitations to attend each other's General Assemblies could be one form of expressing a new relationship. However, that was not an initial priority for either denomination.

TREVOR D GRIBBEN, Convener

DOCTRINE COMMITTEE

1. The Doctrine Committee had two significant matters before it since the last meeting of the General Assembly.

2. Firstly, the Committee was asked to prepare a response for the General Council's consideration to the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) request that the PCI consider whether the WCRC should sign the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) previously ratified between Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Methodist representatives. The response of the Doctrine Committee is outlined in Appendix 1 to this report. It was received by the General Council at its October 2016 meeting and its recommendations adopted. This was subsequently forwarded to the WCRC as the position of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

3. The second matter before the Committee was the consideration of the issue of multi-faith prayer at civic events. The Committee's report is included at Appendix 2 to this report and was received at the March meeting of the General Council, when the following resolution was agreed:

Following consideration of the report of the Doctrine Committee, the General Council affirms that the 2007 Guidelines continue to be followed, but that further substantial reflection on the theological basis for involvement in multi-faith events be carried out by the Doctrine Committee, through the appointment of a dedicated Task Group, which should include a representative from each of the Councils for Public Affairs and Global Mission.

4. The Committee noted that the envisaged substantial reflection could be facilitated in a number of the following ways:

- (a) Holding an event to help orientate us to the complex issues involved in religious participation at civic events in our ever-evolving context;
- (b) Drawing on the resources of scholars who have first-hand familiarity with our context and who have relevant expertise - e.g. Richard Creighton who teaches theology in Nigeria, and whose doctoral research was on the political theology of Oliver O'Donovan;
- (c) Seeking funding for a graduate research position at Union College to examine the theological principles that would guide and shape Irish Presbyterian engagement in public life in the twenty-first century (which would help nurture PCI's own intellectual leadership in this complex issue);
- (d) Dialogue with other Christian groups not presently represented in such events (e.g. non-indigenous Pentecostal communities) to discuss their place and ours in civic society;
- (e) Dialogue with other Christian groups currently who are involved to see if a common response might be made;
- (f) Engagement with representatives of other religions to see if there is any similar discomfort.

J. STAFFORD CARSON, Convener

DOCTRINE COMMITTEE

APPENDIX 1

DOCTRINE COMMITTEE AND THE JOINT DECLARATION ON THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

The Doctrine Committee met on Friday 6th May and Friday 16th September 2016 to consider a request from the World Communion of Reformed Churches that the PCI consider whether the WCRC should sign the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) previously ratified between Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Methodists representatives.

The Background to the Request

The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) was signed in 1999 by the Lutheran World Federation and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) of the Roman Catholic Church after many years of ecumenical conversation. The central claim of the document is that it sets out an agreed position on justification rendering the mutual condemnations of the Reformation period no longer applicable. The World Methodist Council voted to adopt the document in 2006.

The WCRC has completed a dialogue with constituent churches on adopting the document. In addition to the ecumenical impulse underlying this process there are a number of additional motivations. First, the Reformation anniversary of 2017 offers the opportunity to make a bold public declaration. Second, as the “Personal Letter” from the leaders of the WCRC to the PCI makes clear, the ecumenical momentum anticipated from the original agreement has failed to develop and it is now hoped that WCRC involvement will breathe new life into the movement.

Finally, the proposal from the WCRC Executive includes, in addition to the signing the JDDJ, a suggested Statement of Association. This extensive document outlines some Reformed concerns.

The Response of the Doctrine Committee

The unanimous response of the Doctrine Committee is that the PCI should indicate to the WCRC that the JDDJ should not be ratified. The Committee based this conclusion on a number of factors:

- (a) The Committee are uneasy that the WCRC (and the PCI) might join a process that has been ongoing for many decades and in which PCI has not participated. The doctrine of justification by faith alone is a fundamental doctrine of the faith and while we commend others for their willingness to discuss these issues across historic boundaries, it would be unusual for the PCI to approve of a complex theological document which clearly addresses the concerns and conversations of other parties.

- (b) The approach of the document does not fit well with a Reformed confessional approach. The WCRC are clear in their correspondence with the PCI that the document represents a ‘method of differentiated consensus.’ The parties have agreed to a statement that leaves myriad central questions unanswered. In public statements on the doctrine of justification the PCI desires to be as specific and detailed as Scripture and her subordinate standards require. We should seek to say as much as we can about the grace of God with clarity and precision, not as little as we might be able to agree with others.
- (c) The Committee agree that, despite the intention to seek a ‘differentiated consensus’, serious questions remain about the theological exposition in the JDDJ. For example, the definition of justification is not agreed in the document. The parties simply agree to accept one another’s preferred definitions. These definitions may well be mutually contradictory. Furthermore, the meaning of ‘faith alone’ is not clear in the JDDJ. Indeed, the document states explicitly that justification is received in baptism: *‘We confess together that sinners are justified by faith in the saving action of God in Christ. By the action of the Holy Spirit in baptism, they are granted the gift of salvation, which lays the basis of the whole Christian life.’* While there may be qualifications that would enable the PCI to agree to such a statement, we do not believe that this is an appropriate form in which to confess our faith. After serious consideration of the JDDJ, the Statement of Association, and the personal correspondence from the WCRC Executive, the Doctrine Committee could not conclude that the JDDJ represents an authentically Irish Presbyterian public statement of the grace of God in Christ.
- (d) An overarching concern of the Committee concerns the ecumenical approach of the process. The PCI is being asked to approve of a ‘high level’ supra-national ecumenical statement. Yet the correspondence states that the JDDJ may never really have been accepted within the Vatican and it is now therefore necessary for the WCRC to ratify the JDDJ in order to support the work of ecumenical theologians within the Roman Catholic Church: *‘In their hands JDDJ can be useful as a lever that constantly helps to remind the Catholic side of the far-reaching commitments they had entered in’* (Matthias Zeindler). The Doctrine Committee believes as a matter of principle that ecumenical dialogue on this central question must begin at the local level before the ratification of supra-national agreements. Would it not seem odd to our near neighbours on this small island to discover that the PCI was willing to be a ‘lever’ within internal Roman Catholic discussions, yet had not opened conversations with Roman Catholic theologians in Ireland?
- (e) Finally, the Doctrine Committee believes this local ecumenical conversation is an urgent priority for the PCI. In an increasingly secular society we find ourselves making common cause with our Roman Catholic neighbours on many pressing moral concerns, including the definition of marriage and beginning and end of life issues. More than ever we need to be able to articulate the grace of God as profoundly

and as widely as is humanly possible. While we are grateful for the common stand we are able to make with others on moral issues, there is a divine imperative for a faithful Scriptural testimony to the grace of God in the cross of Christ.

Recommendations:

- (a) That the PCI indicate to the WCRC, for the reasons given above, that we do not wish the WCRC to ratify the JDDJ. In addition, the PCI has serious concerns that ratification will impair the public witness of both the WCRC and the PCI to the grace of God.
- (b) The Doctrine Committee requests General Assembly to consider appointing a theological commission to approach the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland for ecumenical discussions on our contemporary understanding of the grace of God in Christ.

DOCTRINE COMMITTEE

APPENDIX 2

MULTI-FAITH PRAYER AT CIVIC EVENTS

This paper attempts to outline the origin of the practice of participation in what is termed ‘multi-faith prayer’ and to summarise the Presbyterian Church in Ireland’s present involvement in such events. It explains the particular theological framework out of which this practice emerged and examines other rationales that might be employed in order to justify the involvement of a Reformed Church in such interfaith events. It is hoped that it may be the beginning of a sustained discussion of the matters of public theology that arise.

1. THE EVOLVING CONTEXT IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

The multi-faith prayer event is, increasingly, the preferred option for how religions, and the cultures formed by those religions, relate to one another in the public square.²⁴ Since the Doctrine Committee’s last consideration of this topic in 2007 the context has evolved on both sides of the border. Given that the speed of change is unlikely to slow it is appropriate that as a denomination we continue to reflect theologically on how the church relates to the ‘religious other’ in the public square.

24 In the United States, President Obama had a multifaith prayer service associated with his inauguration with Muslims, Hindus, Jews and Christians praying and reading from their scriptures. Amanda Ruggeri, ‘For President Obama, a somber, inclusive inaugural prayer service’, *US News*, 21st January, available at: www.usnews.com/news/obama/articles/2009/01/21/for-president-obama-a-somber-inclusive-inaugural-prayer-service.

There is nothing new about multi-faith prayer at civic events in the United Kingdom. Since 1966, the annual service for the 'Observance for Commonwealth Day' has taken the form of a multi-faith event. Now held in Westminster Abbey, this is the largest multi-faith gathering in the UK and includes Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, Hindu and Islamic prayers.²⁵ Most significantly, there has been discussion about the possibility of the next Coronation being a multi-faith service.²⁶ It is important that we begin a conversation about the possible implications of such a significant constitutional change.

In the Republic of Ireland, Presidential inaugurations and national events of remembrance also take the form of multi-faith services. For instance, the official programme for the remembrance event at Glasnevin is styled as an 'Interfaith Service' with participation from 'the Jewish, Islamic and Christian Faiths'.²⁷ Since the formation of the Republic there has been significant change in the religious element of such national events. Initially, a religious ceremony took place immediately prior to the inauguration of an Irish Presidency and it was exclusively denominational. For instance, in 1938, on the morning of his inauguration, President-elect Hyde attended worship in St Patrick's Anglican Cathedral whilst government ministers attended Votive Mass in the Pro-Cathedral. According to the London Times, there were also services in the principal Presbyterian and Methodist churches, as well as in the synagogue. Then in 1945 President-elect O'Kelly attended a Pontifical High Mass in St Mary's Pro-Cathedral. However in 1973, with the inauguration of President Childers, the service included participation from representatives of the four main churches.²⁸ This practice continued at the inaugurations of Presidents Ó Dálaigh and Hillery with an ecumenical service being held in the cathedral of the tradition

25 The orders of service are available on the website of the Abbey. See M. Braybrooke, *Interfaith Organizations, 1893-1979: An Historical Directory* (New York: Edward Mellon, 1980), pp.34-36. This year the only reference to the Lord Jesus in the liturgy was that his 'words' were used in the Lord's Prayer.

26 See Nick Spencer and Nicholas Dixon, *Who wants a Christian Coronation?* (London: Theos, 2015), available at www.theosthinktank.co.uk/publications/2015/09/01/who-wants-a-christian-coronation. See also Norman Bonney, *Monarchy, Religion and the State: Civil Religion in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and the Commonwealth* (Oxford: OUP, 2016), pp.117-24.

27 The officiating representatives were: Rabbi Zalman Lent (Representative of the Jewish Community in Ireland), Imam Sheikh Hussein Halawa (Islamic Cultural Centre), Archbishop Michael Jackson (Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin), Brian Anderson (President of the Methodist Church in Ireland), Trevor Morrow (Former Moderator of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church in Ireland), Father Tom Carroll (Representative of the Greek Orthodox Church in Ireland), Archbishop Diarmuid Martin (Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin), Ms Síle Headen (Chaplaincy of the Humanist Association of Ireland). www.taoiseach.gov.ie/DOT/eng/Historical_Information/1916_Commemorations/Events/Glasnevin_booklet_for_web.pdf

28 At the beginning of 1973 the Fifth Amendment to the Irish Constitution saw the special position afforded to the Roman Catholic Church, and the recognition of the main Protestant denominations, Quakers and Jews removed from the Constitution. Article 44 of the Constitution now states: 'The State acknowledges that the homage of public worship is due to Almighty God. It shall hold His Name in reverence, and shall respect and honour religion'.

of the President-elect. At the inauguration of Patrick Hillery to his second term (December 1983) a religious service preceded the civic ceremony at Dublin Castle with the President-elect being prayed for by representatives of the four main churches (the then moderator, Tom Simpson, represented PCI), the Clerk of the Society of Friends, and the Chief Rabbi. Although this change had ostensibly been to cut costs in difficult economic circumstances, this was to become the pattern for future inaugurations. And so at the inauguration of Mary McAleese in 1997 there was participation from the four main churches (with Frank Sellar representing PCI), the Society of Friends and the Chief Rabbi.²⁹ Most recently, at the inauguration of Michael D Higgins' presidency (November 2011), the multi-faith participation was extended still further with nine 'concelebrants' leading a service that took the following order: Be Thou My Vision was sung and there were prayers and readings from the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin and the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin. There was a musical rendering of St Patrick's Breastplate, a Scripture reading by the head of the Methodist Church, the Lord's Prayer in Irish and a prayer by Trevor Morrow as a representative of the Presbyterian Church, followed by prayers from a Quaker and a Coptic Christian. After the singing of Make me a Channel of Your Peace there was a Jewish prayer from the Chief Rabbi, a reading from the Qur'an by a representative of the Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland, and a statement from a representative of the Humanist Association of Ireland.

This was widely interpreted as an interfaith service.³⁰ Some did however recognise that it was designed to be a Christian service of prayer followed by blessings from Jewish and Islamic representatives and a moment of reflection to mark the humanist philosophy and secular aspects of Irish life.³¹

2. THE HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONTEXTS OF MULTI-FAITH PRAYER

The distinction between 'interfaith prayer' and 'multi-faith prayer' is frequently employed, multi-faith prayer being defined as prayer in the presence of another religious group in which each group present their own prayers and explicitly do not join in the others' prayers.³² Such participation is often *serial*, with each group taking its turn to pray (perhaps in alphabetical or historical order of religion) while the others listen or participate as they feel appropriate. Multi-faith prayer may also be *simultaneous*, with each group allocated a different space

29 At this stage the wearing of formal morning dress was abandoned and the judges no longer wore robes and wigs.

30 See for example: www.irishtimes.com/news/fanfare-as-aras-prepares-to-welcome-new-resident-1.10032; www.independent.ie/irish-news/president-michael-d-promises-seven-years-of-new-ideas-26791169.html; <http://islamireland.ie/news/icc-gives-the-islamic-presentation-at-presidential-inauguration/>; www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/republic-of-ireland/republic-lost-its-way-laments-new-irish-president-28679943.html

31 www.independent.ie/irish-news/president-michael-d-promises-seven-years-of-new-ideas-26791169.html

32 S. Wesley Ariarajah, *Not Without My Neighbour: Issues in Interfaith Relations* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1999), pp.38-39. Michael Amaladoss, SJ, 'Inter-religious Worship', in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-religious Dialogue*, ed. Catherine Cornille, (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp.87-98.

to pray separately at the same event. Either way, the intention is that no prayers would actually be said together.³³ This is summarised according to the rubric of ‘being together in prayer’ as opposed to ‘praying together’. The aim is well captured by Ryan who describes ‘serial’ participation as ‘a situation in which people come together in full fidelity to their own faith and offer an expression of it while at the same time opening their hearts with sincere respect and interest to the faith of others’.³⁴

It is hard to overstate the importance of the example of Pope John Paul II for the widespread acceptance of multi-faith prayer.³⁵ In 1986 he assembled the first of the Assisi prayer vigils for peace and invited Muslims, Buddhists, Zoroastrians and others to participate in parallel prayer. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, it was ‘one of the most remarkable events in the spectacle-filled reign of Pope John Paul II’.³⁶ It did arouse considerable controversy and so, shortly afterwards, the Pope provided his theological rationale for multi-faith prayer in his Christmas address to the Curia.

We don’t come to pray together, but we come together to pray. As each religion prays, thus expressing its own faith, the others do not join in: they respect and silently give encouragement to those who are praying, and are in quiet solidarity with them on the basis of their own belief, and of the inner prayer that flows from it.³⁷

The Pope’s reasons were: (1) that the prayer gathering was a witness to the world that the main religions were committed to peace; and (2) the event was a work of the Holy Spirit because ‘every authentic prayer is called forth by the Holy Spirit, who is mysteriously present the heart of every person’. Four years later, John Paul II offered further reasons in the encyclical *Redemptoris missio* (Mission of the Redeemer):³⁸ (3) all people are created in God’s image and therefore share a fundamental unity; and (4) the *praeparatio* status of world religions means that God can bring the authentic prayers of those of other religions to fullness in Christ and his Church.

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- 33 Gavin D’Costa, ‘Interreligious Prayer Between Christians and Muslims’, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 24 (2012), pp.1-14.
- 34 Thomas Ryan, *Interreligious Prayer: A Christian Guide* (New York: Paulist Press, 2008), 23. His inclusivist approach is based on his conviction that the Bible’s ‘overwhelming ... affirmation [is] that God is one and that God cares for all people’, p.7.
- 35 Arnulf Camps, ‘The Prayers for Peace at Assisi, October 27, 1986: What was Shared?’ in Jerald D. Gort et al, *On Sharing Religious Experience: Possibility of Interfaith Mutuality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 257.
- 36 Francis X. Rocca, ‘Pope Benedict’s Interfaith Outreach’ *The Wall Street Journal*, 31st October 2011.
- 37 John Paul II, ‘Pope’s Christmas address to the Roman Curia: the world situation constitutes a pressing appeal for the spirit of Assisi, 22nd December 1986’, *Bulletin, Secretariat for Non-Christians* 64 (22/1) (1987): pp.54–55, 60, citing 59. See also: Pope John Paul II, ‘Opening Address in the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels’, in Assisi: World Day of Prayer for Peace, 27th October 1986 (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1987), p.88.
- 38 John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), § 29. www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jpii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio_en.html

The nascent inclusivism of Roman Catholic theology had been embraced by the Second Vatican Council that, for the first time in conciliar history, had spoken about other religions in a positive, albeit guarded, manner.³⁹ At least five factors gave rise to a new optimism about the possibility of the salvation of non-Christians: the end of Christendom; two World Wars fought in the heart of Christian Europe; the Holocaust; the critique of missions from the viewpoint of secular modernity; and voices calling for reform within Catholicism.⁴⁰ The upshot was that the Roman Catholic Church now affirms the possibility of salvation for those who ‘sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience’.⁴¹ In other words, non-Christians may experience salvation apart from the sacramental mediation of the institutional church. Jews and Muslims can be saved, especially since their knowledge of God is based on biblical revelation, and there is also hope for Hindus and Buddhists who ‘search, among shadows and images’ for the unknown God who created them and who desires that they be saved.⁴² Indeed, salvation is possible for any who ‘seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience’.⁴³ It is not that non-Christian religions are regarded as salvific, but rather that the Holy Spirit is at work in them preparing non-Christians for the gospel through their institutions and practices (*praeparatio evangelica*). This inchoate salvation comes to completion in a post-mortem encounter with Christ in purgatory.⁴⁴

39 For the historical development of inclusivism within Roman Catholicism see Francis A. Sullivan, ‘Vatican II on the Salvation of Other Religions’, in *After Vatican II: Trajectories and Hermeneutics*, ed. James L. Heft (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 68-95. The inclusivism is also affirmed in the post-conciliar documents *Nostra aetate* (‘In our Time’ the Declaration on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions, *Ad gentes* (‘To the Nations’ the Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church) and *Gaudium et Spes* (‘Joy and Hope’ the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World).

See also Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1969), 6:395: ‘And anyone who has let himself be taken hold of by this grace can be called with every right an “anonymous Christian”’. Hans Kung, ‘The World Religions in God’s Plan of Salvation’, in *Christian Revelation and World Religions*, ed. Josef Neuner (London: Burns and Oates, 1965), pp.51-53: ‘Since God seriously and effectively wills that all men should be saved and that none should be lost unless by his own fault, every man is intended to find his salvation within his own historical condition ... within the religion imposed on him by society. ... A man is to be saved within the religion that is made available to him in his historical situation. Hence it is his right and duty to seek God within that religion in which the hidden God has already found him’.

40 D’Costa explains this trend in his section of Gavin D’Costa, Paul Knitter, and Daniel Strange, *Only One Way? Three Christian Responses on the Uniqueness of Christ in a Religiously Plural World* (London: SCM Press, 2011), pp.8-12.

41 *Lumen Gentium*, 16. This text (‘Light of the Nations’) is a Dogmatic Constitution on the Church and is regarded as one of Vatican II’s principal documents.

42 Catechism of the Catholic Church, §839-843.

43 *Lumen Gentium*, 16.

44 Contra the Westminster Larger Catechism: ‘Q. 60. Can they who have never heard the Gospel, and so, know not Jesus Christ, nor believe in him, be saved by their

In Great Britain, the Catholic Bishops' Conference in England and Wales also applauded multireligious prayer. Their reason was that such prayer served the unity of all people and their unity with God and it is thus part of the mission of the Church and an 'expression of love for our neighbour, and of respect for the integrity of the religions involved, and shows attentiveness to the universal presence of the Holy Spirit'.⁴⁵

The Church of England has also accepted multi-faith prayer, with varying degrees of qualification. In 1992 the Anglican Inter-faith Consultative Group provided theological principles and practical guidelines for Multi-Faith Worship.⁴⁶ Its understanding was that:

[F]aith groups observe respectfully while other believers worship and then take their own turn. This allows sacred texts, prayer and actions to be employed more freely across the faith groups represented, and allows those who wish to recognise areas of common experience and expression without offending those who do not believe they exist.

The Office on Inter-Religious Relations of the World Council of Churches and the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue together concluded that there was a case for multi-faith prayer.⁴⁷ The questions that lay behind their discussions were as follows:

When the natural human response in any given situation is to pray, and the context of that response is multireligious, what can we do together? How can we do it? Indeed, ought we to do it? And if we do, on what basis may we proceed?

Out of these discussions four possibilities emerged:

- (a) A shared multi-faith act with serial presentation from a number of different religious traditions. Although there may be a common theme, no attempt would be made to coordinate the presentations in order to make them cohere;
- (b) A contiguous act like what took place at the Days of Prayer for Peace in Assisi (1986 and 2002);
- (c) A multi-faith act in which 'the aim is to create, out of the resources of a multiplicity of religions involved, a prayer event that produces a "blended" or otherwise "combined" content which may be effectively "owned" in its entirety by each of the participating groups or their religious representative. Inevitably the only way this can be achieved is by taking the approach of the lowest common denominator'; and

living according to the light of nature? A. They who, having never heard the Gospel, know not Jesus Christ, and believe not in him, cannot be saved, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, or the Laws of that Religion which they professe; neither is there salvation in any other, but in Christ alone, who is the saviour only of his body the church'.

- 45 Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, *Meeting God in Friend and Stranger* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2010), pp.57-65.
- 46 'Multi-Faith Worship? Report by the Interfaith Consultative Group of the General Synod of the Church of England (London: Church House Publishing, 1992).
- 47 *The Pro Dialogo Bulletin*, 98 (1998) contains the full text of the Bossey meeting in September 1997 and the concluding statement of the Bangalore meeting of 1994.

- (d) Careful planning to produce a ‘coherent-integrated interreligious’ event.⁴⁸

3. CHALLENGES TO PARTICIPATION IN MULTI-FAITH PRAYER

The widespread embrace of multi-faith prayer has not gone unchallenged, even amongst Roman Catholics whose understanding of other religions provides them with a theological basis for participation in such events. At the time of the first Assisi gathering, Joseph Ratzinger was one of the Pontiff’s closest advisors but he was uneasy about John Paul’s grand gesture and declined an invitation to be present at the multi-faith event. He later pondered over serious questions that had been ‘repeatedly’ raised:

Can one do this? Does this not give most people a false impression of common ground that does not exist in reality? Does this not promote relativism, the opinion that, fundamentally, the differences that divide ‘religions’ are merely penultimate? And is not the seriousness of faith being undermined thereby and God set farther away from us, in the end our forsakenness intensified?⁴⁹

Ratzinger acknowledged that there were ‘undeniable dangers’ with multi-faith prayer, not least because it was easily open to being ‘misinterpreted by many people’. His conclusion was that although such prayer was theologically permissible, if it was to take place at all, it must fulfil two basic conditions. First, it ‘can only exist as a sign in unusual situations, in which, as it were, a common cry for help rises up, stirring the hearts of men, to stir also the heart of God’. Secondly, ‘careful explanation’ was required in order to explain ‘what happens here and what does not happen’.⁵⁰ Tellingly, when, as Pope Benedict XVI, he met with some 300 religious leaders at Saint Francis Basilica in Assisi for the twenty-fifth anniversary of his predecessor’s World Day of Prayer, public prayer was conspicuously absent. The character of the meeting changed to emphasise the social benefits of the religions (and non-religions) working together to stand for peace against war and terrorism.

In the early 1990s there was great discussion about multi-faith prayer in the Church of England. In December 1991 more than 2,000 clergy signed an ‘Open Letter to the Leadership of the Church of England’ in protest at the multi-faith gathering in observance of Commonwealth Day.⁵¹ This appears to have led to the publication of a General Synod report on the matter that was debated in July 1992. The then Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, urged that more work be done on ‘the different underlying meanings of multi-faith worship’ in order to establish ‘a firm base in Christian theology and epistemology’. He recognised that in a multi-faith and multicultural society ‘the nature of a Civic Service’ would have to be reviewed. He was however insistent that ‘integrity’ required ‘that a single tradition of faith should determine the character of the

48 Marianne Moyaert and Joris Geldhof, *Ritual Participation and Interreligious Dialogues: Boundaries, Transgressions and Innovations* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp.57-59.

49 Joseph Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance: Christian Belief and World Religions* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), pp.106-07.

50 Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, p.107.

51 *The Church Times*, 6th December 1991.

service'. Carey believed that 'What other people ask of us is integrity and that is what we ask of them'. He feared that if the Church's distinctive witness was confused by participation in multi-faith worship then the Church would no longer be respected by committed adherents of other religions.⁵²

4. MULTI-FAITH PRAYER AND REFORMED THEOLOGY

Any decision (and consequent guidelines) on participation in multi-faith prayer at civic occasions would be mindful of the fact that as a Reformed Church we do not share the particular doctrinal framework that provided a theological rationale for Roman Catholic involvement in such interfaith events. As we have seen with Pope Benedict, even some of those who subscribe to this Roman Catholic theological framework are so acutely aware of the dangers of such participation they think multi-faith prayer should only take place in exceptional circumstances. For those who do not accept that framework, the participation in an act so open to misunderstanding seems even harder to sustain.

Multi-faith prayer in the 'Spirit of Assisi' is completely in line with Rome's view that nature and grace are two independent realities. In what amounts to a dualistic scheme, socio-religious identity is seen as morally neutral and something that is supplemented and elevated by grace. In what leads to an implicit syncretism, the gospel brings pagan religion to its fulfilment and fruition. In complete contrast, within Reformed Theology, pagan religion is not ethically neutral but an expression of hostility to God. The grace of the gospel renews and restores nature not by supplementing it but by resurrection—hence the particular and exclusive character of the Christian religion within Reformed Theology.⁵³

Consequently, the endorsement of, or participation in, multi-faith prayer by those who embrace the Reformed faith would require significant and persuasive theological justification. Any discussion of what theological warrant there is for such practice would have to take into consideration at least two related theological topics: first, the nature of idolatry and, secondly, the view of religion's place within the public square.

Regarding the nature of idolatry, the Doctrine Committee's report on multi-faith events endeavoured to make a number of distinctions. It was careful to distinguish participation in such events from participation in interfaith worship. In regard to a Presidential inauguration it was claimed that such a context was 'not specifically religious'. A further presupposition was that 'the Old Testament polemic against idolatry and the use of the word "idolatry" in the New Testament does not cover the cases of all religions'.⁵⁴ This was understood as meaning that Judaism is 'clearly not' a case of idolatry and that it was 'difficult' to extend the word 'idolatry' to Islam.⁵⁵

52 Carey's remarks are available at www.glcarey.co.uk/Speeches/1992/MultiFaith.html

53 Herman Bavinck, 'Common Grace', trans. R.C. Van Leeuwen, *Calvin Theological Journal*, 24 (1989), pp.47-52. For exposition of this see Brian G. Mattson, 'A Soft Spot for Paganism? Herman Bavinck and "Insider" Movements', *The Bavinck Review* 4 (2013): 32-43. Available at: https://bavinckinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/TBR4_03_Mattson.pdf

54 General Assembly Annual Report (Belfast: Presbyterian Church in Ireland, 2007), 7.

55 An example of this position would be Miroslav Volf in *Allah: A Christian Response* (New York: Harper, 2010) who believes that Christians and Muslims worship the

Further discussion and clarification is required of these assumptions because, as Daniel Strange has recently argued, the concept of idolatry is the seminal biblical tool through which to view ‘the religious other’ and it has sophisticated explanatory power that encompasses the entirety of the human experience.⁵⁶ He argues that idolatry is ‘perhaps *the* hermeneutical master key with which to unlock the nature of non-Christian religion and religions’.⁵⁷ Strange’s argument is that the gospel always subverts and fulfils the religions of the world.⁵⁸ This is especially the case when it comes to our understanding of Judaism and Islam.⁵⁹ Despite the many complexities in these matters, the Bible is nonetheless consistent in its message that in the world there are only two types of people: those whose worship of the Living God leads to life and those whose worship of idols lead to death. There is no middle ground. The ‘parasitic’ and ‘counterfeit’ nature of idolatry means that there is always a link between the idol and the truth it parodies.⁶⁰ As such, the question must be asked as to whether or not such multi-faith prayer involves idolatry.

same God but understand God in partly different ways. Perhaps the most important text for those who want to argue that Muslims worship the same God as Christians is Acts 17. The argument goes that Paul told the Athenians that what they worshipped in ignorance ‘I declare to you’. Paul supplied more information about the object of their worship. But it is significant that Paul here finds his point of contact with the Greek admission that there was an unknown deity. Paul did not take this approach with those worshipping Zeus or any other deity from the Greek pantheon. Instead those many different idols of Athens simply provoked his spirit.

- 56 Daniel Strange, *For Their Rock is Not as Our Rock: An Evangelical Theology of Religions* (Leicester: Apollos, 2014). For another recent treatment of idolatry see G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Leicester: IVP, 2008). Calvin addresses the question of whether or not Christians and Muslims worship the same God: ‘So today the Turks, although they proclaim at the top of their lungs that the Creator of Heaven and earth is God, still, while repudiating Christ, substitute an idol in the place of the true God’ (Inst. 2.6.4). Similarly Calvin writes: ‘Turks, Jews, and such as are like them, have a mere idol and not the true God. For by whatever titles they may honour the god whom they worship, still, as they reject [Jesus] without whom they cannot come to God, and in whom God has really manifested himself to us, what have they but some creature or fiction of their own’ (Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles ‘1 John 2:22-23’). The Directory for the Publick Worship of God produced by the Westminster Assembly speaks of the ‘blasphemies’ of Islam and the Confession itself is unequivocal that God’s speech is necessary for there to be any true religion and dependence on any other source constitutes idolatry (WCF 1.1). The Larger Catechism states that ‘all false worship’ is ‘spiritual prostitution’ (WLC 110). It therefore forbids ‘recommending, demanding, practicing, or in any way approving any religious worship not established by God himself ... Also forbidden are: any departure from the true worship of God ... whether by our own invention or received from some other tradition, and whether justified by ... good intentions, or any other excuse’ (WLC 109).

57 Strange, *Their Rock*, p.156.

58 Strange, *Their Rock*, p.273. Here Strange is relying on Hendrick Kraemer, ‘Continuity or Discontinuity’, in *The Authority of Faith* (London: OUP, 1939).

59 Strange, *Their Rock*, pp.303-33.

60 Strange, *Their Rock*, p.98.

Even leaving aside the issue of whether the object is the same in the purported worship of Christians, Jews and Muslims, there is also the question of whether or not what is going on is appropriate public worship. Such analysis would involve distinguishing between worshipping a false god (idolatry) and worshipping the true God but in an inappropriate way (e.g. a breach of the second commandment).⁶¹

The second significant area of theology influencing this discussion is the nature of religion within the public square. Within public theology, some Reformed theologians seek to justify such multi-faith practice by articulating a theory of principled pluralism. Within the context of PCI, one of the speakers at the first Church in the Public Square event (January 2014) was Jonathan Chaplain (Kirby-Laing Centre for Christian Ethics), a well-known advocate of principled pluralism.⁶² The ‘central aim’ of his view ‘is that the role of the state in a religiously diverse society is to maintain a public square equally open to contributions from many faiths rather than overtly prefer or privilege any one of them, even Christianity’.⁶³ Chaplain conceives of the national public square as neither *naked* (secular) nor *sacred* (Christian), but instead as *civil*.⁶⁴ As such he believes that on the national public stage the state should give equal rights to all religions and none. This would mean that at civic events each group could, if invited, come and make whatever contribution it deemed appropriate. The desire of principled pluralism is to endorse pluralism without succumbing to relativism. As such it is somewhat similar to what Abraham Kuyper advocated in his *Lectures on Calvinism* (1898). Perhaps most notably, this view has been espoused by Richard Mouw and Sander Griffioen in *Pluralisms and Horizons: An Essay in Christian Public Philosophy* (1993). Overall, the principled pluralist hopes to allow genuine difference to coexist without suppressing or minimising the firmly held convictions of any group.

Were principled pluralism to be embraced, one necessary implication is that the church should make no attempt to cling on to the residual privileges of her former cultural pre-eminence and instead accept her status as one minority among many. That would mean for example that at Remembrance Sunday events in Northern Ireland the church would have to *encourage* participation from other religions.

One of the difficulties with this position is that the public square does not necessarily become more welcoming and hospitable. In the Republic of Ireland multi-faith prayer in a supposedly ‘civil’ public square might mean that citizens

61 It is acknowledged that there can and may be overlap between a consideration of idolatry and question of the theology of worship.

62 See the details of the event at: www.presbyterianireland.org/Utility/About-Us/Councils/General-Council/Church-in-the-Public-Square.aspx

63 Jonathan Chaplain, ‘The Bible, the State and Religious Diversity: Theological Foundations for “Principled Pluralism”’, a paper delivered at a meeting of the Religion, Culture and Communication group of the Tyndale Fellowship, in Cambridge, July 2008. This is what Rowan Williams terms ‘procedural secularism’ in his ‘Secularism, Faith and Freedom’ in *The New Visibility of Religion*, eds. G. Ward and M. Hoelzl (London: Continuum, 2008), 45-47.

64 The Christian Nation model is what is espoused by Oliver O’Donovan in his *Desire of the Nations* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996).

who were conservative Tridentine Catholics could not, in conscience, attend the inauguration of their president because the ceremony would involve a religious role for Protestant clergy. Similarly, there would be some Muslims who would feel unable to attend because a Jewish religious leader was participating. It is worth noting that this would not have been the case under the arrangements for a presidential inauguration prior to 1983. Indeed, given that the Republic is a broadly secular state it could be argued that it is fitting that the religious element of any civic event, such as a presidential inauguration, should not have had a place in the state event itself.⁶⁵ Furthermore, if the goal behind this is to recognise the diversity which the various religions can bring to the public square, then the present arrangement is simply not inclusive or representative enough. For example, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Scientologists, Pantheists and Sikhs appear to have been excluded from any serial participation in the inauguration. By way of illustration, on the basis of the 2011 census of Ireland, when compared to one of the participants in the multi-faith event (the Society of Friends), there are approximately fourteen times as many Pentecostals, ten times as many Hindus, eight times as many Buddhists, and six times as many Lutherans,⁶⁶ and yet these numerically significant minorities did not participate.

If it is argued that Christianity, Judaism and Islam are included on the basis that they are monotheistic religions (perhaps on the basis of a strict reading of the Irish Constitution's declaration that 'Almighty God' deserves worship (44.1), then the argument of principled plurality no longer applies and the question morphs into one of whether or not the name of 'Almighty God' is held in reverence, respect and honour by this kind of multi-faith prayer.

The exact nature of the place of religion within the Irish Constitution is hard to ascertain. For instance, in the Houses of the Oireachtas, at the commencement of each day's business the following Christian prayer is said by the Ceann Comhairle in the Dáil and by the Clerk in the Seanad:

Direct, we beseech Thee, O Lord, our actions by Thy holy inspirations and carry them on by Thy gracious assistance; that every word and work of ours may always begin from Thee, and by Thee be happily ended; through Christ our Lord. Amen.⁶⁷

The different constitutional settlement within the United Kingdom raises other issues for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's role in the public square in that state. In Northern Ireland there is, unlike England, no established religion.⁶⁸

65 The Constitution of Ireland (44.2) affirms that 'The State guarantees not to endow any religion'.

66 www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/documents/census2011pdr/Census_2011_Highlights_Part_1_web_72dpi.pdf

67 www.oireachtas.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=/documents/a-misc/prayer.htm This collect is from the Litany of the Saints.

68 The Church of Scotland Act 1921 (Article 3 of Schedule 1) refers to the Church of Scotland as the national church of Scotland and as such the Kirk is recognized as being qualitatively different to other churches. It states: This Church is in historical continuity with the Church of Scotland which was reformed in 1560, whose liberties were ratified in 1592, and for whose security provision was made in the Treaty of Union of 1707. The continuity and identity of the Church of Scotland are not prejudiced by the adoption of these Articles. As a national Church representative of the Christian Faith of the Scottish people it acknowledges its distinctive call and duty

This is well illustrated by an interesting difference in Parliamentary procedure between Westminster and Stormont. In Westminster, every morning, the Speaker's Chaplain publicly says the following prayer:

Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of Parliament and all in positions of responsibility, the guidance of your Spirit. May they never lead the nation wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideals but laying aside all private interests and prejudices keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all mankind; so may your kingdom come and your name be hallowed. Amen.⁶⁹

Whereas at Stormont, per Standing Order 8 of the Assembly,

Before the commencement of business the Speaker shall announce the commencement of a period of two minutes silent prayer or contemplation. This period shall be known as Prayers; it shall take place in private and shall be the first item on the Order Paper for the day.⁷⁰

So, even though it is known as Prayers, it is not an explicitly and self-consciously Christian 'moment' and it is quite different from the prayers at the Houses of the Oireachtas.

However, for civic events that occur on the *national* stage in the United Kingdom, most frequently in London, the Protestant Reformed religion still has, at least in theory, a formal place in state institutions.⁷¹ It is in that context that any invitation to participate is considered and, if deemed appropriate, taken up in order to honour the name of Christ in the public square by witnessing to the truth of the Gospel and to pray for God's mercy and blessing to be upon the nation. However, as in the Republic of Ireland, if that event were to entail multi-faith prayer it would be necessary to provide a theological basis that would justify participation in an interfaith event so prone to misunderstanding.

5. CONCLUSION

The situation across the island is changing rapidly and the churches' inherited position in society continues to lose its influence and the support it once had.

It would appear that when the Presbyterian Church is invited to participate in civic events of a religious nature these will increasingly be conceived of as taking the form of the multi-faith prayer event. This raises significant challenges because, as we have seen, such events initially found their origin and justification in a theological system very different from our own. Even some who embrace that theological tradition recognise the highly problematic nature of involvement in such interfaith events. Others try to justify involvement in multi-faith prayer on

to bring the ordinances of religion to the people in every parish of Scotland through a territorial ministry.

69 www.churchofengland.org/our-views/the-church-in-parliament/speaker-s-chaplain/prayers-in-the-house-of-commons.aspx

70 www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/standing-orders/standing-orders/#a8

71 This view has been espoused by Oliver O'Donovan in *Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996) and by the former Anglican Bishop of Rochester, Michael Nazir-Ali.

the basis of principled pluralism but, even setting aside any theological analysis, this in itself creates significant difficulties surrounding inclusivity.

Given that so many complex and interrelated matters of public theology converge in this issue it would be wise for us to encourage sustained theological discussion on how the Presbyterian Church should relate to the religious other in the public square. It would seem necessary to include within this an opportunity to reflect upon the nature of idolatry. Perhaps an initial response might be to convene a colloquium at which a number of different voices might make contributions. One thinks that theologians such as Gavin D'Costa, Jonathan Chaplain, Oliver O'Donovan and Daniel Strange would be able to stimulate and better inform our thinking and decisions about this difficult and increasingly pressing topic.

Recommendation:

Following consideration of this paper, the Doctrine Committee agreed that the 2007 Guidelines continue to be followed, but that a substantial reflection on the theological basis for involvement in multi-faith events be carried out by a task group or by the Doctrine Committee.

The Committee noted that the envisaged substantial reflection might be facilitated in the following ways:

- (a) An event could be held to help orientate us to the complex issues involved in religious participation at civic events in our ever evolving context;
- (b) We could draw on the resources of scholars who have first-hand familiarity with our context and who have relevant expertise - e.g. Richard Creighton who teaches theology in Nigeria, and whose doctoral research was on the political theology of Oliver O'Donovan;
- (c) Funding might be provided for a graduate research position at Union College to examine the theological principles that would guide and shape Irish Presbyterian engagement in public life in the twenty-first century (which would help nurture our own intellectual leadership in this complex issue);
- (d) Dialogue with other Christian groups not presently represented in such events (e.g. non-indigenous Pentecostal communities) to discuss their place and ours in civic society;
- (e) Dialogue with other Christian groups currently who are involved to see if a common response might be made;
- (f) Engage with representatives of other religions to see if there is any similar discomfort.

CHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE

1. Since the 2016 General Assembly the Church Relations Committee continued to have an overview of the various inter-church bodies to which the Presbyterian Church in Ireland belongs, namely the Irish Council of Churches, the Irish Inter-Church Meeting, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe and the Council of European Churches. The Committee also received reports from the groups appointed to further conversations with both the Church of Scotland and the Free Church of Scotland. The Committee was updated on the discussions taking place in the Relationships with other Denominations Task Group, on which it is represented by the Committee Convener, Chairman and the Rev Lorraine Kennedy-Ritchie.

Irish Council of Churches (ICC) and Irish Inter-Church Committee (ICC)

2. Both the Irish Council of Churches Executive and the Irish Inter-Church Committee met on a regular basis throughout the year. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland is represented on the Inter-Church Committee by the Committee Convener and the Clerk, with the Very Rev Dr Ivan Patterson joining them on the ICC Executive. The Clerk also sits on the Joint Management Committee, with oversees the financial and practical affairs of both bodies.

3. The annual Inter-Church Meeting was held on Thursday 24th and Friday 25th November 2016 in Portarlinton in the Republic of Ireland, on the theme of *'Forsaken? The suffering of the churches in the Middle East'*. Everyone on the PCI delegation felt this was again an excellent and very worthwhile meeting, with high calibre input and helpful discussion sessions. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland group appointed to the 2016 ICCM was: Very Rev Dr Ian McNie, the Clerk, Rev John Brackenridge, Very Rev Dr Ivan Patterson, Mrs Anne Deighan, Rev Dr Liz Hughes, Rev Uel Marrs, Rev Dr Peter McDowell and Rev John Seawright.

4. The 94th ICC AGM was held on Thursday 30th March 2017 in Belfast Central Mission of the Methodist Church. The theme of the AGM reflected that the Church is living and witnessing in a more uncertain social, economic and political atmosphere than could have been imagined. The AGM informed member Churches of our day-to-day work in that environment and also, with the help of Dr Gladys Ganiel, stimulated thought on how Churches might strengthen their united witness in the face of division and uncertainty. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland group appointed to the 2017 ICC AGM was: The Moderator, Clerk, Very Rev Dr Ivan Patterson, Rev John Brackenridge, Rev Lorraine Kennedy-Ritchie, Rev Cheryl Meban, Mrs Valerie Stewart, Rev Steve Stockman, Rev Jim Stothers, Rev David Bruce, Mrs Linda Wray, Mr Lindsay Conway, Mr Gavin Norris, Very Rev Dr Norman Hamilton, Rev Stephen Johnston, Rev Tony Davidson and Mr Owen Wilson.

World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)

5. The Clerk attended the 2017 meeting of European Council of WCRC, which was held near Dusseldorf on 24th March 2017, and which was largely preparation for the forthcoming full General Council meeting of WCRC later in the summer.

6. That 26th WCRC General Council meeting is being held in Leipzig from 29th June – 7th July 2017 and the 2016 General Assembly appointed the Clerk, and the Revs John Brackenridge and Cheryl Meban to represent the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, with the General Council being authorised to make adjustments if necessary. However, subsequently the General Council in October 2016 decided, on the unanimous recommendation of the Doctrine Committee, to oppose the association of WCRC to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ). (See the detailed report of the Doctrine Committee, Reports p.101.) This association with the JDDJ is the significant focus of the WCRC General Council.

7. PCI submitted the details of the above delegation on 13th September 2016, this however was ‘lost’ by WCRC and only ‘found again’ on 15th March 2017. WCRC at that point rejected PCI’s delegation, as it does not conform to the following constitutional requirement:

In accordance with the Reformed understanding of church polity Art IX determines that at least 50% of the delegates must be lay people: “no more than half shall be ordained ministers”.

PCI was deemed not to have been met this requirement, and even after an ‘appeal’, when extenuating circumstances were presented, WCRC continued to reject the PCI delegation.

8. Following consideration at the General Council meeting in March 2017, on the recommendation of the Clerk and Church Relations Committee Convener, in the light of points above, and noting that the overall cost per delegate is going to be approx. £2,500, the General Council passed the following resolution:

That the formal PCI delegation be reduced to one person, namely the Clerk of the General Assembly, noting that the Rev Cheryl Meban can be in attendance, registered as a member of the outgoing Executive Committee and paid for by WCRC.

This will allow two of the original three delegates to be present at the Council, at a reduced cost of £2,500 (rather than £7,500) and, as there is only one person in the formal delegation, the constitutional restrictions do not apply.

Meeting with the Church of Scotland (CofS)

9. While the wider matter of relationships with the Church of Scotland is encompassed within the report of the special ‘Relationships with other Denominations’ Task Group, the Committee received a report on a positive meeting that had taken place between representatives of the Church of Scotland and PCI in Edinburgh on Monday 5th December 2016, with the following participants present:

PCI: Very Rev Drs Rob Craig (General Council Convener) and Ivan Patterson (Church Relations, Chair); Revs John Brackenridge (Church Relations, Convener) and Trevor Gribben (Clerk)

CofS: Very Rev John Chalmers (Principal Clerk), Rev Alison McDonald (Ecumenical Relations Convener), Rev Dr John McPake (new Interim Ecumenical Relations Officer) and Rev Derek Browning (Assembly Arrangements Convener, now also Moderator Designate)

10. The decisions of the 2016 PCI was explained and discussed. While the CofS reps regretted the decisions they understood something of the depth of feeling in PCI. The CofS representatives were encouraged by the wider process that PCI had entered into. All present felt this would help widen the focus beyond the 'presenting issue' that was causing current tension in relationships. It materialised that the CofS has not clearly thought through categories/strategy for relationships – like PCI most had simply grown up over the years and were a combination of historic relationships (both confessional and other) and current (or in some cases past) direct missional partnerships.

11. It was recognised that, though a PCI delegation would not be attending the 2017 CofS General Assembly, a CofS delegation would be invited to attend the 2017 PCI General Assembly. There was some discussion relating to how welcome the CofS delegation would be, clear assurances given and general agreement that there was value in the normal CofS delegation coming.

12. PCI reps raised the issue of need to find a way to enable the PCI General Assembly to make its 'concern/disappointment' known to the CofS in a way that will both be clear and gracious, enabling the possibility of the 'annual symbolic decision to not send the Moderator' to no longer be necessary. This could give an 'outlet' for PCI to express its concern/disappointment and then to re-establish more normal relationships. The CofS reps indicated they understood, from the perspective of many in PCI, the need to find some way of doing this. They indicated that the CofS would obviously receive anything that PCI wished to communicate, however it could produce a 'response' from a number within the CofS who were on the more 'radical wing'.

13. It was apparent that PCI and the CofS were both unhappy with the WCRC's proposed association of with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. There were major shared concerns both about the process of decision-making and the apparent 'predetermined conclusion'.

Meeting with the Free Church of Scotland

14. While again the wider matter of relationships with the Free Church of Scotland is encompassed within the report of the special 'Relationships with other Denominations' Task Group, the Committee received a report on a positive meeting that had taken place between representatives of the Free Church of Scotland and PCI in Edinburgh on Tuesday 6th December 2016, with the following participants present:

PCI: Very Rev Drs Rob Craig (General Council Convener) and Ivan Patterson (Church Relations, Chair); Revs John Brackenridge (Church Relations, Convener) and Trevor Gribben (Clerk)

Free CofS: Rev. David Meredith, Mission Director; Rev. Alasdair M. Macleod, Mission Board Chairman; Rev. Malcolm Macleod, Assistant Clerk of Assembly; Rev. Iver Martin, ETS; Rev. John Nicholls, Moderator of the General Assembly.

15. Representatives of both churches reported on recent significant events in their respective denominations and the challenges of ministry in their respective contexts. The Free CofS representatives reported on the following areas of ministry and developments in the denomination:

- Church Planting
- The importance of discipleship
- New congregation's joining from other denominations, in particular arising from recent developments in the Church of Scotland
- Developments in global mission
- Developments in Edinburgh Theological Seminary and the relationship with Glasgow University
- Membership of **International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC)** – www.icrconline.com
- Membership of **World Reformed Fellowship** – <http://wrfnet.org>

PCI Reps summarised developments and significant issues in Ireland.

16. Ecumenical Relations: There was a general discussion over the theology and practice of ecumenism and ecumenical relations.

- (a) What criteria do we use as we consider initiating a conversation and developing a relationship with other denominations?
- (b) How do we evaluate existing relationships?
- (c) How to we develop new relationships?
- (d) What are the different levels at which we can have a meaningful, mutually-productive conversation?

17. There was general agreement that what matters on the ground is ultimately what makes a difference and that much of the responsibility for this rests with the local Minister and Kirk Session.

18. Follow-up: The decisions of the 2016 PCI was explained and discussed. The Free CofS reps welcomed the PCI decisions which were very much in line with their own thinking. The meeting noted the mutual benefit of the discussion and agreed the following matters as areas of common interest as the basis for the natural development of relationships between both denominations:

- Church Planting
- ETS and PCI College
- Discipleship
- Church Revitalisation
- Global Mission

JOHN BRACKENRIDGE, Convener

GENERAL COUNCIL

SECTION 5

Thursday 4.45pm

ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATIONS TASK GROUP

Introduction

1. This is the second interim report to the General Assembly from this Task Group. The remit given by the 2015 General Assembly was: *A new Engagement and Consultations Task Group be formed to carry forward the examination of the issue of engagement (between Presbyteries and the new Councils and between Presbyteries and congregations) and that this group subsume the work of reviewing Consultations.*

2. The first part of this report is concerned with engagement between Presbytery and Congregations. It is an interim report as the issue of engagement between Presbytery and the Councils will constitute the major part of our work over the forthcoming year and will also by necessity have a bearing on how Presbytery relates to Congregations.

3. The second part brings the new Consultation Process for final approval at this year's General Assembly.

Improving Engagement between Presbytery and Congregations

4. The Report to the 2016 General Assembly was sent to Presbyteries for comment. Sixteen Presbyteries responded. The vast majority of comments were in agreement with the challenges outlined in it – the slide into congregationalism, the decline in attendance by some ministers and elders and lack of meaningful engagement between Congregations and Presbytery, the lack of reporting about Presbytery to Kirk Sessions, the negative attitudes of some Congregations which see Presbytery as merely judicial and not supportive, discerning little added value coming from Presbytery. There is work to be done here.

5. **Miscellaneous suggestions of good practice.** It is not all negative, however, as some Presbyteries have already begun a process of better engagement in their meetings and also with the Congregations within their bounds. Some good ideas are being shared, but without intentionality they will wither on the vine. It is hoped, therefore, that this process will encourage Presbyteries to take engagement seriously and act to introduce improvements. This will often be best achieved by introducing “one-degree” shifts, small but regular changes that cumulatively turn the ship around. It is intended to arrange a meeting soon with all the Clerks of Presbytery to talk through these ideas so that as far as possible all can be on the same page. The following are some recurring themes:

- Annual pulpit exchange
- Annual Presbytery fun days/Barbecues
- United evening services in summer
- Presbytery to meet in circles around tables rather than in rows
- Refreshments during the evening
- Communion in the Moderator's church with members of Session/ congregation invited along
- Prayer requests emailed to congregational prayer secretaries
- Pulpit prayers for vacant congregations and other Presbytery issues
- Book reviews in Presbytery
- Ministers sharing something of what they learnt on a study week/ sabbatical
- Annual elders training event organized by the Presbytery
- Launch a Presbytery web site
- Talk positively about Presbytery!
- Use occasional teaching opportunities in church to emphasise our wider church and the strengths of being part of Presbyterian family
- Congregations being supportive of each other instead of being competitive
- Presbytery better co-ordinates and informs congregations of prayer ministry teams/counselling/training that is available. Sharing and not duplicating resources.
- Vision days and strategy days

6. The Task Group is also considering a publicity campaign to highlight the strengths of being part of the Presbyterian family. A leaflet with the working title of "Better Together" is under consideration for widespread distribution. The Task Group is not naïve about the challenges in the current climate, especially among the younger generations, of getting people excited about being part of the Presbyterian family. Nevertheless it believes this is worth investing energy into this for the benefit of our Church and our individual members. There are strengths in our denomination that we need to celebrate.

7. What has kept the Task Group going has been a core belief that Presbytery, when done well, brings immense benefits to elders and ministers, and to congregations. Some members of the Task Group have been greatly impressed and influenced by an article by Paul Levy of the International Presbyterian Church (entitled *The Four C's of Presbytery*) where he speaks of Presbytery as a court, a college, a catalyst and an encouragement. He says, and the Task Group agrees with him, that Presbytery at its best, and when we make it a priority, "will benefit our congregations".

8. **Elders.** Many of the responses suggest that representative elders should be appointed for a minimum period of three years so that they become familiar with the processes of Presbytery and gain the confidence to contribute meaningfully to debates. A maximum of five years' service may also be appropriate so that representation is shared around different elders in each Kirk Session. This in itself should improve engagement. It is also apparent that very little of Presbytery business seems to be on Kirk Session agendas – room could be made for a short report on decisions made and on major points of discussion at Presbytery when Session meets.

9. **Presbytery Business Committee and Agendas of the main meetings.** A number of Presbyteries have a Business Committee which meets up to a week prior to Presbytery and this enables some of the non-controversial and routine business to be transacted and recommended to the main meeting for adoption. This is a great help in freeing up time within Presbytery for some of the meaningful engagement and discussion that is increasingly looked for.

10. A number of Presbyteries have mentioned making time for prayer within the meetings and passing on prayer points to Congregations. Some have held single issue meetings and training meetings or events which have been well supported. Others find it helpful to give Congregations occasional slots to inform the Presbytery of new initiatives, outreach events or even teaching series that have gone well.

11. While it is recognised that the Presbytery is a court of the church and that there are judicial and administrative aspects to be dealt with, other pastoral and theological elements can be introduced which ministers and elders would find stimulating and helpful in their ministry. There is a great opportunity to work smarter and equip better when we have the potential of so many leaders in one room, maximizing the possibilities Presbytery offers to network, communicate, train and engage.

12. A further and more radical consideration must be the role of Presbyteries as agents for missional strategy in their areas. Work by Presbyteries on “big picture” thinking appears to be limited and is usually precipitated by crisis due to steep decline and by then it is usually too late. There are various factors to this limitation: constraints of time and capacity for ministers and elders who are already overstretched; the creeping congregationalism and independence that sees such thinking as a threat rather than an opportunity to grow the Church as a whole; and the feeling that this is more the domain of the Linkage Commission. The Task Group will devote some further thought to this issue over the next year if that is the mind of the General Assembly: a resolution to test this is appended.

Consultations

13. A new Consultation Process, which has been piloted over the past year, is presented for adoption. Various factors have undergirded its development –

- The necessity of supportive accountability for Congregations
- An attempt to streamline the process as much as possible while doing it well
- The desire to widen the circle of meaningful engagement with a Congregation during a Consultation
- Encouraging Congregations to celebrate what is good while not ignoring the challenges
- Encouraging the leadership to address issues if necessary with outside help

14. One of the strengths of the Presbyterian Church is that we can draw on the support of others in Presbytery, yet a Consultation is often viewed a bit like a school inspection – something that is unwelcome, unwanted and bothersome. However, over the past number of years, as Visitation moved to Consultation, the framers of the process have sought to encourage a more positive, affirming attitude to these reviews of congregational life. Granted that they are often seen

as threatening by ministers, in the experience of the members of the Task Group they have tended to be carried out in a non-threatening and pastoral manner by colleagues in ministry who know their turn for Consultation will come!

15. The Task Group has sought to provide a new process which avoids being oppressive, having an agenda of targets, or speaking in terms of “success” or “failure”. While it has streamlined Consultations as much as possible, it is convinced that there is a need to ensure that Consultations are done well, and with a certain rigour and enthusiasm so that our members know that Presbytery cares and that it is seeking to be a good and wise steward of the resources that God has given. To be Presbyterian is to be accountable to each other, encouraging each other to be, by the grace of God, all that he purposes for us. The Consultation process is just part of the bigger picture of how we can better engage with each other as Presbyterians, as ministers and elders within Presbytery and also with Congregations and Councils.

16. A successful and meaningful outcome to a Consultation will depend on the Team undertaking it with the commitment it deserves, viewing it as a good opportunity to provide positive, objective feedback for the good of the Congregation. To add value to the process, Presbytery may appoint to the Team elders with appropriate gifting and availability of time – and these are not restricted to those who are currently serving as representative elders. Age and gender balance should also be important considerations in making up a Team.

17. To date Consultations have not been written into the Code, which has perhaps led to them being seen as “optional extras”. It is intended to bring Overtures to the 2018 General Assembly to give them the same status as Visitations used to have. In the meantime a resolution is appended which, if passed, will require that the new Consultations Process be applied by all Presbyteries from 1st January 2018.

18. There are four documents comprising the process (see Appendix 1). The Task Group is grateful to the Rev Jonathan Boyd who has put an immense amount of work into shaping them.

1. Presbytery and Consultation Team Resources and Guidance Notes
2. Kirk Session Guidance Notes and Consultation Questions
3. Minister/Associate Minister Guidance Notes and Consultation Questions
4. Review of Resources, Records and Policies (to be completed by Session and Committee)

They will be made available in electronic format. The Task Group is convinced that this is not information-gathering for its own sake but to help us as a Church fulfil the Great Commandment and the Great Commission of our Lord.

NORMAN CAMERON, Convener

ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATIONS APPENDIX 1

Presbyterian Church in Ireland

Presbytery Consultations

Presbytery and Consultation Team

Resources and Guidance Notes

Overview of Consultations

The purpose of Consultations

A Consultation is a process by which Presbytery enquires into the life of a congregation in order to discover:

- **encouragements** to celebrate, for the edification of the congregation and to inspire the rest of Presbytery;
- **challenges** faced by the congregation, so that Kirk Session can be directed and equipped to deal with the most pressing issues;
- any **concerns** that Kirk Session may be struggling to deal with, requiring the intervention of Presbytery.

The Consultation process

The process consists of a number of stages:

1. Presbytery should notify Kirk Session twelve weeks before a Consultation is due to take place. In preparation for the Consultation, Presbytery appoints a Consultation Team and the Kirk Session appoints a group of Congregational Representatives.
2. When the Consultation commences questionnaires are sent to the Kirk Session, Minister and Associate Minister (if applicable) and written replies returned to the Consultation Team within six weeks.
3. The Consultation Team meets with Congregational Representatives and, separately, with the Minister and Associate Minister (if applicable) for more focused discussions. This should take place within one month of the questionnaires being returned.
4. Based on this, the Consultation Team produces a Consultation Report for Presbytery summarising aspects of congregational life which can be celebrated, challenges faced by the congregation and, if necessary, any concerns for Presbytery to deal with. The report will recommend some issues for the Kirk Session to work on over the course of the next year.
5. Kirk Session then has one year in which to implement the recommendations of the Consultation Report. After this year, the Consultation Team will present a Follow-up Report to Presbytery and be discharged.

Guidance Notes

Coordinating Consultations

It is recommended that Presbytery appoint someone to coordinate Consultations on an on-going basis from year to year – a Presbytery Consultation Coordinator. This would make the process of setting up Consultations each year easier by maintaining a list of who has served on teams, which congregations are due for a Consultation, etc. and provide a way of passing on accumulated experience and dealing with common issues that may arise.

Frequency of Consultations

Consultations should occur at ten-yearly intervals.

No Consultations should be undertaken within two years of an installation of a new Minister.

In long-term Stated Supplies, Consultations should take place in the same manner as in settled situations.

Informing the Kirk Session of the Consultation

Presbytery shall inform the Kirk Session at least twelve weeks in advance of the Consultation.

The Consultation Team

The Consultation will be conducted by a Consultation Team appointed by Presbytery.

The team will consist of four-six members, at least two of whom should be Ministers. But ministers will not comprise more than 50% of the team; the rest shall ruling elders. Elders may be drawn from any congregation and do not need to be members of Presbytery.

The quorum for the Consultation Team will be three.

A Consultation Convener will be appointed to organise and chair all meetings of the Consultation Team, as well as writing and presenting all reports to Presbytery.

The Convener will be provided with the following documents by the Clerk of Presbytery or the Presbytery's Consultation Coordinator:

- *Presbytery and Consultation Team Resources and Guidance Notes* for the use of the Consultation Team,
- *Kirk Session Consultation Questions and Guidance Notes* to be sent on to the Kirk Session,
- *Review of Resources, Records and Policies* to be sent on to the Kirk Session for completion by Kirk Session and Congregational Committee,
- *Ministers and Associate Ministers Consultation Questions and Guidance Notes* to be sent on to the Minister and an additional copy to the Associate Minister (if applicable).

As well as examining the returned questionnaires:

- as many of the Consultation Team as possible are strongly advised to **visit a service** in the congregation,
- the Consultation Team will **meet with a group of eight-twelve Congregational Representatives**, up to four of whom will be ruling elders,
- the Consultation Team will **meet with the Minister** and Associate Minister (if applicable).

Inspections

A number of inspections will be carried out:

- All items on the **historical schedule** of the congregation.
- All **registers and minute books**. These should be checked by someone who is independent of the congregation to ensure that they are kept up to date and in good order. This could be someone from the Consultation Team.
- All church property should have up-to-date **safety certificates for electrical and gas installations**.

Gas and electric Inspections

- It is the responsibility of the congregation to arrange and pay for all necessary inspections.
- Approved contractors in Northern Ireland are those who are NICEC approved (electrical) and Gas Safe Registered (gas).
- Approved contractors in the Republic of Ireland are those who are on the Register of Electrical Contractors of Ireland (electrical) and on the Register of Gas Installers Ireland (gas).
- Manse safety inspections should take place every ten years.
- Church gas installations should be inspected annually.
- Church electrical installations should be inspected every five years.

Analysing the information in preparation for discussion

When the responses have been returned, members of the Consultation Team will individually examine the returns and record their impressions using their own copy of *Form 1: Individual Impressions* on page 9. The form lists eleven areas of congregational life which include the nine areas addressed by the questions to Kirk Session, a tenth area 'Property and Finance' relating to information gathered from the *Review of Resources, Records and Policies* and a final area 'Other'.

- Taking into account all the information gathered from the questionnaires and the visit to a service, the member should consider each area of congregational life.
- If there are signs of encouragements which could be celebrated and they would like to know more about these encouragements, they should tick the corresponding box in the green column headed 'encouragements'.
- If there are signs of challenges which the Kirk Session need to deal with and they would like to know more about these challenges, they should tick the corresponding box in the amber column headed 'challenges'.
- If there are both encouragements and challenges of interest, both columns should be ticked.
- There is also space in the final column to make notes on each area of congregational life to help discuss the impressions with the rest of the team later.

The Consultation Team will then meet to discuss its impressions. It is important that the views of all members of the team are heard and considered so that the process is not led by the views of the loudest or most senior member, so the Convener is encouraged to make sure that all members give their thoughts.

On the basis of this discussion and impressions from the visit to a service, the Consultation Team will agree on two or three areas of congregational life to discuss in more detail with the Congregational Representatives in order to find out more about encouraging aspects of congregational life which can be celebrated, challenges for the Kirk Session to deal with, and possible concerns for Presbytery to consider. The Convener will record these areas using *Form 2: Convener's Summary* on page 10.

- For each area of congregational life the Convener should tally the number of ticks for encouragements by each member of the Team and record this in the column headed 'Total encouragements'.
- For each area of congregational life the Convener should tally the number of ticks for challenges by each member of the Team and record this in the column headed 'Total challenges'.
- For each area of congregational life the Convener should add these two to record the total in 'Overall total'.
- The Convener should use these totals to get an idea of which areas of congregational life are of greatest interest and lead a discussion to decide which two or three areas to focus on and record these in the column headed 'List two or three areas of focus'.
- If there are any particular questions that the Team would like to ask in any of these areas they should be recorded in the column headed 'Note any specific questions you would like to ask during discussion'.

Discussion with Congregational Representatives

The Consultation Team will then organise separate discussion meetings with the Congregational Representatives, the Minister and the Associate Minister (if applicable). The order and timing of these would be at the discretion of the Team, but should happen as soon as reasonably possible.

The aim of this discussion is to hear the story of the congregation in a fuller way than written answers can provide. All Congregational Representatives should be encouraged to share their thoughts rather than allowing one or two confident people to dominate conversation. Some optional questions are provided on pages 15-18 for the Team to optionally make use of during discussions. The questions may be used as they are, used as inspiration to form new questions, or ignored entirely if the Team is happy to come up with its own questions. They are a resource to help the Team, not a rigid template to restrict it.

When the Consultation Team meets with the Congregational Representatives they should expect to find a group of eight-twelve people who are broadly representative of the congregation, its organisations and its ministries, consisting of:

- up to four ruling elders,
- at least two young people (no older than 25),
- a balance of genders.

The Minister should not be a part of the Congregational Representatives and will not be present during its discussion with the Consultation Team.

One of the elders will be appointed as Chairperson for the Congregational Representatives and be responsible for coordinating with the Consultation Convener to arrange meetings and exchange information. The Clerk of Session should send the Chairperson's contact details to the Consultation Convener.

Prior to the meeting, in order to help with preparation, the Consultation Convener must send the Chairperson:

- a copy of the Kirk Session's answers,
- a list of the two or three areas of congregational life to be discussed, and
- any specific questions that the Team intends to ask and has already prepared.

During the discussion with the Congregational Representatives each individual Consultation Team member will record their thoughts on *Form 3: Consultation Team Discussion Notes* on page 11.

- Each member of the Team should have one copy of this form for each area of focus for the discussion and record at the top which area the notes are for.
- It is important to discuss and record both encouragements to be celebrated and challenges to be dealt with, so there are two sections labelled 'Encouragements' and 'Challenges'.
- Below this there is one box for recording any concerns that the Team member thinks Presbytery may need to deal with instead of the Kirk Session.

Discussion with Ministers

The discussions with the Minister and Associate Minister (if applicable) should be quite relaxed and informal and provide an opportunity for ministers to be open about what they are finding encouraging or challenging, both in terms of ministry and home life. The emphasis here should be on listening and providing a pastoral environment.

To discern the pastoral needs it may be helpful to consider the circumstances of the Minister that may provide particular challenges to their well-being. This is a list of potential areas for conversation, but is by no means exhaustive:

- If they are in a Presbytery that is dispersed over a wide geographical area, how do they cope with isolation?
- If they are in a large congregation managing a team ministry, how do they cope with the potential frustrations of 'wasting time' on management rather than direct ministry?
- If they are in a linkage, how do they cope with the doubling up (or more) of organisations and the likely increased administrative and organisational burden they have to take on.
- If they have moved to an area that is culturally quite different to where they previously lived or ministered, how are they coping with the adjustment?
- Have there been or are there currently any family crises such as a sick parent?

Reporting to Presbytery

When all the discussions have been completed, the Consultation Team members will meet to discuss their individual impressions and agree on recommendations. The Consultation Convener will then write the Consultation Report using *Form 4: Consultation Report* on page 12.

There is space on the form for recording any encouragements or challenges which have arisen out of discussions but were not originally selected as areas to focus on.

The Report should recommend an aspect of congregational life which the Kirk Session should focus on developing over the next year. This could, for instance, be a challenging area which needs to be addressed, or an encouraging area with potential for greater fruitfulness. Recommendations for action should be as specific as possible to help give the Kirk Session direction and to make it easier for the Consultation Team to identify progress when preparing the Follow-up Report.

The Consultation Team or Consultation Convener must meet with the Minister and Clerk of Session to verbally inform them of the content of the Report prior to it being reported to Presbytery, while making it clear that the recommendations will still have to be agreed by Presbytery.

The Consultation Report will be presented verbally to Presbytery and a written copy submitted to the Clerk of Presbytery.

If the Consultation Report is approved by Presbytery, then the Clerk of Presbytery will send the Report to Kirk Session.

The Consultation Team will not present the Consultation Report to the congregation (or the Follow-up Report), nor is the Kirk Session required to do so. However, if the Kirk Session wish to share any of the contents or a summary, it is free to do so.

Follow-up

After one year the Consultation Team will consult with Kirk Session to hear about progress regarding the recommendations of the Consultation Report, then meet to discuss their views on this progress and agree on what should be reported to Presbytery.

The Consultation Convener will make a Follow-up Report to Presbytery. Providing that the Consultation Team is satisfied with progress made, this should be a brief verbal report.

If the Follow-up Report is approved then the Consultation Team will be thanked and discharged.

Example timelines

These are examples to help visualise the timing of the process, but are not intended to restrict when a Consultation should start or finish.

Starting in September

May Presbytery meeting:	Congregation chosen and Kirk Session informed of timeline.
September Presbytery meeting:	Consultation Team established and Consultation officially commences.
October:	Questionnaires returned. Consultation Team discusses questionnaires and chooses areas to focus on for discussion.
November:	Consultation Team meets with the Congregational Representatives, Minister and Associate Minister (if applicable). Consultation Team draws up its conclusions and the Convener writes the Consultation Report, then shows it to the Minister and Clerk of Presbytery.
December Presbytery meeting:	Consultation Report presented to Presbytery.

The Kirk Session then has one year to implement the recommendations of the Consultation Report. The results of this would be reported at the February Presbytery meeting.

Starting in February

November Presbytery meeting:	Congregation chosen and Kirk Session informed of timeline.
February Presbytery meeting:	Consultation Team established and Consultation officially commences.
March:	Questionnaires returned. Consultation Team discusses questionnaires and chooses areas to focus on for discussion.
April:	Consultation Team meets with the Congregational Representatives, Minister and Associate Minister (if applicable). Consultation Team draws up their conclusions and the Convener writes the Consultation Report, then shows it to the Minister and Clerk of Presbytery.
May Presbytery meeting:	Consultation Report presented to Presbytery.

The Kirk Session then has one year to implement the recommendations of the Consultation Report. The results of this would be reported at the September Presbytery meeting.

Form 1: Individual impressions

Each Team member needs one copy of this form.

Area of congregational life	Tick if you would like to know more because there are signs of		Make notes in this space if you wish
	encouragements	challenges	
A. Outreach			
B. Discipleship			
C. Leadership			
D. Worship			
E. Pastoral Care			
F. Mission			
G. Sacraments			
H. Relationships			
I. Staffing			
J. Property and Finance			
K. Other			

Form 2: Convener's Summary

Area of congregational life	Total encouragements	Total challenges	Overall total
A. Outreach			
B. Discipleship			
C. Leadership			
D. Worship			
E. Pastoral Care			
F. Mission			
G. Sacraments			
H. Relationships			
I. Staffing			
J. Property and Finance			
K. Other			
List two or three areas of focus	Note any specific questions you would like to ask during discussion		
1.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>		
2.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>		
3.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>		

Form 3. Consultation Team Discussion Notes

Each Team member needs a copy of this form for each area of congregational life discussed with the Congregational Representatives.

Area of congregational life discussed:

Encouragements to celebrate

Challenges for Kirk Session to deal with

Concerns for Presbytery to consider looking into a separate process

Form 4. Consultation Report

Which areas did discussion focus on?

1.

2.

3.

Encouragements to celebrate

Area 1:

Area 2:

Area 3:

Other:

Challenges for Kirk Session to deal with

Area 1: _____

Area 2: _____

Area 3: _____

Other: _____

Concerns for Presbytery to consider looking into in a separate process

Optional Discussion Questions

These questions are entirely optional and are provided to give the Consultation Team ideas for helpful questions to ask during discussions. They can be used as they are, modified, used as inspiration for the Team's own questions, or ignored entirely.

General questions

What has encouraged the congregation in the last five years?

What has been most challenging for the congregation?

How open is the congregation to change?

What evidence is there of this?

What further changes would you like to see happen?

What is the strategy, plan or vision for [insert area of congregational life being discussed]?

Who implements the strategy, plan, or vision?

How is the congregation involved?

What have the results been?

What challenges have you faced implementing the strategy and how have they been dealt with?

Why do people join your congregation?

Why do people leave the congregation?

A. Outreach

What brings unchurched people from the community into the church?

How does the church engage with the community, outside of the church?

How many adult professions of faith have there been in the last two years?

How has the local area changed in the last five years?

Are there intentional pathways to draw people in from being outsiders to members of the congregation? How have you seen this happen?

What proportion of children in church programmes would be churchered compared to unchurched?

B. Discipleship

How well attended are Bible studies, prayer meetings and small groups?

What age groups are involved?

Why do people come (or not)?

What sort of resources, programmes, activities, and relationships have helped you to grow and mature in your own faith?

What role do the organisations you're involved with play in discipleship e.g. opportunities to make new disciples, helping disciples to grow, providing opportunities for disciples to encourage one another?

How are people prayed for and supported in work they do outside of church?

How are gifts related to ministry outside the congregation identified, celebrated, and encouraged?

How are young people encouraged to be involved in the life of the congregation as they move through their teenage years?

What opportunities are there for different generations to mix and encourage each other?

C. Leadership

How are people equipped to lead in church ministries?

What training events have leaders attended in the last two years?

How have these been helpful?

How does Kirk Session keep informed about organisations in the church and support their leaders?

How are new leaders recruited?

How do organisations plan for new leadership e.g. to prepare for when the BB captain retires?

D. Worship

How has the preaching helped you to understand the gospel better?

How has the preaching helped you to understand the implications of the gospel for life?

How has the preaching helped you to think about the application of faith to current affairs and contemporary culture?

What sort of diversity is there in the style of music, the themes covered by lyrics, and the general tone of praise?

How often do you celebrate the Lord's Supper? Is there ever any discussion about this?

If there was an area you'd like to see improve, what would it be?

How are children and young people ministered to on a Sunday morning?

How do you help young people transition from youth ministry to involvement in the wider ministry of the church e.g. adjusting from Bible Class to being in for the whole service?

What has worked well to engage people in prayer?

E. Pastoral Care

How does the congregation care for the Minister and his/her family?

What typically happens when a ruling elder calls with a member of their district on a normal pastoral visit?

How are members encouraged and equipped to care for one another?

If there was an area you'd like to see improve, what would it be?

What practical things do members do to love and support one another that have been found to be helpful?

F. Mission

What connections does the congregation have with missionaries and evangelists at home and overseas and how are they supported?

How do you partner with others in local and global mission?

What opportunities are there to pray together about local and global mission?

What has been the most memorable thing the congregation has done to learn about or support mission in the last five years?

How does the congregation hear about the wider work of the church that we support through the United Appeal for Mission?

How are members encouraged to support the work of the wider church by giving to the United Appeal for Mission?

G. Sacraments

What do you find most helpful about the way the Lord's Supper is celebrated?

What do you think could be improved?

How would you describe the tone or feel of Communion services?

How would you describe the invitation or welcome to the Lord's Table?

Why do you think people resist becoming communicant members?

What do you find most helpful about the way baptisms are carried out, from the point of enquiry through to the administration of the sacrament?

What do you think could be improved?

How is the congregation taught about the sacraments?

How are people prepared to become communicant members?

H. Relationships

How are disagreements and tensions handled in the congregation?

How are disagreements handled within groups such as the Kirk Session or organisations?

How have disagreements between groups handled e.g. between the Kirk Session and organisations?

What opportunities are there to develop relationships between members and do many people take advantage of them?

What challenges are there to improving relationships and fellowship within the congregation?

How do you partner with and support the work of other Presbyterian congregations?

How do you partner with and support the work of other local congregations?

How have you felt supported and encouraged by Presbytery?

How are members encouraged to pray for organisations within the congregation, other congregations, and the wider church?

I. Staffing

How could you see additional staff being helpful?

How do the staff equip the congregation to do the work of the church together, rather than merely doing the work for the congregation?

J. Finance and Property

What challenges have there been to congregational finances in recent years?

What teaching has there been on giving in the last two years?

Do you have a clear picture of what the congregation spends money on and why?

What would you like to change about your buildings and why? What challenges would there be to doing this?

What have you changed about your property in the last ten years? How has this benefitted the congregation?

Do you anticipate having to make any major expenditures relating to property in the next ten years? How are you preparing for this?

Presbyterian Church in Ireland
Presbytery Consultations

Kirk Session

Consultation Questions and Guidance Notes

Overview of Consultations

The purpose of Consultations

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- **encouragements** to celebrate, for the edification of the congregation and to inspire the rest of Presbytery;
- **challenges** faced by the congregation, so that Kirk Session can be directed and equipped to deal with the most pressing issues;
- any **concerns** that Kirk Session may be struggling to deal with, requiring the intervention of Presbytery.

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The process consists of a number of stages:

1. Presbytery should notify Kirk Session twelve weeks before a Consultation is due to take place. In preparation for the Consultation, Presbytery appoints a Consultation Team and the Kirk Session appoints a group of Congregational Representatives.
2. When the Consultation commences questionnaires are sent to the Kirk Session, Minister and Associate Minister (if applicable) and written replies returned to the Consultation Team within six weeks.
3. The Consultation Team meets with Congregational Representatives and, separately, with the Minister and Associate Minister (if applicable) for more focused discussions. This should take place within one month of the questionnaires being returned.
4. Based on this, the Consultation Team produces a Consultation Report for Presbytery summarising aspects of congregational life which can be celebrated, challenges faced by the congregation and, if necessary, any concerns for Presbytery to deal with. The report will recommend some issues for the Kirk Session to work on over the course of the next year.
5. Kirk Session then has one year in which to implement the recommendations of the Consultation Report. After this year, the Consultation Team will present a Follow-up Report to Presbytery and be discharged.

Guidance Notes

Being informed of a Consultation

Presbytery will inform the Kirk Session that a Consultation is to take place at least twelve weeks in advance.

Written questionnaires

The Consultation Convener will send two documents to the Kirk Session:

- *Kirk Session Consultation Questions and Guidance Notes*
- *Review of Resources, Records and Policies*

These should be completed and returned within six weeks.

The answers will help the Consultation Team to select two or three areas of congregational life for further discussion, in order to learn more about encouragements in congregational life to be celebrated, challenges that the Kirk Session will have to deal with to help the congregation be more fruitful, and potential concerns that may require intervention by Presbytery.

The Kirk Session should meet to discuss the *Questions for the Kirk Session* in this booklet and prepare answers. The Clerk of Session will then be responsible for completing the questionnaire and returning it. It may be appropriate to split the Kirk Session into small groups to consider individual sections of the questionnaire or there may already be existing committees within Kirk Session that have responsibility for some of these areas.

The *Review of Resources, Records and Policies* largely concerns the work of the Congregational Committee. The Kirk Session is responsible for it being completed correctly and returned, but it may be appropriate to have the bulk of the work carried out by the Congregational Committee or its officers. In addition to filling in answers, the *Review* also asks for copies of several documents and policies to be returned. A checklist is included at the end of the *Review*.

The Minister and Associate Minister (if applicable) will also receive questions to be completed separately and returned to the Consultation Team.

During this time it is strongly recommended that some or all of the Consultation Team also visit a service in the congregation.

Discussion with Congregational Representatives

Kirk Session will appoint a group of Congregational Representatives which is broadly representative of the congregation, its organisations and its ministries. It will meet with the Consultation Team to discuss the answers provided by Kirk Session. The reason for meeting with this group is to get a more detailed picture of the area of particular interest from a wider range of voices than just the Kirk Session.

This will be a group of eight-twelve people consisting of:

- up to four ruling elders,
- at least two young people (no older than 25),
- a balance of genders.

The Minister should not be a part of the Congregational Representatives and will not be present during their discussion with the Consultation Team.

One of the ruling elders should be appointed as Chairperson for the Congregational Representatives and be responsible for coordinating with the Consultation Convener to arrange meetings and exchange information. The Clerk of Session should send the Chairperson's contact details to the Consultation Convener.

Prior to the meeting between the Consultation Team and the Congregational Representatives, in order to help with preparation, the Consultation Convener must send the Chairperson:

- a copy of the Kirk Session's answers,
- a list of the two or three area of congregational life to be discussed,
- any specific questions that the Team intend to ask and have already prepared.

Discussion with Ministers

Ministers will each have an individual informal discussion with the Consultation Team. The order and timing of the discussions are at the discretion of the Consultation Team. The aim of this discussion is primarily pastoral, with the intention of supporting and encouraging ministers.

The Consultation Report

Following its discussions, the Consultation Team will prepare a Consultation Report for Presbytery containing encouragements to celebrate, challenges for Kirk Session to deal with, concerns for Presbytery to consider looking at in a separate process and recommended action for Kirk Session to take in the coming year. The recommendations could, for instance, relate to an encouraging aspect of congregational life which has the potential to be developed further, or to a challenge which the Kirk Session needs to address.

The Consultation Team or Consultation Convener must meet with the Minister and Clerk of Session to verbally inform them of the content of the Report prior to it being reported to Presbytery, while making it clear that the recommendations will still have to be agreed by Presbytery.

The Consultation Team will not present the Consultation Report to the congregation (or the Follow-up Report), nor is the Kirk Session required to do so. However, if the Kirk Session wish to share any of the contents or a summary, it is free to do so.

Final outcome

After Presbytery has approved the Consultation Report, the Clerk of Presbytery will send a copy to the Clerk of Session and the Kirk Session will then have one year in which to implement any recommendations.

At the end of this year, the Consultation Team will consult with the Kirk Session to hear about progress regarding the recommendations of the Consultation Report and present a Follow-up Report to Presbytery.

If Presbytery is satisfied with progress, this will conclude the Consultation process.

If Presbytery has concerns about the congregation, further action may be taken in a separate process, making use of information from the Consultation.

Example timelines

These are examples to help visualise the timing of the process, but are not intended to restrict when a Consultation should start or finish.

Starting in September

May Presbytery meeting:	Congregation chosen and Kirk Session informed of timeline.
September Presbytery meeting:	Consultation Team established and Consultation officially commences.
October:	Questionnaires returned. Consultation Team discusses questionnaires and chooses areas to focus on for discussion.
November:	Consultation Team meets with the Congregational Representatives, Minister and Associate Minister (if applicable). Consultation Team draws up its conclusions and the Convener writes the Consultation Report, then shows it to the Minister and Clerk of Presbytery.
December Presbytery meeting:	Consultation Report presented to Presbytery.

The Kirk Session then has one year to implement the recommendations of the Consultation Report. The results of this would be reported at the February Presbytery meeting.

Starting in February

November Presbytery meeting:	Congregation chosen and Kirk Session informed of timeline.
February Presbytery meeting:	Consultation Team established and Consultation officially commences.
March:	Questionnaires returned. Consultation Team discusses questionnaires and chooses areas to focus on for discussion.
April:	Consultation Team meets with the Congregational Representatives, Minister and Associate Minister (if applicable). Consultation Team draws up its conclusions and the Convener writes the Consultation Report, then shows it to the Minister and Clerk of Presbytery.
May Presbytery meeting:	Consultation Report presented to Presbytery.

The Kirk Session then has one year to implement the recommendations of the Consultation Report. The results of this would be reported at the September Presbytery meeting.

Questions for the Kirk Session

These questions should be discussed by the Kirk Session and the Clerk of Session should then complete the questionnaire and return it to the Consultation Convener within six weeks.

Kirk Session should also ensure that the *Review of Resources, Records and Policies* is filled in with the assistance of the Congregational Committee and returned within six weeks.

A. Outreach

1. Give a brief description of the community which you are seeking to reach and areas of encouragement and challenge.

2. What is Kirk Session's vision for outreach to the local community?

3. How is that vision demonstrated by Kirk Session and the congregation?

4. Please detail recent evangelistic initiatives undertaken. What has gone well and what has not?

B. Discipleship

1. Please give details of the Congregation's strategy for making disciples among people of all ages.

2. What have been the most helpful programmes/resources used recently to encourage people to grow in their faith?

3. How are people enabled to identify and exercise their gifts?

C. Leadership

1. What strategies are being used to develop leadership skills in the congregation?

2. Is there a good supply of leaders coming through for the various organisations and ministries or are there areas where this is a struggle?

3. What has Session done to help improve its own leadership skills recently?

D. Worship

1. Realising that the conduct of services is the Minister's responsibility, do you believe that services are encouraging, vibrant and helpful to the congregation and how is this demonstrated?

2. Who else beside the Minister would be regularly involved in helping lead services of worship?

3. What opportunities are there for corporate prayer in the life of the church and how well are those supported?

4. How do you make visitors and potential new members feel more welcome?

E. Pastoral Care

1. Has Session considered the *Three Models of Pastoral Care* booklet and discerned the best way forward?

2. What are the arrangements for delivery of pastoral care in the congregation?

3. Are individual ruling elders comfortable with the pastoral care element of their role and how does this work in practice?

4. How does the Kirk Session care for the minister and his/her family?

F. Mission

1. How important is the congregation's involvement in global mission and how is this demonstrated?

2. How is interest in mission in the whole of Ireland demonstrated?

G. The Sacraments

1. How are individuals admitted to the Lord's Table and how are new members followed up?

2. When was the Communion Roll last revised?

3. How does the Session deal with requests for baptism?

4. How does the Session seek to exercise loving discipline on an ongoing basis?

H. Relationships

1. How would you rank relationships within Kirk Session:

Excellent Satisfactory Poor

2. How would you rank relationships between the Kirk Session and the Minister:

Excellent Satisfactory Poor

3. Is the congregation united in purpose and vision and how is this demonstrated?

I. Staffing

1. Do you have any paid staff in addition to the Minister? If yes, please list them.

2. Have you considered whether you need additional staff and in which areas?

Any other comments for the Consultation Team's consideration:

Presbyterian Church in Ireland
Presbytery Consultations

Ministers and Associate Ministers

Consultation Questions and Guidance Notes

Overview of Consultations

The purpose of Consultations

A Consultation is a process by which Presbytery enquires into the life of a congregation in order to discover:

- **encouragements** to celebrate, for the edification of the congregation and to inspire the rest of Presbytery;
- **challenges** faced by the congregation, so that Kirk Session can be directed and equipped to deal with the most pressing issues;
- any **concerns** that Kirk Session may be struggling to deal with, requiring the intervention of Presbytery.

The Consultation process

The process consists of a number of stages:

1. Presbytery should notify Kirk Session twelve weeks before a Consultation is due to take place. In preparation for the Consultation, Presbytery appoints a Consultation Team and the Kirk Session appoints a group of Congregational Representatives.
2. When the Consultation commences questionnaires are sent to the Kirk Session, Minister and Associate Minister (if applicable) and written replies returned to the Consultation Team within six weeks.
3. The Consultation Team meets with Congregational Representatives and, separately, with the Minister and Associate Minister (if applicable) for more focused discussions. This should take place within one month of the questionnaires being returned.
4. Based on this, the Consultation Team produces a Consultation Report for Presbytery summarising aspects of congregational life which can be celebrated, challenges faced by the congregation and, if necessary, any concerns for Presbytery to deal with. The report will recommend some issues for the Kirk Session to work on over the course of the next year.
5. Kirk Session then has one year in which to implement the recommendations of the Consultation Report. After this year, the Consultation Team will present a Follow-up Report to Presbytery and be discharged.

Guidance Notes

Being informed of a Consultation

Presbytery will inform the Kirk Session that a Consultation is to take place at least twelve weeks in advance.

Written questionnaires for Kirk Sessions

The Consultation Team will send two documents to the Kirk Session:

- *Kirk Session Consultation Questions and Guidance Notes*
- *Review of Resources, Records and Policies*

These should be completed and returned within six weeks. This will help the Consultation Team to select two or three areas of congregational life for further discussion, in order to learn more about encouragements in congregational life to be celebrated, challenges that the Kirk Session will have to deal with to help the congregation be more fruitful, and potential concerns that may require intervention by Presbytery.

The Kirk Session should meet to discuss the *Questions for the Kirk Session* in the *Kirk Session Consultation Questions and Guidance Notes* booklet and prepare answers. The Clerk of Session will then be responsible for completing the questionnaire and returning it. It may be appropriate to split the Kirk Session into small groups to consider individual sections of the questionnaire or there may already be existing committees within Kirk Session that have responsibility for some of these areas.

The *Review of Resources, Records and Policies* largely concerns the work of the Congregational Committee. The Kirk Session is responsible for it being completed correctly and returned, but it may be appropriate to have the bulk of the work carried out by the Congregational Committee or its officers. In addition to filling in answers, the *Review* also asks for copies of several documents and policies to be returned. A checklist is included at the end of the *Review*.

During this time, some or all of the Consultation Team will also visit a service in the congregation.

Written questionnaires for Ministers

At the end of this document is a questionnaire for the Minister. If there is an Associate Minister then they will also receive a copy. Each Minister should individually complete their own questionnaire and return it to the Consultation Team.

Discussion with Congregational Representatives

Kirk Session will appoint a group of Congregational Representatives who are broadly representative of the congregation, its organisations, and its ministries. They will meet with the Consultation Team to discuss the answers provided by Kirk Session. The reason for meeting with this group is to get a more detailed picture of the area of particular interest from a wider range of voices than just the Kirk Session.

This will be a group of eight-twelve people consisting of:

- up to four ruling elders,
- at least two young people (no older than 25),
- at least two women,
- at least two men.

The Minister should not be a part of the Congregational Representatives and will not be present during its discussion with the Consultation Team.

Discussion with Ministers

Ministers will each have an individual informal discussion with the Consultation Team. The order and timing of the discussions are at the discretion of the Consultation Team. The aim of this discussion is primarily pastoral, with the intention of supporting and encouraging ministers.

The Consultation Report

Following their discussions, the Consultation Team will prepare a Consultation Report for Presbytery containing encouragements to celebrate, challenges for Kirk Session to deal with, concerns for Presbytery to consider looking at in a separate process and recommended action for Kirk Session to take in the coming year. The recommendations could, for instance, relate to an encouraging aspect of congregational life which has the potential to be developed further, or to a challenge which the Kirk Session need to address.

The Consultation Team or Consultation Convener must meet with the Minister and Clerk of Session to verbally inform them of the content of the Report prior to it being reported to Presbytery, while making it clear that the recommendations will still have to be agreed by Presbytery.

The Consultation Team will not present the Consultation Report to the congregation (or the Follow-up Report), nor is the Kirk Session required to do so. However, if the Kirk Session wish to share any of the contents or a summary, it is free to do so.

Final outcome

After Presbytery has received the Consultation Report the Kirk Session will then have one year in which to implement any recommendations.

At the end of this year, the Consultation Team will consult with the Kirk Session to hear about progress regarding the recommendations of the Consultation Report and present a Follow-up Report to Presbytery.

If Presbytery is satisfied with progress, this will conclude the Consultation process.

If the process has uncovered concerns about the congregation which have not been dealt with satisfactorily in the year since the Consultation Report, or fresh problems have arisen during this time, further action may be taken in a separate process. This may make use of information from the Consultation.

Example timelines

These are examples to help visualise the timing of the process, but are not intended to restrict when a Consultation should start or finish.

Starting in September

May Presbytery meeting:	Congregation chosen and Kirk Session informed of timeline.
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May Presbytery meeting:	Consultation Report presented to Presbytery.

The Kirk Session then has one year to implement the recommendations of the Consultation Report. The results of this would be reported at the September Presbytery meeting.

Questions for the Minister

These questions should be answered by the Minister alone and returned to the Consultation Convener within six weeks.

Name: _____

Congregation: _____

Position (circle one): Minister Associate Minister

1. What have been your priorities and emphases regarding leading the church over the past few years?

2. What has been the emphasis of your preaching/teaching and conduct of worship over the past year?

3. Do you feel part of Kirk Session and does Kirk Session work well as a team?

4. How do you divide your time between teaching, visitation, meetings, responsibilities outside the congregation and family life?

5. What sort of pastoral care do you and your family receive:

a. Within the congregation?

b. From the Presbytery?

6. How do you ensure your own walk with God is good?

7. How do you look after your physical and emotional health?

8. In order to further develop your ministerial skills and be spiritually refreshed, it is helpful to undertake in-service training and make use of sabbatical time.

a. Please list in-service training then you have undertaken in the last five years, including the dates.

b. Please provide the dates of your last sabbatical and details of what it involved.

9. What has been your biggest encouragement recently?

10. What is your biggest concern at the moment?

11. Which areas of church life would you especially like to see develop or change over the next few years?

Any other comments for the Consultation Team’s consideration:

Presbyterian Church in Ireland
Presbytery Consultations

Review of Resources, Records and Policies

Instructions

Overview

The *Review of Resources, Records and Policies* largely concerns the work of the Congregational Committee.

The Kirk Session is responsible for it being completed correctly and returned, but it may be appropriate to have the bulk of the work carried out by the Congregational Committee or its officers.

In addition to filling in answers, the *Review* also asks for copies of several documents and policies to be returned. A checklist is included on page 13.

It should be returned to the Consultation Team within six weeks of being received by the Kirk Session.

Inspections

A number of inspections will be carried out by the Consultation Team:

- All items on the historical schedule of the congregation.
- All registers and minute books. These should be checked by someone who is independent of the congregation to ensure that they are kept up to date and in good order. This could be someone from the Consultation Team.
- All church property should have up-to-date safety certificates for electrical and gas installations.

Gas and electric Inspections

- It is the responsibility of the congregation to arrange and pay for all necessary inspections.
- Approved contractors in Northern Ireland are those who are NICEC approved (electrical) and Gas Safe Registered (gas).
- Approved contractors in the Republic of Ireland are those who are on the Register of Electrical Contractors of Ireland (electrical) and on the Register of Gas Installers Ireland (gas).
- Manse safety inspections should take place every ten years.
- Church gas installations should be inspected annually.
- Church electrical installations should be inspected every five years.

Review of Resources, Records and Policies

Membership Profile

Trends in numerical strength

With the help of published statistics the following information should be obtained:

	10 years ago	5 years ago	Last year
Families claiming connection			
Contributing families			
Persons of all ages			
In Sunday School and Bible Class			
Communicants			
Communicants attending at least once in the last year			
Average Sunday attendance			

Comments:

Present congregational profile

<18	19-39	40-59	60-79	80+

Comments:

Organisations under control of the Kirk Session

Name	Total membership	% belonging to congregation

Comments:

Finances

With the help of published statistics the following information should be obtained:

	5 years ago		Last year		% change	
	Total	Per contributing family	Total	Per contributing family	Total	Per contributing family
Total income						
Assessable income						
Property						
Mission etc.						

Who audited the previous year's accounts?

List of Paid Staff (Ministers and others)

Name	Role

Are there contracts in place for all non-ministerial staff?

Comments:

Records

Current church records

Register	Kept by	Are all details correct?
Baptismal		
Communion Roll		
Marriage		
Graveyard/Burial		
Session Minutes		
Committee Minutes		
Bequests Schedule		
Historical Schedule		

Contact details

1. How is contact information for members of the congregation and of organisations stored?

2. How are these details kept up to date?

3. Have up-to-date details for church officers and congregational agents been provided to the relevant people in Assembly Buildings?

Historical Records and Artefacts

1. Have all items on the historical schedule been inspected and when?

2. Who carried out the inspection?

3. Are the storage arrangements satisfactory?

Comments:

Property and Insurance

Trustees and Deeds

Please attach confirmation from your solicitor stating the date of inspection of the items listed below and indicating whether the items are in order.

Property Trustees	Special responsibilities (if any)
Title deeds, leases, etc. held by the congregation	

Comments:

Insurance

- 1. Is there adequate property and personnel insurance, including public liability and indemnity insurance?

- 2. When were the insurances last reviewed?

Please attach a copy of your most recent schedule of insurance.

Maintenance of property

Property	Work in past 5 years	Current condition	Proposed work
Church			
Church halls			
Manse			

All property should receive regular gas and electrical inspections. Please attach a copy of the most recent gas and electrical safety certificates.

- 1. Have your insurers been informed of any renovation/extension work since the last insurance review?

Comments:

Policies

Policy	Do you have one?	Person in charge	Date of last review
Child Protection			
Health and Safety			
Food Hygiene			
Fire Safety			

Please attach a copy of each policy.

Child Protection Policy

1. Is the Kirk Session satisfied that all leaders of each children's/youth organisation know what to do if a concern about a child is brought to his/her attention?

2. Does each youth organisation comply with the recommended ratios of leaders to children as detailed in section 7.2 of the Child Protection Guidelines?

3. Have all new helpers since 2005 completed the appropriate application form?

4. Who stores completed application forms?

5. Where are the forms stored?

6. When did Taking Care training last take place?

7. Have you found any particular problems in complying with the Child Protection Guidelines?

Comments:

Health and Safety Policy

1. Are Risk Assessments for all premises and activities regularly completed?

Food Hygiene Policy

1. If you don't have a Policy, why have you considered it unnecessary?

Fire Safety Policy

1. Are there any properties not covered by the Fire Safety Policy? If so, list them.

2. Are there sufficient fire extinguishers for all premises?

3. When were they last tested?

Miscellaneous

1. When were all electrical appliances in the church building and church halls last PAT tested?

2. Are there sufficient people with First Aid Training in your organisations?

Copyright Licensing

1. Do you have an appropriate Copyright Licence?

2. What is your CCL number?

3. Please tick what cover you have

CCL	MRL	CLA	PRS	PPL	CVL

Disability Arrangements

1. What arrangements have been made by the Kirk Session and Congregational Committee for the more active participation of disabled people in congregational life? For example:

- (a) Access by people with mobility difficulties
- (b) Those who are deaf or hard of hearing
- (c) Those whose sight is impaired
- (d) Those who have a learning difficulty
- (e) Others

Environmental Issues

1. When was an environmental audit last carried out?

2. Who carried out the audit?

For further information or advice, please contact the Stewardship of Creation Panel in the Council for Global Mission.

Charity Commission

1. Is the registration of your Charity Trustees up to date?

Any other comments for the Consultation Team's consideration:

Final Checklist

Have you provided your most recent, up-to-date versions of the following documents?

	Letter from your solicitor stating the date of inspection of title deeds, leases, etc. and indicating whether the items are in order
	Insurance schedule
	Church gas safety certificate(s) (if applicable)
	Church electrical safety certificate(s)
	Manse gas safety certificate (if applicable)
	Manse electrical safety certificate
	Child Protection Policy
	Health and Safety Policy
	Food Hygiene Policy
	Fire Safety Policy

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

1. The Nominations Committee has met on four occasions since the last General Assembly.
2. At its meeting in September 2016 the Committee noted that during the previous year 17 out of 209 Direct Presbytery Representatives changed ('B' line), 6 out of 86 other members changed ('C' line). It was also noted that in the nominations which the Committee has influence over it was well within the figures for Ordained / Gender which the structures report indicated should be aspired to.
3. One major issue, particularly with smaller Councils and Committees, is to ensure places are filled as efficiently as possible, therefore:
 - (a) To ease the scramble to fill vacancies Conveners and Secretaries of Councils are being asked to ascertain each year prior to the March Presbytery meetings who will be resigning from Councils and Committees, and to report such to the Nominations Committee.
 - (b) It was also agreed to assist the process of filling convenerships that these are no longer required to be advertised in the *Herald* but that instead a web address be placed on the Church Record section of the *Herald*. It was agreed to ask Council Secretaries, when vacancies occur early in the year, to bring names to the Nominations Committee in the autumn so that they may be added to sit and deliberate with a view to appointment by the Assembly.
4. In seeking to clarify further the **process for filling vacancies** in the membership of Councils and Committees the following was noted:
 - (a) The Nominations Committee (NC) is responsible for taking the lead in this process.
 - (b) The process is (i) Council Conveners in notifying a vacancy indicate any particular expertise or experience that is desirable; (ii) NC look in the pool for suitable people having regard for a balance of experience, ordination, gender and age; (iii) Only if suitable people are not found in the pool are other names sought from NC and/or Council Conveners and Secretaries who supply names and relevant details of any to be considered; (iv) Conveners would normally be asked if they have any comments regarding the shortlist of those being considered for their Council/Committees.
 - (c) For practical reasons it was decided to appoint a panel to carry out this work between meetings of the NC and report back to the Committee with recommendations. This 'Membership' Panel will be refreshed each year.
5. Filling vacancies for **Council/Committee Conveners**. Work on replacing two Council and at least 6 Committee Conveners has been progressing well. The NC report that in one case there has been more than one applicant, in a few cases just one applicant. However, in at least half the cases there has been no application and so, after the closing date, and in consultation with the Council Conveners and Secretaries, the NC has approached people to consider taking on Convenerships. There is a role for members of the General Council and others to

encourage people to consider applying for vacancies as they arise - they are open to *all* communicant members of PCI.

6. A group was set up to look at the pool and considered the process for refreshing the pool.

(a) Current Membership of the Pool – It was reported in December that of the 342 people in the pool some 146 had not been used on Commissions, Councils or Committees and about one third of these were female. In light of this, and of the low rate of turnover in the previous year it was decided that there was no immediate need to refresh the pool with new people. However, in some cases the level of information supplied on the forms used in 2014 will make it difficult to identify an appropriate place for some of those in the pool to serve. It was decided to ask those in the pool who have not been used to date to indicate their willingness to remain in the pool and to complete an online survey to enrich the information available. The Committee is hopeful of a good response to this and to have a pool with more significant information from which to draw.

(b) **In the future** it is intended that for 2019 nominations ‘C’ line members will be asked if they are willing to serve their second term of 4 years. While it is hard to predict how many spaces will need to be filled, it is anticipated that those who step down will be replaced by those in the existing pool. **For 2023** a need to begin the process of seeking new nominations for the pool is foreseen.

7. A suggestion was made to the Committee that it should consider bringing to the General Assembly a proposal that a ‘D’ line be added to all Councils as a ‘quota’ which could then be used to address any imbalance arising from Presbytery nominations. In light of the Structures Review it was the unanimous view of the Committee not to do this. As reported last October, the NC had established that the balances of the nominations for which it is responsible are within the range to be aspired to in terms of ordination and gender. It will seek to focus the remit of nominating to the ‘C’ line, while having regard for a balance of experience, ordination, gender and age, on the nominations over which it has a direct say.

8. One area in the Structures Review which had not received much attention was the task of ‘providing a strategy for **increasing the number of younger people** on councils, committees, etc.’ A group has been set up to meet with others in relation to this. Initially four issues were identified (i) Where do we gather the names for the pool from? (ii) What are people asked to serve on – councils, committees, panels or task groups? (iii) What are the strategic areas for younger people to contribute to? (iv) What does meaningful participation look like for younger people? To explore these issues and to hear the voice of younger people a survey was conducted at the 2017 Youth Assembly. In light of this the following is offered as an initial approach or strategy:

(a) It is important that the voice of younger people be heard and be allowed to influence and shape the work of Councils and Committees. The Committee is encouraged by the strong desire of younger people to be heard and in particular the desire of those at the recent Youth Assembly to be involved and this means that the opportunity for involvement of younger people is real.

- (b) The challenge of achieving this is as much for congregations and presbyteries as it is for our councils. In seeking to fulfil the remit of developing a strategy for involving more young people the NC suggests the following.
- (i) encourage Councils and Committee to think ‘younger’ when appointing Panels and Task Groups;
 - (ii) when refreshing the pool, specifically target younger people who have already served on Panels and Task Groups;
 - (iii) gather details of younger people who have been at the Youth Assembly, served on Summer Teams etc. and pass this on for consideration for membership of Panels and Task Groups;
 - (iv) pull together good practice examples of younger people who have been involved at different levels and communicate this to other young people;
 - (v) encourage and challenge the Church over the involvement of younger people at Presbytery and Kirk Session level.

9. **Length of Conveners’ service:** In a few cases, where under the new structures a Commission, Council, or Committee carries out essentially the same work, then the maximum length of service permitted, including time under the previous structures is 7 years. The NC has already received one request for an extension to this maximum and will need to monitor this for where it may arise in other cases.

10. The Committee will meet again before the General Assembly and seek to fill outstanding vacancies and any which arise between the time of writing and the Assembly.

JONATHAN CURRY, Convener

GUYSMERE CENTRE TASK GROUP

1. During the past year it remained clear to the Task Group that, as previously reported, redeveloping the Guysmere site as a residential facility for the denomination was not a viable option.

- (a) The Task Group noted that the demand for a denominational Youth Centre or Conference Centre had previously been surveyed and it was the clear outcome that, while residential ministry of different types remained important, the denomination did not need its own centre.
- (b) The Task Group also noted that in 2012-13 professionals were consulted and asked to provide costs for a re-developed Guysmere. It was reported at that time that costs for a renewed building would be a minimum of approx. £700,000 plus professional fees plus vat – well in excess of £1million.
- (c) It was further noted that the centre when operational had for many years been subsidised from central funds (currently there is an accrued debt of £160,566) and that any redeveloped centre was unlikely to be economically viable. A continued subsidy from central (United Appeal) funds would almost certainly be required, as mid-week use of the centre would be very limited during most of the year.

- (d) In the past doubts were expressed regarding the willingness of PCI's congregations to underwrite these costs through further assessments (for the capital development) or through the United Appeal for an annual subsidy. It was concluded then that a re-development would not be wise, given that little interest had been shown in the denomination for running a residential centre, with none of the General Assembly's Councils expressing a commitment to, or indeed sufficient interest in, using a redeveloped Guysmere Centre. The Task Group concurs with this conclusion.

2. There was however a strong desire within the Task Group, if at all possible, to retain the Guysmere site for ministry and/or mission within PCI. Approaches therefore were made to the Council for Social Witness (CSW) to see if that Council would be interested or able to develop the site for supported living or some other form of social witness. After detailed discussion, and exploration over an extended period of time of a variety of uses, including consultations with potential funders and partners, the CSW concluded "*that the development would not be viable, in this current vacuum within funding streams.*"

3. As noted above, the Guysmere Centre has an accrued debt of £160,566, which continues to rise as its present 'moth-balling' incurs a cost of some £10,000 per annum to keep the buildings secure, insured etc. Therefore, in the light of the above, the Task Group concluded that to keep the 'spirit of Guysmere' alive the site should be sold and a fund established, under the control of the Council for Congregational Life and Witness, to support ministry, mission and outreach, with particular emphasis on residential ministry among young people. Resolutions are appended to this effect.

IVAN J PATTERSON, Convener

GENERAL COUNCIL

RESOLUTIONS

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

1. That the Draft Order of Business for the 2017 General Assembly be approved.
2. That the 'Guide to Assembly Procedure' (yellow pages) be approved with the appropriate General Assembly Standing Orders suspended, when necessary, to facilitate alternative presentations etc.
3. That a grant of £20,000 be made from the Incidental Fund to the Arrangements Panel of the General Assembly Business Committee.
4. That the Initial Report of the General Assembly Business Committee be received.

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

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

6. That the General Assembly welcome the plans for the celebration of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation through the 'FAITH AT THE CROSSROADS - Rediscovering the Reformation' evenings in October 2017 and commend these to all Congregations.

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

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

8. That the priorities outlined in Priorities Appendix 1 be adopted as the priorities for the work of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland at General Assembly level, as delivered through its Councils, Committees and Panels.

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

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

10. That for 2017, the Assessment Rates, along with the related allocation of funds, be as set out in Support Services Appendix 1 and that the rate of assessment for the Pension Fund be set at 24% of stipend paid in the year.

11. That the 2017 budgeted expenditure of the Incidental Fund be as set out in Support Services Appendix 2.

12. That the amended Rules of the Prolonged Disability Fund, as set out in Support Services Appendix 4, be approved and that those receiving a benefit from the Prolonged Disability Fund (and who were age 56 or over on 1st January 2015) retain entitlement in retirement to an amount equivalent to the former annual bonus, under Code Par 315(5).

13. That approval is given to the pre-65 retirements of the Revs Brian McManus (Cloughwater), Harry Robinson (Downshire) and Alastair Bill (Saintfield Road, Belfast) and that the General Council approval of the pre-65 retirements of Revs David Chapman (Second Islandmagee) and John Hanna (Glendermott) is noted.

14. That the arrangements approved by the General Assembly in June 2010 regarding the appointment of Members Nominated Trustees (MNT) to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Pension Scheme (2009) be amended to allow for an unfilled position in one of the MNT constituencies to be filled by a nomination to one of the other constituencies.

15. That approval be given to the Support Services Committee to explore the merits or otherwise of a change to the financial year end to 31st August and, if appropriate, to engage in a period of consultation with the wider Church and report back to the 2018 General Assembly.

16. That the United Appeal for 2018 be as set out on the Schedules to the report of the United Appeal Committee.
17. That the General Assembly encourage all Congregations to make use of the available United Appeal for Mission promotional materials and to mark the first Sunday in March (or other suitable Sunday) as United Appeal for Mission Sunday.
18. That Section 3 of the Report of the General Council be received.

Resolutions – General Council

(Section 4: 3.30pm Thursday afternoon)

19. That the recommendations regarding the categories of inter-church relationship used by PCI (see Par 10 of the Report of the Relationships with other Denominations Task Group) be adopted.
20. That the framework and principles contained in the report drafted by the Council for Global Mission (see Appendix 2 of the Report of the Relationships with other Denominations Task Group) be adopted.
21. That the recommendations regarding the inter-church bodies to which PCI should belong (see Par 17 of the Report of the Relationships with other Denominations Task Group) be adopted.
22. That the recommendations regarding the Church of Scotland (see Par 18 of the Report of the Relationships with other Denominations Task Group), with the exception of recommendation (b), be adopted.
23. That the recommendations regarding the Free Church of Scotland (see Par 19 of the Report of the Relationships with other Denominations Task Group) be adopted.
24. That the delegates to the United Reformed Church 2018 and the Presbyterian Church of Wales 2018 be recommended by the General Council to the 2018 General Assembly; and that the General Council be permitted to appoint delegates to the General Synod of the Church of Ireland 2018 and the Methodist Conference 2018, along with other delegates as required.
25. That a Theological Engagement Task Group be appointed to approach the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland for ecumenical discussions on the contemporary understanding of the grace of God in Christ; and that the membership of the group be as follows:
 - Principal JS Carson (Acting Convener), Professor of Systematic Theology, Rev Dr Martyn Cowan, Prof John Gillespie, Rev John Faris, Ms Zoe Hollinger, Rev Dr Michael McClenahan, Dr Patrick Mitchel, Very Rev TWJ Morrow, Rev John Seawright, Rev Joanne Smith
26. That the General Assembly agree that the 2007 guidelines for multi-faith events continue to be followed, but that further substantial reflection on the theological basis for involvement in multi-faith events be carried out by the Doctrine Committee, through the appointment of a dedicated Task Group of the Committee, with the group including a representative from each of the Councils for Public Affairs and Global Mission.
27. That Section 4 of the Report of the General Council be received.

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

28. That the General Assembly encourage Presbyteries to adopt some of the good practice suggestions outlined in the Report of the Engagement and Consultations Task Group in order to improve engagement in their meetings and also with Congregations.
29. That the General Assembly direct the Engagement and Consultations Task Group to consider and report back on the issue of the role of Presbyteries as agents for missional strategy.
30. That the General Assembly approve the new Consultations Process as in Engagement and Consultations Appendix 1 and direct that it be used by all Presbyteries from 1st January 2018 onwards.
31. That the following resignations be accepted (or noted) and appointments made:
 - (a) the resignation of the Rev AV Stewart as Convener of the Discipleship Committee on 3rd August, 2016 be noted, that he be thanked for his services, and that the _____ be appointed in his place;
 - (b) the resignation of the Rev RJ Hyndman as Convener of the Worship Committee be accepted, that he be thanked for his services, and that _____ be appointed in his place;
 - (c) the resignation of the Rev Dr JA Curry as Convener of the Leadership Committee be accepted, that he be thanked for his services, and that _____ be appointed in his place;
 - (d) the resignation of the Rev TC Morrison as Convener of the Youth, Children's and Family Strategy Coordination Committee be accepted, that he be thanked for his services, and that _____ be appointed in his place;
 - (e) the resignation of the Rev Dr Graham Connor as Convener of the Council for Congregational Life and Witness be accepted, that he be thanked for his services, and that the Rev TC Morrison be appointed in his place;
 - (f) the resignation of the Rev BD Colvin as Convener of the Home Mission, Irish Mission and Deaconess Committee be accepted, that he be thanked for his services, and that the Rev RI Carton be appointed in his place;
 - (g) the resignation of the Rev Stephen Simpson Convener of the Council for Mission in Ireland on 31st December, 2016 be noted, that he be thanked for his services, and that the Very Rev Dr FP Sellar be appointed in his place;
 - (h) the resignation of the Rev Andrew Faulkner as Convener of the Reception of Ministers and Licentiates Committee be accepted, that he be thanked for his services, and that _____ be appointed in his place;
 - (i) the resignation of the Rev Dr WJM Parker as Convener of the Ministerial Studies and Development Committee be accepted, that he be thanked for his services, and that the Rev Andrew Faulkner be appointed in his place.

32. That the nominations to the General Assembly Commissions, Councils and Committees (as tabled by the Nominations Committee) be approved.
33. That the General Assembly agree that the Guysmere Centre be sold at the appropriate time.
34. That General Assembly direct that, once all financial liabilities are settled, steps be taken to establish a 'Guysmere Fund' under the control of the Council for Congregational Life and Witness, to support ministry, mission and outreach with an emphasis where possible on residential ministry amongst young people.
35. That the General Council be authorised to oversee the sale of the Guysmere Centre and the drawing up of the terms of the "Guysmere Fund", in consultation with the Council for Congregational Life and Witness.
36. That Section 5 of the Report of the General Council be received.

Resolutions – General Assembly Business Committee

(Second Section) – 12.00noon Friday:

37. That from 2018 onwards, the General Assembly shall include additional evening sessions, and consequential adjustments, as outlined in General Assembly Business Committee Appendix 1 – Option ## (Insert either Option 1 or Option 2).
38. That from 2018 onwards each congregation shall be entitled to send one additional communicant member or ruling elder, aged 30 or under, to sit and deliberate alongside the representative elder and that the current arrangements for 'named additional elders' shall cease.
39. That the General Assembly authorise the Clerk to make all necessary amendments to the 'Contents' and 'Index' pages of the Code to reflect changes agreed by the General Assembly; and to make appropriate consequential changes to date numbering and symbols in the Appendices.
40. That the Second Report of the General Assembly Business Committee be received.

AD-HOC OVERTURES

SECTION (A) OVERTURES ON THE BOOKS FROM THE 2016 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

RELATED TO THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND MARRIAGE TASK GROUP

Anent Par 85 of the Code

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

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

RELATED TO THE CHARITY REGISTRATION TASK GROUP

Anent Par 137 of the Code

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

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

Anent Par 16(3) of the Code

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

Anent Par 16(4) of the Code

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

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

Anent Par 47(1) of the Code

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

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

Anent Par 51(1) of the Code

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

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

Anent Par 52 of the Code

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

Anent Par 33

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

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

Anent Pars 61 and 97 of the Code

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

substituted in their place.

Anent Par 61 of the Code

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

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

Anent Par 62 of the Code

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

Anent Par 72 of the Code

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

- (h) subject to Rules (*See Pars 220-223, 225 and 226*), accept the retirement of a minister, whom it shall designate as Minister Emeritus;
- (i) annually review the position of each Minister Emeritus and following each review may release a retired minister from the responsibilities of full membership of Presbytery (and thereby also of the General Assembly), whom it shall then designate as Minister Emeritus (Released). A decision to so release is appropriate when there is:
 - (i) a request from the Minister Emeritus; or
 - (ii) a lack of capacity to fulfil the responsibilities of membership of Presbytery; or
 - (iii) a failure to attend Presbytery for a period of twelve months without appropriate reason.

and the subsequent sub-paragraphs renumbered.

Anent Par 81(6) of the Code

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

Anent Par 97(h) of the Code

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

- (h) ministers or ruling elders who are ex-officio members of the General Assembly in virtue of their appointment as:-
 - (i) Conveners and Secretaries of each of the Assembly’s Standing Commissions, Councils and Committees;
 - (ii) Clerks of Presbytery;
 - (iii) Two of the Trustees of the General Assembly, being ruling elders, appointed annually by the Trustees;

Anent Par 97(j) of the Code

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

Anent Par 98 of the Code

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

Anent Par 128(1) of the Code

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

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

RELATED TO THE SUPPORT SERVICES COMMITTEE**Anent Par 46(h) of the Code**

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 46(h) of the Code, the words “independent examiners or” be inserted before the word “auditors”.

Anent Par 46(h) of the Code

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

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

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

Anent Pars 76(e) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 76(e) of the Code, the words “independently examined or” be inserted before the word “audited”.

Anent Par 137 of the Code

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

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

RELATED TO THE COUNCIL FOR TRAINING IN MINISTRY**Anent Pars 72(e), 74, 132(5), and 134(3) of the Code**

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

RELATED TO THE LINKAGE COMMISSION**Anent Par 36(f) of the Code**

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 36(f) of the Code, the words “auxiliary ministers,” be inserted after the words “assistant ministers,”

Anent Pars 57(3)and(6), 73(d), and 82(3)and(4) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Pars 57(3)and(6), 73(b), and 82(3)and(4) of the Code, the words “Union Commission” be deleted and the words “Linkage Commission” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 57(5) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 57(5) of the Code, the words “Committee on Church Architecture” be deleted and the words “Linkage Commission” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 76(b) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 76(b) of the Code, the words “Church Architecture Committee” be deleted and the words “Linkage Commission” substituted in their place.

RELATED TO THE COUNCIL FOR MISSION IN IRELAND**Anent Par 79(e) of the Code**

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

Anent Par 116(2) of the Code

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

SECTION (B) NEW OVERTURES

GENERAL

1. Purpose to make it clear that, while the Committee’s responsibilities concerning a sexton/caretaker remain, the Kirk Session is the employing body:

Anent Par 35 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 35 of the Code, a new sub-paragraph (h) be added as follows:

- (h) act as the employing body concerning all those in remunerated employment in the congregation.

Anent Par 47(2)(f) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 47(2)(f) of the Code be deleted, and the following substituted in its place:

- (f) subject to the provisions of Par 35(h), be responsible for appointing or dismissing the sexton or caretaker;

2. Purpose to make it clear that if someone is no longer under the jurisdiction of a Presbytery they are no longer Clerk:

Anent Par 65(2) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 65(2) of the Code, the words “at the pleasure of the court” be deleted and the words “at the pleasure of the court, provided they remain under its jurisdiction” be substituted in their place.

3. Purpose to allow a Minister Emeritus to be included in the list of those who may celebrate marriage:

Anent Par 85(1) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 85(1) of the Code, the words “minister without charge or licentiate” be deleted and the words “minister without charge, minister emeritus (released), or licentiate” be substituted in their place.

4. Purpose to remove an incorrect page reference – and this is the only instance of a page reference in the whole Code.

Anent Par 173 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 173 of the Code, the words “on page 77” be deleted.

5. Purpose to take account of the Protracted Illness Guidelines of the Linkage Commission and of the Prolonged Disability Fund and do away with some archaic references:

Anent Par 222(3) of the Code

It is hereby overtured that Par 222(3) of the Code be deleted, and the following substituted in its place:

- (3) When, from illness or infirmity, a minister becomes permanently unfit to discharge the duties of his office, and is medically so certified, he may apply through the Support Services Committee to receive benefit from the Prolonged Disability Fund according to its rules, as agreed from time to time by the General Council.

6. Purpose to update the reference to “specified sources” to “assessable income”:

Anent Par 239(2) of the Code

It is hereby overtured that in Par 239(2) of the Code, the words “specified sources” be deleted and the words “assessable income” be substituted in their place.

7. Purpose to remove a superfluous reference to missionaries: if they are a missionary minister it will be reported anyway. Non-ministerial missionaries are not reported. Also to ensure that the designation of a Minister Emeritus as a Minister Emeritus (Released) is reported. Also to ensure that Licentiates who come to the end of their assistantships are reported.

Anent Par 260(b) of the Code

It is hereby overtured that Par 260(b) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

- (b) the names of ministers who, since its last annual report, have died, been designated Minister Emeritus (Released), retired from active duty, resigned their charges, or have been installed, inducted, ordained or licensed by Presbytery, with the respective dates;

Anent Par 260(d) of the Code

It is hereby overtured that Par 260(d) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

- (d) the names of ministers who, since its last annual report, have resigned the office of the ministry, or have been suspended or deposed, or have been declared to be no longer ministers of the Church; and of licentiates who have ceased serving an assistantship under Par 219A, or from whom licence has been withdrawn;

COUNCIL FOR CONGREGATIONAL LIFE AND WITNESS

8. Purpose update reference to Marriage and Family Committee in line with the new structures:

Anent Par 85(5)(6)and(7)

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 85(5)(6)and(7) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in their place:

- (5) Where difficulty arises as to whether a marriage by the Church is advisable, the minister may consult with his Kirk Session or refer the matter to the Re-marriage Panel of the Pastoral Care Committee under the Council for Congregational Life and Witness before agreeing to celebrate the marriage.
- (6) A minister should not join in marriage a member of the Church with one holding beliefs or having a Church membership incompatible with the Christian witness of the Protestant Reformation, until careful instruction has been given in the doctrines and obligations of our evangelical faith or until other conditions approved by the Re-marriage Panel have been observed.
- (7) While this Church does not prohibit the marriage of a divorced person or persons, it is strongly recommended that a minister does not join in marriage a person who has been divorced, except in circumstances recognised by the Re-marriage Panel as justifying such action. In the case of a divorced minister wishing to remain in office after re-marriage the approval of Presbytery shall be obtained.

COUNCIL FOR MISSION IN IRELAND

9. Purpose to remove the power to issue calls to deaconesses and lay agents from Kirk Sessions and conforms to Pars 277(4) and 305(2):

Anent Par 36(f) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 36(f) of the Code, the words “auxiliary ministers, deaconess and lay workers” be deleted and that the words “auxiliary ministers” be substituted in their place.

Anent Par 201 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 201 of the Code be deleted and the following be substituted in its place:

- 201. (1) Candidates for appointment as missionaries, deaconesses, senior lecturers, auxiliary ministers and lay agents** of the Church must be approved in respect of character and ability, and have received training for their special work, in accordance with the decision of the appropriate supervising Council or agency of the General Assembly.
- (2) Each candidate, when qualified, may be called by the appropriate Council, and in the case of auxiliary ministers, by a Kirk Session; and the Presbytery concerned shall be requested to arrange for a public commissioning or induction service in the work to which they have been appointed.

- (3) Presbyteries should not act except at the call of a Kirk Session or the appropriate Council on the authority of the General Assembly.

10. Purpose to make update Committee reference in line with new structures:

Anent Code Par 305(11)

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 305(11) of the Code, the words “Council for Mission in Ireland Personnel Committee” be deleted and the words “Home Mission, Irish Mission and Deaconess Committee of the Council for Mission in Ireland” be substituted in their place.

COUNCIL FOR GLOBAL MISSION

11. Purpose to make update Committee reference in line with new structures:

Anent Par 290(4) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 290(4) of the Code, the words “Personnel Committee” be deleted and that the words “Personnel Panel” be substituted in their place.

COUNCIL FOR TRAINING IN MINISTRY

12. Purpose to remove anachronisms concerning the eligibility of various categories of people to supply in vacant congregations:

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

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 190(2)(a) of the Code be deleted, and the following substituted in its place:

- (a) A congregation in such circumstances shall be supplied only by:
- (i) ministers, licentiates, accepted students for the ministry, auxiliary ministers, accredited preachers or elders of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland;
 - (ii) staff employed in the congregation;
 - (iii) speakers on deputation from agencies of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland or from other agencies supported by the congregation;
 - (iv) ministers of other Churches deemed eligible to so supply by the Reception of Ministers and Licentiates Committee;
 - (v) ministers from neighbouring churches when conducting occasional customary or one-off services.”

13. Purpose to make it clear that a Transferring Minister has to *successfully* complete any course work and/or assistantship to be declared eligible for a call:

Anent Par 193(1)(b) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 193(1)(b) of the Code, the words “have completed” be deleted and words “have successfully completed” be substituted in their place.

14. Purpose to make procedures concerning licentiates and ministers without charge clearer:

Anent Par 219(5) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 219(5) of the Code, the words “the foregoing sub-paragraphs” be deleted and the words “the previous sub-paragraph” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 219(3) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 219(3) of the Code be deleted, the following substituted in its place, and subsequent paragraphs renumbered:

- (3) The Presbytery shall exercise its jurisdiction over licentiates and ministers in association with the appropriate Assembly Council, as prescribed in Par 74.
- (4) In respect of licentiates not serving an assistantship under Par 219A, and of ministers without charge:
 - (a) Presbytery shall decide annually on whether to seek authorisation to retain their recognition. The names of those not retained shall be reported by the Presbytery in accordance with Pars 260 and 263, and these names shall be removed from the Church’s current records.
 - (b) The Presbytery shall seek authorisation annually through the Council for Training in Ministry, or its appropriate committee, for those it wishes to retain on the Church’s current records as recognised licentiates or ministers without charge. The Council shall consider such requests and ask the Assembly to resolve on its recommendations.
 - (c) It shall be a condition for retention that they report regularly to Presbytery as required, not less than annually, on their life and work, especially involvement in congregational life and Church work, in preaching, administration of the sacraments and conduct of marriages, and on whether they have actively been seeking a call.
 - (d)
 - (i) On accepting a full-time appointment which is not under the jurisdiction of the Assembly, they shall be deemed to have resigned from their position in the Church, except as hereafter provided.
 - (ii) This rule does not apply to anyone appropriately employed either: by a para-church or similar Christian agency which serves the wider church; or on a full-time temporary basis in the service of a member Church of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, so long as they continue in good standing and in such employment.

15. Purpose to make clear the body that assigns licentiates:

Anent Par 219A(i)

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

- “(i) **A licentiate** may be assigned to serve an assistantship in a congregation. Such an assignment shall be made by the Council for Training in Ministry’s Assignments Panel, with the approval of the minister and Kirk Session of the congregation.”

LINKAGE COMMISSION

16. Purpose to change the order in which permissions are required concerning alterations to property:

Anent Par 57(5)

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 57(5) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

- (5) The site and plans of all new buildings proposed to be erected on congregational property and of all proposed demolition, structural alterations of or structural additions to existing buildings thereon (including all proposals and designs for memorials, windows, artificial lighting and for seating and furnishings requisite for public worship) shall be authorised, successively, by the congregation, the Presbytery and the Linkage Commission, and without such authorisations no such erection or alteration shall be undertaken or made.

Anent Par 76(b)

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 76(b) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

- (b) subject to the provisions of paragraph Par 57(5) and (6) of the Code, examine and approve of the site and plans of all new Church buildings and of all permanent alterations or additions to Church buildings or property and of furnishings used in the conduct of public worship and of any demolition involved in such projects;

17. Purpose to remove an out of date reference to the Allocation Committee. In any case the reference to the Linkage Commission is sufficient:

Anent Par 198(10) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 198(10) of the Code, the words “on the recommendation of its Allocation Committee” be deleted.

REPORTS OF PRESBYTERIES

The **ARDS PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev JM Wade is their Moderator; that the Rev Dr GMcK Eagleson, Minister Emeritus of First Donaghadee, died on 28th May 2016; that the Rev DN Gray, Minister of Portaferry, retired on 31st July 2016; that the Rev Dr DR Purce, Minister of Groomsport, retired on 31st July 2016; that the Rev WJ Carlisle, Minister of Movilla, retired on 31st August 2016; that the Rev RJ Montgomery, Minister of Trinity, Bangor, retired on 31st October 2016; that the Very Rev Dr Rodney Sterritt, the Revs DG Bailie, William Caughey, JKF Watson, WM Gray, David Johnston, WL Haslett, AA Stevenson, HS Boyd, Roy Stirling and Douglas Bradley, Ministers Emeritus, became Ministers Emeritus (Released) on 7th February 2017; that the Rev Simon Henning, Minister of Ballyblack, resigned his Charge on 31st August 2016 and was received as a Minister without Charge under the care of Presbytery; that the Rev Dr WJA Sleith, Minister of Regent Street, Newtownards, resigned his Charge on 26th June and was given credentials to the Presbytery of Dromore; that the Rev JM Browne presented credentials from the Presbytery of Derry and Donegal and was installed to the Charge of First Donaghadee on 26th August 2016; that the Rev AJ Galbraith presented credentials from the Presbytery of Down and was inducted as Associate Minister in West Church, Bangor on 1st September 2016; that the Rev CI Dickson was inducted as a Missionary on 6th May 2016; that Mr MA Johnston presented credentials from the Presbytery of North Belfast and was ordained and installed to the Charge of St Andrew's, Bangor on 17th June 2016; that Mr JP McWatters, a Licentiate under the care of Presbytery, was ordained and installed to the Charge of Streat, Newtownards, on 3rd February 2017; that Mr Alan Marsh was licensed on 5th June 2016 and given credentials to the Presbytery of East Belfast; that Mr RC Patton presented credentials from the Presbytery of Ballymena and was received as a Licentiate; that the Rev CG Anderson was given credentials to the Presbytery of Down; that Mr DP Burke was given credentials to the Presbytery of East Belfast; that Mr JS McCrea was given credentials to the Presbytery of Derry and Donegal; that under their care are: as Ministers without Charge the Revs David McKee (retired), CD Mawhinney, Dr SI Dennis and Simon Henning; as Licentiates without Charge Mr E Kirwan and Mr KJ Ward; as Students Mr Richard Tregaskis and Mr David Morrison; that they held Consultations at First Bangor and Lisnabreen; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed separately; that all Kirk Sessions have adopted 'The equality policy for licensing the use, by bodies other than the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, of church halls and other properties used for direct mission or ministry purposes', as directed by the General Council (exercising delegated powers from the General Assembly).

The **ARMAGH PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev LW Webster is their Moderator; that the Rev BA McDonald, Minister Emeritus of Caledon and Minterburn, died on 29th May 2016; that the Very Rev Dr WM Craig, Minister Emeritus of First Portadown, died on 10th February 2017; that the Rev DJ Hutchinson, Minister of Moy and Benburb, retired on 31st October 2016; that the Rev WJI Thompson, Minister of First Keady and Armaghbreague, resigned

his Charge on 23rd June 2016 and was installed to the Charge of Knappagh and Lislooney on 24th June 2016; that Dr MC Cowan presented credentials from the Presbytery of Down and was received as a Licentiate without Charge under the care of Presbytery; that Dr MC Cowan was ordained and inducted as Lecturer in Historical Theology at Union Theological College on 9th December 2016; that Mr CW Jackson was licensed on 5th June 2016 and remains under the care of Presbytery; that Mr ET Frazer was licensed on 19th June 2016 and given credentials to the Presbytery of Dromore; that Mr PG Cleland was given credentials to the Presbytery of Iveagh; that under their care are: as Ministers without Charge the Revs Drs M McClenahan and JWP McConnell; as Licentiates Mr SD Kennedy and Mr CW Jackson; as a Student Mr JT Graham; that they held a Consultation at Benburb; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed; that all Kirk Sessions have adopted 'The equality policy for licensing the use, by bodies other than the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, of church halls and other properties used for direct mission or ministry purposes', as directed by the General Council (exercising delegated powers from the General Assembly)

The **BALLYMENA PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev William Sinclair is their Moderator; that the Rev WF Dickey retired from the duties of the active ministry in First Broughshane on 31st March 2016; that the Revs WJ Hook and EEH Porter, Ministers Emeritus, became Ministers Emeritus (Released) on 7th February 2017; that the Rev RM Murray resigned his Charge as Minister of Connor on 8th September 2016, having received and accepted a call from Drumreagh and Dromore and was given credentials to the Presbytery of Route; that the Rev MJR Neilly resigned his Charge as Minister of Buckna on 31st August 2016; that the status of the Rev JC Stephens as a Minister transferring from another Church, under the care of Presbytery, ceased on 28th February 2017; that the appointment of Mr SW Orr as Licentiate Assistant in High Kirk ceased on 31st January 2017, he remains under the care of Presbytery as a Licentiate without Charge; that the Rev MJR Neilly was installed to the Charge of First Ahoghill on 1st September 2016; that Mr RJ Watt presented credentials from the Presbytery of North Belfast and was ordained to the Office of the Christian Ministry and installed to the Charge of Killymurriss on 6th May 2016; that Mr JT Blue presented credentials from the Presbytery of East Belfast and was ordained to the Office of the Christian Ministry and installed to the Charge of Rasharkin on 2nd December 2016; that Mr DA McMillan, a Licentiate under the care of Presbytery, was ordained to the Office of the Christian Ministry and installed to the Charge of Clough on 16th December 2016; that Mr MD Boyd was licensed as a Probationer for the Christian Ministry on 29th May 2016 and remains under the care of Presbytery; that Mr RC Patton was licensed as a Probationer for the Christian Ministry on 29th May 2016 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of Ards; that Mr JJ Boyd was licensed as a Probationer for the Christian Ministry on 19th June 2016 and remains under the care of Presbytery; that Mr MS Rutledge, having presented credentials from the Presbytery of Templepatrick, was received as a Licentiate under the care of Presbytery; that under their care are: as Licentiates Mr JJ Boyd, Mr MD Boyd and Mr MS Rutledge; as a Licentiate Without Charge Mr SW Orr; as Students for the Ministry Mr JA Porter and Mr C Wilson; that a Consultation was held with First Ballymena during the year; that the Financial Reports of the Congregations are being printed separately; that all Kirk Sessions have adopted

‘The equality policy for licensing the use, by bodies other than the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, of church halls and other properties used for direct mission or ministry purposes’, as directed by the General Council (exercising delegated powers from the General Assembly).

The **NORTH BELFAST PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev NSR Lockhart is their Moderator; that the Rev JK Doherty, Minister of Woodvale, retired on 30th June 2016; that the Rev GF McKeown, Minister of Rathcoole, retired on 31st December 2016; that the Rev Dr LE Carroll, Minister of Fortwilliam and Macrory, resigned her Charge on 11th September and was received as a Minister without Charge under the care of Presbytery; that the Rev Samuel Newell, Minister of Alexandra, resigned his Charge on 31st January 2017 and was received as a Minister without Charge under the care of Presbytery; that Mr SD Currie, a Licentiate under the care of Presbytery, having received and accepted a call to be the Associate Minister of Knock, was given credentials to the Presbytery of East Belfast; that Mr MA Johnston, a Licentiate under the care of Presbytery, having received and accepted a call to St Andrew’s, Bangor, was given credentials to the Presbytery of Ards; that Mr JM Warburton, a Licentiate under the care of Presbytery, having received and accepted a call to High Street, Holywood, was given credentials to the Presbytery of East Belfast; that Mr RJ Watt, a Licentiate under the care of Presbytery, having received and accepted a call to Killymurriss, was given credentials to the Presbytery of Ballymena; that Mr JC Newell was licensed on 19th June 2016 and given credentials to the Presbytery of South Belfast; that Mr SN Hawthorne and Mr RA Orr presented credentials from the Presbytery of Carrickfergus and were received as Licentiates; that Mr JA Martin presented credentials from the Presbytery of South Belfast and was received as a Licentiate; that Mr JTH Porter presented credentials from the Presbytery of Monaghan and was received as a Licentiate; that under their care are: as Ministers without Charge the Revs Dr LE Carroll, JSB Drennan (retired); LH Eagleson; CI McKnight (retired), SA Newell, WA Shaw, WM Smyth (retired) and FW Vincent; as Licentiates SN Hawthorne, JA Martin, RA Orr and JTH Porter; as a Licentiate without Charge Mr David McCarthy; as Students Mr Philip Houston and Mr Gerard Keaveny; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed and will be supplied separately; that all Kirk Sessions have adopted ‘The equality policy for licensing the use, by bodies other than the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, of church halls and other properties used for direct mission or ministry purposes’, as directed by the General Council (exercising delegated powers from the General Assembly).

The **SOUTH BELFAST PRESBYTERY** report that Rev KM Mbayo is their Moderator; that the Rev GR Connor, Minister of Dunmurry, resigned his Charge on 7th April 2016 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of Down; that the Rev JA Peacock resigned from Youth Link, NI on 31st December and was received as a Minister without Charge under the care of Presbytery; that the Rev CH Deering, Minister of Ballycairn, was loosed from his Charge on 31st May 2016 and received as a Minister without Charge under the care of Presbytery; that Mr JA Martin was licensed on 27th May 2016 and given credentials to the Presbytery of North Belfast; that Mr JC Newell presented credentials from the Presbytery of North Belfast and was received as a Licentiate; that Mr JJ

O'Donnell presented credentials from the Presbytery of Dublin and Munster and was received as a Licentiate; that under their care are: as Ministers without Charge the Revs CH Deering, JD Maxwell and JA Peacock; as Licentiates Mrs CE Heron, Mr JC Newell and Mr JJ O'Donnell; as Students for the Ministry Mr A Alves-Areias and Dr SA Wright; that the Rev KA Drury, Minister without Charge, ceased to have this status on 7th February 2017; that no Consultations were held during the year; that the Financial Reports of all Congregations are being printed; that all Kirk Sessions have adopted 'The equality policy for the licensing the use, by bodies other than the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, of church halls and other properties used for direct mission or other ministry purposes', as directed by the General Council (exercising delegated powers from the General Assembly).

The **EAST BELFAST PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev MR Burnside is their Moderator; that the Rev ND Craig presented credentials from the Presbytery of Derry and Donegal and was installed to the Charge of Belmont on 30th September 2016; that Mr GJ Ball, a Licentiate under the care of Presbytery, was ordained and inducted as Associate Minister in Orangefield on 15th March 2016; that Mr DP Burke presented credentials from the Presbytery of Ards and was ordained and inducted as Moderator's Assistant in Bloomfield on 8th May 2016; that Mr SD Currie presented credentials from the Presbytery of North Belfast and was ordained and inducted as Associate Minister in Knock on 2nd December 2016; that Mr JM Warburton presented credentials from the Presbytery of North Belfast and was ordained and installed to the Charge of High Street, Holywood on 27th January 2017; that Mr Alan Marsh presented credentials from the Presbytery of Ards and was received as a Licentiate; that Mr JT Blue was given credentials to the Presbytery of Ballymena; that under their care are: as Ministers without Charge the Revs PP Campbell, WJ Harshaw, Dr DJ Montgomery and BJ Walker; as Licentiates Mr Richard Cronin, Mr WA Dickey, Mr SJ Lowry and Mr BN van der Linde; as Students Mr S Bostock, Mr A Downey, Mr B Johnston and Mr S Kennedy; that the Rev DR Baker, Minister without Charge, ceased to have that status on 7th February 2017; that Mr SE Cowan and Mr Paul Orr, Licentiates Without Charge, had their licence withdrawn on 7th February 2017; that they held a Consultation at Christchurch, Dundonald; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed; that all Kirk Sessions have adopted 'The equality policy for licensing the use, by bodies other than the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, of church halls and other properties used for direct mission or ministry purposes', as directed by the General Council (exercising delegated powers from the General Assembly).

The **CARRICKFERGUS PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev Dr David Chapman is their Moderator; that Mr SN Hawthorne was licensed on 29th May 2016 and given credentials to the Presbytery of North Belfast; that Mr RA Orr was licensed on 5th June 2016 and given credentials to the Presbytery of North Belfast; that Mrs Joanne Smith presented credentials from the Presbytery of Dublin and Munster and was received as a Licentiate; that under their care are: as a Minister without Charge the Rev RJ Gilkinson; as Licentiates Mr AD Burke, Mr Ian Cahoon, Mr Andrew Gill, Mr RS Hamilton, Mr DJ Kelly and Mrs Joanne Smith; as a Licentiate without Charge Mr CMS Barron; that they held

no Consultations during the year; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed; that all Kirk Sessions have adopted 'The equality policy for licensing the use, by bodies other than the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, of halls and other properties used for direct mission or ministry purposes', as directed by the General Council (exercising delegated powers from the General Assembly).

The **COLERAINE AND LIMAVADY PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev AWT Brown is their Moderator; that the Rev JD Mark, Minister without Charge (retired) died on 19th September 2016; that the Rev CJ Aitcheson, Minister of Castlerock, resigned his Charge on 31st October 2016 and was received as a Minister without Charge; that the Rev PA Kerr presented credentials from the Presbytery of Route and was installed to the Charge of Ballyrashane on 24th June 2016; that under their care are: as a Minister without Charge the Rev CJ Aitcheson; as a Licentiate Mr RJA McClure; as a Student Mr J Torrens; that they held Consultations at Ringsend, Portstewart and Aghadowey; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed; that all Kirk Sessions have adopted 'The equality policy for licensing the use, by bodies other than the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, of church halls and other properties used for direct mission or ministry purposes', as directed by the General Council (exercising delegated powers from the General Assembly).

The **DERRY AND DONEGAL PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev CM Wilson is their Moderator; that the Revs KJC McConnell and JM Cathcart, Ministers Emeritus, became Ministers Emeritus (Released) on 1st November 2016; that the Rev ND Craig, Minister of Ray and Newtowncunningham, resigned his Charge on 29th September 2016 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of East Belfast; that the Rev JM Browne, Minister of Fannet, Milford and Rathmullan, resigned her Charge on 25th August 2016 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of Ards; that Mr JS McCrea presented credentials from the Presbytery of Ards and was ordained and installed to the Charge of Donemana on 24th June 2016; that under their care are: as Ministers without Charge the Revs DA Edgar, RA Mulholland, KG Patterson and JC Teeney; as Licentiates Mr DJ Clarke and Mr MTW McMaw; as Students Mr JD McKane and Mr RW McFaul; that they held Consultations at Waterside, Fahan, Raphoe and Ballindrait; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed; that all Kirk Sessions in Northern Ireland have adopted 'The equality policy for licensing the use, by bodies other than the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, of church halls and other properties used for direct mission or ministry purposes', as directed by the General Council (exercising delegated powers from the General Assembly).

The **DOWN PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev DM Spratt is their Moderator; that the Rev RN Stewart, Minister without Charge, died on 12th November 2016; that the Rev GR Connor presented credentials from the Presbytery of South Belfast and was installed to the Charge of First Comber on 8th April 2016; that the Rev CG Anderson presented credentials from the Presbytery of Ards and was received as a Minister without Charge under the care of Presbytery; that Dr MC Cowan was given credentials to the Presbytery of Armagh; that the Rev AJ Galbraith, Minister of First Ballynahinch, resigned his

Charge on 31st August 2016 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of Ards; that under their care are: as Ministers without Charge the Revs CG Anderson, Samuel Armstrong (retired), JM Casement and GR Stockdale; as Licentiate Mr BA Kee and Mr AS McQuade; as Students Mr Peter Burke and Mr Michael McCormick; that they held no Consultations during the year; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed; that all Kirk Sessions have adopted 'The equality policy for licensing the use, by bodies other than the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, of church halls and other properties used for direct mission or ministry purposes', as directed by the General Council (exercising delegated powers from the General Assembly).

The **DROMORE PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev RD Cameron is their Moderator; that the Very Rev Dr Howard Cromie, Revs Drs RJG Gray and JS McIvor, Revs Kenneth Smyth, RD Larmour, WH Gray, David McConaghy, WJ Keefe, Robert Lockhart and DC Porter, Ministers Emeritus, became Ministers Emeritus (Released) on 7th February 2017; that the Rev Dr WJA Sleith presented credentials from the Presbytery of Ards and was installed to the Charge of Hillsborough on 27th June 2016; that Mr ET Frazer presented credentials from the Presbytery of Armagh and was received as a Licentiate; that Mr NW Duddy, a Licentiate under the care of Presbytery, was given credentials to the Presbytery of Dublin and Munster; that under their care are: as a Minister without Charge the Rev WJ Todd; as Licentiate Miss SJ Moore and Mr ET Frazer; as Students Mr R Aiken, Mr J Maguire and Mr P Poots; that they held Consultations at Sloan Street, Lisburn and Drumlough; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed; that all Kirk Sessions have adopted 'The equality policy for licensing the use, by bodies other than the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, of church halls and other properties used for direct mission or ministry purposes', as directed by the Council (exercising delegated powers from the General Assembly).

The **DUBLIN AND MUNSTER PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev SW Rea is their Moderator; that the Rev DC Caskie, Minister Emeritus of Dun Laoghaire, died on 10th November 2016; that the Rev JD Woodside, Minister of Drogheda, retired on 19th July 2016; that Mr NW Duddy presented credentials from the Presbytery of Dromore and was ordained and inducted to the Charge of Arklow on 28th May 2016; that Mr JJ O'Donnell was licensed on 18th June and given credentials to the Presbytery of South Belfast; that Mrs Joanne Smith was licensed on 26th June and given credentials to the Presbytery of Carrickfergus; that they held a Consultation at Drogheda; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed.

The **IVEAGH PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev Dr MCA Gray is their Moderator; that the Rev MG McClelland, Minister of Tandragee, retired on 31st March 2016; that Mr AM Boreland, a Licentiate under the care of Presbytery, was ordained and installed to the Charge of Newcastle on 4th March 2016; that Mr RJ Edgar presented credentials from the Presbytery of Templepatrick and was ordained and installed to the Charge of Ballyronney and Drumlee on 3rd June 2016; that Mr PG Cleland presented credentials from the Presbytery of Armagh and was ordained and installed to the Charge of Drumgooland and Kilkinamurry on 17th June 2016; that Mr MS Rutledge was licensed on 5th June and given

credentials to the Presbytery of Templepatrick; that they have under their care as a Minister without Charge the Rev EG McAuley (retired); that no Consultations were held during the year; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed; that all Kirk Sessions have adopted 'The equality policy for licensing the use, by bodies other than the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, of church halls and other properties used for direct mission or ministry purposes', as directed by the General Council (exercising delegated powers from the General Assembly).

The **MONAGHAN PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev Stephen McNie is their Moderator; that the Rev WJA Buchanan Minister of First Ballybay, Second Ballybay, Rockcorry and Drumkeen, died on 23rd April 2016; that the Rev John Rushton, Minister Emeritus, became Minister Emeritus (Released) on 7th February 2017; that Mr JTH Porter was licensed on 27th May 2016 and given credentials to the Presbytery of North Belfast; that they have under their care as a Minister without Charge the Rev DJM Boyle; that they held no Consultations during the year; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed separately; that all Kirk Sessions in Northern Ireland have adopted 'The equality policy for licensing the use, by bodies other than the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, of church halls and other properties used for direct mission or ministry purposes', as directed by the General Council (exercising delegated powers from the General Assembly).

The **NEWRY PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev JKA McIntyre is their Moderator; that the Very Rev Dr MA Barry, Minister of First Newry, retired on 10th September 2016; that the Revs Robert Nixon, Joseph Nixon and RJ Mattison, Ministers Emeritus, became Ministers Emeritus (Released) on 7th February 2017; that the Rev BAH Wilson, Minister of Second Newtownhamilton and Creggan, was loosed from his Charge on 1st December 2016 and was received as a Minister without Charge under the care of Presbytery; that under their care are: as a Minister without Charge the Rev BAH Wilson; as Students Mr CB Mulvenny and Mr DS Bingham; that the Rev DB Murphy, Minister without Charge, ceased to have this status on 7th February 2017; that they completed Consultations at Poyntzpass, Fourtowns and Downshire Road; that the Financial Reports of the Congregations are being printed separately; that all Kirk Sessions have adopted 'The equality policy for licensing the use, by bodies other than the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, of church halls and other properties used for direct mission or ministry purposes', as directed by the General Council (exercising delegated powers from the General Assembly).

The **OMAGH PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev RN Orr is their Moderator; that the Rev RWW Clarke, Minister Emeritus of Trinity Omagh and Gillygooley, died on 12th February 2017; that the Revs WJ Kelly and Desmond Shaw, Ministers Emeritus, became Ministers Emeritus (Released) on 1st November 2016; that the Revs Arthur O'Neill and NR McCormick, Ministers Emeritus, became Ministers Emeritus (Released) on 7th February 2017; that the Rev JA Gordon, Minister of Fintona, Ballynahatty and Creevan, resigned his Charge on 31st October 2016 and was received as a Minister without Charge under the care of Presbytery; that they have under their care as a Minister without Charge the Rev JA Gordon; that they held no Consultations during the year; that

the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed separately; that all Kirk Sessions have adopted 'The equality policy for licensing the use, by bodies other than the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, of church halls and other properties used for direct mission or ministry purposes', as directed by the General Council (exercising delegated powers from the General Assembly).

The **ROUTE PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev HSW Cubitt is their Moderator, that the Rev JT McCullough, Minister Emeritus of Toberdoney and Croaghmore, died on 25th September 2016; that the Rev William Brown, Minister without Charge (retired), died on 31st December 2016; that the Rev John Hume, Minister Emeritus of Dunluce, died on 22nd January 2017; that the Very Rev Dr DIJ McNie, Minister of Trinity, Ballymoney, retired on 30th November 2016; that the Rev PA Kerr, Moderator's Assistant in Trinity, Ballymoney, resigned his Charge on 3rd May 2016 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of Coleraine and Limavady; that the Rev RM Murray presented credentials from the Presbytery of Ballymena and was installed to the Charge of Dromore and Drumreagh on 9th September 2016; that under their care are: as a Minister without Charge the Rev Dr Victor Dobbin, CB (retired); as a Student Mr Richard Morrison; that they held Visitations at Garryduff and Dunloy; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed separately; that all Kirk Sessions have adopted 'The equality policy for licensing the use, by bodies other than the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, of church halls and other properties used for direct mission or ministry purposes', as directed by the General Council (exercising delegated powers from the General Assembly).

The **TEMPLEPATRICK PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev CK McDowell is their Moderator; that the Rev ET Conn, Minister Emeritus of Second Donegore, died on 11th August 2016; that the Revs RA Boyd and SW McClintock, Ministers Emeritus, became Ministers Emeritus (Released) on 7th February 2017; that the Rev JL Tosh, Minister of Second Donegore, resigned his Charge on 7th February 2017 and was received as a Minister without Charge under the care of Presbytery; that the Rev Dr WJM Parker, Minister of First Antrim, was loosed from his Charge on 31st May 2016 and received as a Minister without Charge under the care of Presbytery; that the Rev JE Sloan presented credentials from the Presbytery of Tyrone and was installed to the Charge of OC Randalstown on 13th May 2016; that Mr MS Rutledge presented credentials from the Presbytery of Iveagh and was received as a Licentiate; that Mr RJ Edgar was given credentials to the Presbytery of Iveagh; that Mr MS Rutledge, a Licentiate under the care of Presbytery was given credentials to the Presbytery of Ballymena; that under their care are: as Ministers without Charge the Revs Dr WJM Parker and JL Tosh; as Licentiates Mr MPF Fryer; Mr JR Kernohan, Mr PWA McClelland and Mr AJ McCracken; that they held no Consultations during the year; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed separately; that all Kirk Sessions have adopted 'The equality policy for licensing the use, by bodies other than the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, of church halls and other properties used for direct mission or ministry purposes', as directed by the General Council (exercising delegated powers from the General Assembly).

The **TYRONE PRESBYTERY** report that the Rev JA Spence is their Moderator; that the Rev DS Graham MBE, Minister Emeritus, of First Magherafelt, died on 22nd February 2017; that the Rev JE Sloan, Minister of Bellaghy and Knockloughrim, resigned his Charge on 12th May 2016 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of Templepatrick; that under their care are: as a Minister without Charge the Rev WI Ferris; as a Licentiate without Charge Mr JA Dunn; that they held no Consultations during the year; that the Financial Reports of Congregations are being printed; that all Kirk Sessions have adopted 'The equality policy for licensing the use, by bodies other than the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, of church halls and other properties used for direct mission or ministry purposes', as directed by the General Council (exercising delegated powers from the General Assembly).

RESOLUTION

1. That the Report of the Presbyteries be received.

COUNCIL FOR CONGREGATIONAL LIFE AND WITNESS

Convener: Rev Dr GRAHAM CONNOR
Secretary: Rev DAVID THOMPSON

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Council for Congregational Life and Witness has met on two occasions since last year's General Assembly.
2. The report details:
 - (a) Some of the key questions in congregational life and witness to which the Council is seeking to apply itself.
 - (b) A particular emphasis on production of a range of DVD material intended to envision and equip congregations in a variety of aspects of life and witness.
 - (c) Main outputs of the Council Committees and Panels.
 - (d) Reflections on the need to prioritise work and streamline messages.
 - (e) Obstacles to development of the Council's remit in the areas of engaging presbyteries, structures and participation, communication with congregations and the absence of a coordinated approach to stimulating congregational prayer for the ministry and mission of the wider Church.
 - (f) Opportunities in envisioning for fruitfulness in small congregations, equipping and enabling congregations entering a new phase of ministry by harnessing the Growing in Fruitfulness material and developing partnerships with other organisations offering specific, specialist, support in enabling congregations in aspects of their life or witness.
3. Two appendices set out an overview of main activities, training and events offered by the Council in core areas of congregational life and witness and a *PCI Counselling Framework of Theology, Ethics and Practice* referred to in the report.

FELLOW WORKERS WITH GOD WHO MAKES THINGS GROW

4. The Council for Congregational Life and Witness, its Committees, Panels, Task Groups and Organising Groups continue to develop and deliver a wide range of resources, training, events, programmes and facilitation for congregations and their members. In a variety of ways, these expressions of the Council's remit aim to support and encourage congregations across the island of Ireland in living out their calling as the people of God.

5. As the Council moves into its third year, it shows many encouraging signs of beginning to make sense of the agendas inherited from the previous structures and to strike out in new ways.

6. As the Biblical image of the Council's theme of fruitfulness reminds us, it is not always easy to see and understand what God is doing at any given point in time. We offer our service to Him prayerfully as His fellow workers, expecting that He will work in us and through us in His way and at His pace. We humbly remember that, '*he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who makes things grow*' (1. Corinthians 3:7). In that spirit of dependence and expectation, this report offers an overview of what is happening and what the Council is able to discern from what it sees.

CLEARING THE GROUND FOR FRUITFULNESS - ASKING THE HARD QUESTIONS

7. Another of the Bible's pictures of fruitfulness reminds us that the work of growing a vineyard often begins by '*digging up the ground and clearing it of stones*' (Isaiah 5:2). Often ministry and mission has the feel of that back-breaking work. This is especially true when we are called to address uncomfortable questions about what we have always done and the ways we have always done it. Equally challenging is trying to imagine what we might do differently and what that might look like.

8. The Council and its Committees are bravely asking, and in some cases beginning to address, hard questions arising from the realities of congregational life and witness in this season of change in Church and society. These include:

- What does covenant family ministry look like today? (Launch of Close to Home resource and development of follow-up materials)
- How do we reach unchurched children and young people? (REACH conference 20 May 2017)
- Which models of Sunday morning children's ministry and worship might be most effective in a range of congregational settings today? (Resource for discussion with DVD material in production)
- How can we re-imagine contemporary women's ministry as an integral part of congregational life and witness, whether through Presbyterian Women or in other ways? (First stage of the formation of an ongoing strategy for women's ministry)
- What are the realities of being an Elder today? (Survey of Elders and initial responses being explored)
- How can we help congregations develop emerging leaders? (EMERGE Developing Younger Leaders' pilot programme, January-June 2017)
- How can we maximise the missional potential of Parent and Toddler groups in reaching unchurched families? (Resource published August 2016)
- How do we equip congregations and their members to rise to the challenge of evangelism in contemporary Ireland? (Overflow Conference 9 March 2017)
- How do we help congregations develop global mission involvement as a vital part of congregational life and witness? (Short DVD resource for congregations planned)

- How do we support congregations in helping members grapple with real issues in areas such as mental health? (Resource for discussion with DVD material in production)
- How do we change the conversation about worship in congregations from personal style and preference to substance and participation in a meeting with the living God? (Resource for discussion with DVD material in production)
- How can we help congregations make the most of the opportunity of Harvest? (Harvest Big Sing Event 16 September 2017)
- How can following Jesus become what it was always meant to be, a process in which disciples make disciples? (Disciple Makers Network and 'Essentials' resource)
- What are the discipleship implications of following Jesus in a still divided society? (DVD clip and discussion starter on PCI Vision for Society Statement)

9. These are just some of the questions being addressed by the Council Committees. None of them have easy answers and the Committee Conveners, members and staff are to be commended for not shying away from the challenges they raise.

10. In all of this we look to the Lord, grateful of His invitation, *'if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to Him.'* (James 1:5). But more than that, we also anticipate the outworking of His promise, that through His Spirit's work, He will do *'immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us.'* (Ephesians 3:20).

OPENING OUR EYES AND LOOKING AT THE FIELDS – CHANGING THE CONVERSATION. FIRING THE IMAGINATION

11. One of the most requested forms of congregational resourcing emerging from the Council's engagements with all nineteen presbyteries during 2015/16 was DVD material. There is a widespread recognition that we need to move beyond theorising about what things might look like to what they do look like when congregations step out in faith.

12. DVD clips which capture the stories of those congregational journeys out of 'the way we have always done things' into 'trying a different way', have exercised significant influence in the denomination in recent years. As local stories, grounded in the realities of the culture and structures of Irish Presbyterianism, they have that extra ring of authenticity and power of possibility. They arise and speak out of our situation and fold back into it more readily than stories imported from elsewhere around the globe.

13. The Council requested significant funding from United Appeal to produce a range of DVD material. This work is now under way and includes the following projects:

Short clips on a series of aspects of congregational life and witness

- Issues of Pastoral Care
- Close to Home
- Family Ministry
- Mentoring
- Congregational Outreach
- Global Mission Involvement
- A discussion starter on Women's Ministry
- A discussion starter on the PCI Vision for Society

Bigger projects

- Essentials – part of a discipleship resource for use in local congregations
- Models for Sunday morning Children's Ministry – part of a discussion starter
- Series of clips on aspects of leadership in the Church
- Series of clips on approaching and participating in worship as an encounter with God

14. These clips will be rolled out gradually over the period of the next twelve months. They will be flexibly produced for use in a range of settings in congregational life and are offered as an attempt to change the conversation from 'what isn't working any more' to 'what might be worth trying'.

SOWING FOR A VARIED CROP

15. The Council's Committees and Panels oversee the development of fruitful congregational life and witness across a wide range of areas. The following section highlights some of the main outputs of this work.

DISCIPLESHIP COMMITTEE

16. This year has seen the ongoing development of the *Discipleshaping Church* agenda in a number of ways.

17. *Tides* remains a popular devotional in electronic format. It is planned to expand contributors and continue to develop the range of topics addressed, while attempting to increase exposure, particularly through social media.

18. The *Disciple Makers' Network* has been delivered in two locations, Ballygawley and Belfast. Attracting groups of key leaders from around fifty congregations, it has created significant momentum, widening and deepening the discipleship agenda in congregations. It is hoped to make available some of the resources piloted for congregations which participated in the initiative for wider use.

19. *Essentials* is a DVD Bible study resource usable in a variety of congregational settings. It offers the opportunity to focus on core elements of being and making disciples. It will be available for congregational use from late August.

20. Following Jesus is a multifaceted, daily challenge and opportunity expressed in a range of relationships, settings, circumstances and stages of life. The Committee's work expresses that in a variety of ways, all aimed at growing disciples.

21. *How to be a Close to Home congregation*, a DVD Bible Study resource launched in September 2016, has been used by many congregations in a wide variety of settings. It helps ground and illustrate the realities of covenant theology as a key expression of discipling children and young people in home and church life. The Council continues to commend its use to congregations and draws their attention to follow up resources found on the PCI website.

22. *Transform*, an event aimed at helping young adults explore and express elements of what it means to follow Jesus at their particular age and stage of life, was held from 7/8 April 2017 in the Crescent Arts Centre, Belfast. The theme of gospel transformation was unpacked through a series of talks, seminars and visits to mission projects. Two regional *Transform* events were also held in Londonderry and Monaghan.

23. Exploration of a piece of work involving envisioning and equipping congregations to develop more intentional ministries of children and youth discipleship has also been commenced.

24. The aspect of Christian generosity continues to be addressed under the *Grace of Giving* banner and a range of literature has been refreshed and continues to be available for congregational use.

25. The *Good Relations Panel* has focused on promoting the PCI Vision for Society Statement for congregations and their members through a series of blog posts, short DVD clips, posters and prayer cards. A DVD Bible study resource will follow, enabling a deeper exploration of some of the implications of the statement for the everyday realities of following Jesus in a still divided society.

26. Moving the denomination on to a more disciple-making footing involves significant culture change for congregations. It is a gradual process and requires intentional, patient and courageous leadership from ministers, elders and other leaders.

27. The Council welcomes the Priorities Committee's identification of discipleship development as a key dimension of the next season of denominational life and witness and looks forward to exploring how it can continue to stimulate congregational thinking and practice in what it means to become a *Discipleshaping Church*.

DAVID THOMPSON, Acting Convener

GLOBAL MISSION INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE

28. June 2017 sees the drawing to an end of the *Fit for Purpose* theme, 'A Community of Global Concern'. Throughout 2016/17, the Committee has worked with the Council for Global Mission to promote the theme and suggest a range of ways in which congregations could access and harness the momentum it

offered in developing their global mission involvement.

29. The *Global Mission Menu* was deliberately designed to have a shelf life that stretched beyond the *Fit for Purpose* theme. It highlights in one place many ways in which individuals and congregations can be envisioned, equipped and engaged in God's global mission. The Council continues to commend it to congregations exploring how to renew and refresh their participation in what God is doing in His wider world.

30. *Prepared to Go*, a one-day training event preparing individuals and teams for short-term overseas mission, was held on 8 April 2017. While the quality of the content of this event is high and always greatly appreciated by those who attend, the Committee has observed that numbers remain small. Exploration of whether this event represents the best means of equipping those going overseas is required.

31. Similarly, the *Ignite Romania* team attracted small numbers. Again, whether denominational short-term mission teams remains a priority area for the development of congregational global mission involvement is in question.

32. The *Youth and Children's Project* continues to provide an important vehicle for raising awareness of global mission and engaging with aspects of what God is doing in the wider world for many congregations. The 2017/18 Project will support the work of PCI missionary Diane Cusick in the development of early years education projects in Zambia. A corresponding local element will focus on provision of youth and children's material for the new church building in Maynooth.

33. The Committee have taken some time to reflect on what feels like an important juncture in how the Council envisions, equips and enables congregations for global mission involvement. As a number of the paragraphs above indicate, some of the time-honoured ways in which this aspect of church life and witness has been promoted and developed in the past seem to be losing traction. Such trends suggest the need for re-evaluation and re-imagining the task in light of changes in both global mission and patterns and rhythms of congregational life and witness.

34. The Committee have identified a need to raise the profile of global mission in congregations and suggest a range of simple ways of gaining momentum in this area of witness. A DVD resource is planned for use in Kirk Sessions, Mission Committees or other congregational settings.

TREVOR LONG, Convener

LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE

35. Leadership development is another area identified by the Priorities Committee in its report to the Assembly. In congregational life and witness, leadership takes many forms, including formally elected leaders such as ministers and elders, other leaders of organisations – paid and unpaid – and those who show leadership potential. Christian leadership is about godly character, gifting and competence, but also demands understanding the congregational context in which the role is exercised.

36. Much light can be gleaned from many quarters of the ever-expanding body of leadership literature and models of leadership in public, private and voluntary sectors. Leadership in the church of Christ in local expression, however, will always be a distinctive opportunity to show Christ-likeness and will always offer the particular challenge of leading in a very differently constituted organisation – the diverse congregation of God’s people which is the Body of Christ.

37. The Leadership Committee is committed to continuing to find ways of expressing and promoting what it means to lead in the complex mix of today’s culture, with a conviction to enable the changes necessary to be tomorrow’s church, while at all times mirroring the character of Christ.

38. A series of six short DVD clips, with accompanying devotional and Bible study materials are in production. They aim to offer a flexible leadership development tool that will be usable in a range of congregational settings.

39. Kirk Session is obviously a key component in leadership in any congregation and the *Elders’ Panel* has been responding to the outcome of a survey of elders identifying what they consider to be the most pressing issues in developing their leadership. This has led to specific work on updating the *Prepared to Lead* material and the production of a specific resource for Clerks of Session, as well as Elders’ Roadshows in Dromore and Iveagh Presbyteries.

40. *SPUD* and the *Intern Programme* continue to offer opportunity for younger members of the church to test and hone their gifting as leaders. Both of these initiatives are increasingly and intentionally shaped with a leadership development edge.

41. *Emerge* is a pilot programme aimed at partnering with congregations in developing younger members they identify as having potential leadership gifts. Three weekend gatherings are supplemented by a residential overnight. Learning on the scheme is put to work back in congregational leadership settings. Reflection on this practice is then shared and built upon as the whole group learns from one another’s experiences.

42. The *Children’s Ministry Course* and *Youth Ministry Course* continue to prove popular with those who discern their gifting in these areas of ministry and who are able to commit to intensive programmes of study. Youth and Children’s *Road Trips* offer one-night training opportunities. This year a partnership with the Council for Training in Ministry has seen the inclusion of Road Trip seminars on self-harm and young people and social media.

43. A planned *Sharpening Your Interpersonal Skills* course failed to attract the necessary numbers of participants. The Committee will continue to consider how the valuable contribution of this material might be delivered in different, more accessible, forms.

JONATHAN CURRY, Convener

OUTREACH COMMITTEE

44. The Outreach Committee has adopted a twin focus for its work: exploring how to envision, equip and enable the church for evangelism and community witness in contemporary Ireland.

45. The *Overflow* conference, held on 9 March 2017, offered delegates the opportunity to reflect on contemporary evangelistic realities and gather some ideas for encouraging congregations and their members in the church's task of sharing the gospel. The Committee plans to create some flexible follow up material from the day to disseminate more widely and take the conference conversation into congregations.

46. Following initial discussion and feedback gathered at a meeting of the full Council, the Committee has begun to explore the area of community witness. Under a working title of *Present*, which draws on the concept of incarnational mission, a framework is being constructed to help congregations develop ways of being present to bear witness in their communities.

47. The definition of community witness being unpacked is as follows:

Community witness is a means of congregations being present in their neighbourhood or networks as a means of:

- *showing God's love;*
- *sharing His wisdom for living;*
- *spreading the hope to be found in Him.*

48. Early reflection on feedback from both Council and Committee suggests that the Church is struggling to make sense of the relationship between evangelism and social outreach and the distinctive contributions of both to the mission of God.

49. Two main priorities identified in the area of community witness are helping congregations in understanding their neighbourhood as it is today and how to develop community witness among unchurched families.

50. Council notes the Priorities Committee's identification of the area of being active to bless the community in practical caring initiatives as one which requires particular focus in this season of the Church's witness. The Committee will reflect further on the issues which have surfaced in the area of congregational community witness and move towards resourcing congregations as they engage in this area.

51. The Committee oversees the *Impact* summer team programme. Helpful work has been undertaken to develop the processes of selection of venues and preparing and supporting team leaders and members. A more thoroughgoing review is planned during 2017/18 which will consider opportunities for expanding the types of teams that are offered.

STEPHEN RICHMOND, Convener

PASTORAL CARE COMMITTEE

52. The Pastoral Care Committee continues to sow a vision for the pastoral life of the local congregation. What has become known as the 'Pastoral Life Triangle' encompasses a pastoral core of the framework for understanding life found in Scripture, a pastoral community, or environment, in which to support one another in the church along with a focus on specific pastoral care in response to particular situations of need.

53. One way in which this more holistic understanding of pastoral life is being promoted is through its inclusion in an updated version of the basic Pastoral Care Training Course. Regional Pastoral Care training, including this wider emphasis, has been delivered in Comber and Coleraine and was well supported in both venues. A DVD clip introducing the Pastoral Triangle into congregational thinking is also planned.

54. Having considered how best to build on the momentum around the issue of the Church and mental health raised by the previous *Breaking the Silence* initiative, the Committee has focused on ways to envision and equip the local congregation in ministering to those suffering in this way. This important issue is now included as an element in regional pastoral care training. An extensive piece of work has also involved the compilation of useful websites, books, articles, basic information and providers of mental health services on the PCI website as a place to which those providing pastoral care can go for guidance and support. A Bible study and discussion guide with DVD material for use in congregations is also in production.

55. Offering pastoral care to those who have been bereaved continues to be a focus for training. The Committee commissioned a reprint of the booklet, *'Life after Loss: A Christian perspective on dealing with loss'*, and commends it again to those offering pastoral care in such circumstances.

56. The Council's report to last year's General Assembly noted with regard to the *PCI Family Holiday* that, *'significant work remains to be done to create a sustainable funding model and to maximise the potential of the Holiday to supplement congregational social witness.'*

57. This year's Holiday was held from 17 to 21 April 2017 at the Share Activity Village, Lisnaskea. With the Council's active encouragement, the Organising Group have made significant efforts to better publicise the potential of this annual event for congregations as an opportunity to supplement and build upon their life and witness. Examples suggested included making use of the Holiday as an Easter week for the congregation, or subsidising families on the margins of church life to attend with others from the congregation to build on relationships established in a mission setting. At time of writing, it appears that very few congregations have responded to these ideas.

58. The Council hopes that an ongoing financial deficit accruing to this event has been significantly reduced by new budgetary arrangements. Nevertheless, without the continuing generous subsidy of the *Presbyterian Children's Society* enabling around a dozen families to attend free of charge each year, the event would not be viable.

59. The Council will continue to both build on the innovations introduced to maximise the potential of this initiative and reflect on its contribution to supplementing the life and witness of local congregations.

60. A *Pastoral Care and Counselling Task Group* was assigned the responsibility of addressing the resolution of last year's General Assembly with regard to *PCI Counselling*. The remit given by the Assembly was as follows:

That the Council for Congregational Life and Witness is directed to appoint a Pastoral Care and Counselling Task Group to:

- (i) further engage with the Association of Christian Counsellors and explore alternative options for accreditation of a denominational counselling service by December 2016;

- (ii) examine the support needed, and that can be provided, to enhance the provision of pastoral care in congregations;
- (iii) explore other bodies to which those requiring support additional to congregational pastoral care might be signposted;
- (iv) receive a final report from the PCI Counselling Review Task Group carefully detailing the nature of the service provided in support of congregational pastoral care by PCI Counselling up to this point.

61. The Committee notes the diligent, demanding and detailed work undertaken by the Task Group in a very short period of time to fulfil this remit. This has involved engaging with, among others, the Association of Christian Counsellors, the General Assembly Solicitor and Insurer, those who provide pastoral care in congregations and the PCI Counselling team.

62. The Task Group has left no stone unturned in examining the implications of continued affiliation of *PCI Counselling* to the *Association of Christian Counsellors (ACC)* following their issue of a Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy, the wider implications of which call into question the compatibility of the Association's position with that of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Having failed to receive clarification on a number of issues raised in correspondence with the ACC, the Task Group further engaged with the Association by sending a *Presbyterian Church in Ireland position paper on the principles and practice of PCI Counselling with regard to the issue of same-sex orientation with particular reference to the Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy in the UK issued to counselling services affiliated to the ACC*. An invitation for office bearers of ACC to meet with representatives of the Task Group to discuss the issue was also extended. Again, correspondence failed to gain satisfactory clarity on some of the issues involved and the offer of a meeting was declined by ACC.

63. At its meeting of 23 November 2016, the Pastoral Care Committee recommended that, *'the Task Group carefully detail the benefits to PCI Counselling provided by an affiliating body and only pursue affiliation if it proves absolutely necessary for governance purposes and legal protection of the service.'* This recommendation was approved by a full meeting of the Council for Congregational Life and Witness on 29 November 2016.

64. Investigation of these issues with the General Assembly Solicitor and Insurance provider showed that no governance purpose was provided and no legal protection accrued from affiliation of the counselling service. Consequently, it was decided not to pursue affiliation of any future service.

65. The Task Group received the latest statistics and snapshot of the provision of support offered by *PCI Counselling*. It also commissioned a survey to examine the nature of support desired by congregations to supplement pastoral care in areas which are complex and require specialist attention. A range of those directly involved in providing pastoral care in congregations across all nineteen presbyteries were contacted and invited to respond to a brief questionnaire. Results showed that a counselling style ministry was the preferred option. The strong opinion was also that any future provision be more closely tied to ongoing pastoral support provided by the congregation.

66. While this work was continuing, the counselling service was closed for a short period because of a lack of clarity around the restriction placed on counsellors by the ACC's Memorandum of Understanding. Further work by the Task Group enabled the reopening of the Counselling service in January 2017 by providing safe boundaries within which it could operate during the period of continued uncertainty and instability while these matters were under investigation.

67. The Task Group brought all of these strands of its work together in the compilation of a *Framework of Theology, Ethics and Good Practice (Appendix 2)* along with a series of recommendations to move towards a re-launch of the denomination's counselling ministry in September 2017. Its report and recommendations, as set out below, were approved and adopted by the Pastoral Care Committee at its meeting of 9 March 2017 and by a full meeting of the Council for Congregational Life and Witness on 14 March 2017. Steps are already in motion to implement the necessary pieces to complete this jigsaw.

- (a) That future affiliation of the denominational counselling ministry be not pursued as it is not absolutely necessary for governance purposes and legal protection of the service.
- (b) That present affiliation to the Association of Christian Counsellors be allowed to lapse in January 2018 and that a brief letter of thanks be sent to the Association for the ways in which they have contributed to the ministry of PCI Counselling since its inception in 1992.
- (c) That the *PCI Counselling Framework of Theology, Ethics and Good Practice* be approved as the foundational document for the denominational counselling ministry.
- (d) That any benefits previously provided by being an affiliated service be provided for. These include:-
 - (i) Counselling code of ethics and practice - to be subsumed into the PCI Counselling Framework of Theology, Ethics and Good Practice.
 - (ii) Complaints procedure – that further work to be undertaken.
 - (iii) Training – that this continues to be drawn from a range of providers.
- (e) That the denominational counselling ministry be promoted primarily, but not exclusively, as supplementing congregational pastoral provision and linked more closely to developments in that area through the Pastoral Care Committee. That this include offering clients the option of their Minister, or other congregational agent of pastoral support, being informed of the progress of their counselling process.
- (f) That the following pieces of work be undertaken to prepare for a re-launch of the service in September 2017
 - (i) Consideration of new name
 - (ii) Complete rebranding and rewrite of publicity material and Operating Manual
 - (iii) Communication with all presently involved in PCI Counselling as to the details of the Council decision with an opt in or opt out date of 31st May 2017
 - (iv) Approval of training schedule reflective of new service for 2017-2019

- (v) Refresh of application and interview process for counsellors, including decision concerning necessity of requirement of membership of a PCI congregation for any counsellors recruited after 31 May 2017
- (vi) Publicity to recruit new counsellors
- (vii) Re-launch of service with careful consideration of volunteer starting capacity
- (g) That the Pastoral Care and Counselling Task Group stay in place to sign off on the pieces of work contained in section (e) above.
- (h) That the following timetable of key actions be progressed.
 - (i) Email communication with counselling team immediately following Council meeting
 - (ii) Meeting for counselling team called before Easter 2017
 - (iii) Paragraph included in Council Report to General Assembly detailing steps taken with the PCI Counselling Framework of Theology, Ethics and Good Practice appended
 - (iv) Further Task Group meeting to sign off on matters arising under section (f) above
 - (v) Relaunch of the denominational counselling ministry in September 2017

68. The last two years have proved a long and challenging journey for everyone involved with this issue and the Pastoral Care Committee and Council as a whole have been conscious of, and grateful for, the patience and prayers of all involved in the delivery of *PCI Counselling*. Throughout, there has been a constant awareness of the delicate balances to be struck between the needs of helping clients, remaining true to the teaching of Scripture, ensuring the necessary protections for those involved in counselling and arriving at a sustainable future service. The Pastoral Care Committee and Council are pleased to have found a way to navigate a very complex situation to achieve appropriate provision of a ministry to help individuals who need the kind of specialist support which is beyond that which any congregation is equipped to offer through the normal practice of pastoral care. Both believe that the work of the Task Group provides a balanced foundation upon which the denominational counselling ministry can go forward with the confidence of clients, counsellors and the whole Church.

ALISTAIR BILL, Convener

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

69. The present phase of the Committee's work is focused on delivering a number of key resources and events.

70. Work continues on the *Encounter* DVD Bible study resource. Aiming to refocus the congregational worship conversation on substance rather than style, this resource will equip congregations to enable members to reflect on what it means to participate in worship and to benefit from a greater awareness of the flow of the different elements involved.

71. The Committee partnered with the Council for Training in Ministry to deliver an event on 10 May 2017 exploring Reformed Worship in contemporary expression.

72. *Worship Academy* will take place from 17-19 August 2017. Based in Wellington Presbyterian Church, Ballymena, participants will be developed in their musical gifting, theological appreciation and ability to lead in congregational worship. It was particularly pleasing to have participants in last year's *Worship Academy* lead praise at Youth Night. The Committee identifies this as a crucial channel of leadership development in this area of church life.

73. The *Big Sing* planned for Saturday 16th September 2017 in Assembly Buildings, Belfast, will take up a harvest theme and offer congregations a way of intentionally developing their Harvest Services or additional gatherings. As in previous events, a pack of materials is now available in advance of the event to allow organists, musical directors, choirs and musicians to familiarise themselves with the compositions before coming on the day. Packs are available from the Council office.

74. The Committee is beginning to explore the area of models for corporate congregational prayer. A discussion of this issue at a meeting of the full Council has provided feedback to build upon.

75. One initial response to stimulate the development of congregational prayer was a partnership with the Good Book Company to offer their book, *Five Things to Pray for Your Church* by Rachel Jones at a discounted price. This has proved a very worthwhile initiative with so many congregations taking up the offer that the publisher needed to authorise a further print run of the book.

76. The Committee will continue to explore ways to promote and resource congregations for prayer.

JAMES HYNDMAN, Convener

YOUTH, CHILDREN'S AND FAMILY STRATEGY AND COORDINATION COMMITTEE

77. The Committee has begun to outwork the Youth, Children's and Family strategy outlined in last year's report to the General Assembly.

78. The major focus has fallen on developing the area of reaching unchurched children and young people. The Committee recognised that this is a necessary parallel and counter-balance to the *Close to Home* emphasis which falls largely on discipling those who grow up in covenant families.

79. Focus Groups with those in PCI congregations who work in this area of mission, and with a range of parachurch agencies, helped shape content and format for the *Reach* morning conference held on 20 May 2017 in Assembly Buildings, Belfast. The Committee plans to reflect on feedback from this event, draw upon material recorded and shape a series of next steps to encourage congregations in this aspect of witness.

80. The Committee has also received reports on ongoing resourcing of the church in the area of family ministry and is working towards producing material to stimulate congregational approaches to young adults' ministry. It has received

an initial report on opportunities and ideas for developing ministry in schools. These will be areas of particular focus during 2017/18.

81. The Council approved a partnership with the *Presbyterian Children's Society* at its November Meeting. This has led to a range of outcomes including, inclusion of the Society's work in denominational prayer resources, publicising its missional potential in Council communications to congregations and collaboration on the content of a card highlighting its ministry to key congregational workers.

82. A paper exploring the potential and contribution of *Youth Link* in supporting congregational youth work has been commissioned. Ways of maintaining regular communication with major providers of children's and youth work in congregations who operate under the auspices of Kirk Session are being explored.

83. Large Council run events such as *Kids Big Day Out*, *MAD* and *Youth Night* provide important supplementary ministry to that which takes place week by week in local congregations. Organising Groups are continuing to develop resources that accompany the events. In this way, congregations who participate can derive further benefit from the attendance of children and young people through using materials that harness the momentum of the events in an ongoing way back in their children's or youth ministry.

84. *Youth Night* will be held on Saturday 10 June 2017. The theme is '(un) faithful' and will unpack the message of the book of Hosea.

85. Following last year's review, the *SPUD* initiative has been reshaped for 2016/17. A new format saw a well attended Youth Assembly meeting in Assembly Buildings on 28 January 2017. Topics for discussion this year included social media, mental health and the Church and young people. The *SPUD* Working Group has been developing the feedback from the Youth Assembly with a focus on a variety of ways to highlight and embed their perspectives in both congregational life and the policy shaping life of the denomination. Council welcome this creativity of approach as an important contribution to an emerging wider picture of finding viable vehicles for youth and young adult participation in the Church at all levels.

86. A *SPUD* residential is another new element. Running during Assembly week, it is intended to enable and encourage greater participation by *SPUD* delegates in the overall life of the Assembly and its debates.

87. The Council will take stock of these new aspects of the *SPUD* initiative after the Assembly, but are encouraged by the early signs of renewal.

88. Alongside its strategy role, this Committee is charged with ensuring that elements of ministry and mission to children, youth, young adults and families are coordinating with, and being incorporated into, the core areas of Council output in discipleship, global mission involvement, leadership, outreach, pastoral care and worship. The Committee has conducted an overview of Council agendas and outputs and is satisfied that the key strategic elements of children's, youth, young adult and family life and witness are emerging and taking shape organically within the Council's overall work.

COLIN MORRISON, Convener

WOMEN'S MINISTRY STRATEGY AND COORDINATION COMMITTEE

89. Following the approval of last year's General Assembly of the new structures for incorporating women's ministry and Presbyterian Women into the work of the Council, the Women's Ministry Strategy and Coordination Committee and the *PW Panel* have quickly established a shared vision and close working relationships.

90. A joint Away Day explored models for women's ministry emerging in congregations. A vision for *Presbyterian Women* as part of a larger women's ministry and integrated more closely with the overall life and witness of the local congregation was shared at the PW Forum on 10 September 2016 and then further disseminated via PW LINKs. The potential of this vision has been welcomed and gained widespread acceptance. First steps in working it out are now beginning to be taken.

91. For the Women's Ministry Strategy and Coordination Committee, a crucial first step will be to sow a vision for a variety of models of women's ministry at congregational level. They plan to do so by producing a short DVD clip aimed at starting a discussion in congregations about ways of developing and integrating women's ministry.

92. It is important to stress that this resource is not just for women in the congregation, *PW Groups* or those involved in other expressions of women's ministry. It will be most productive when it births a conversation engaging both those involved in women's ministry and the Kirk Session and minister. By starting a conversation about an approach to women's ministry which draws upon and re-enforces the priorities of the whole congregation, the potential of the contribution of women's ministry will be maximised.

93. The *PW Panel* is charged with the oversight and development of *Presbyterian Women* in tandem with the overall emphases of the Council for Congregational Life and Witness. Early developments in this partnership include a wider consideration of the Council's emerging direction in choosing annual *PW* themes, an ongoing re-imagining of the annual 'Inspirations' resources pack, and the development of the evening programme of the Annual Meeting.

94. The *PW theme* for 2017/18 is 'Grow and bear fruit'. It offers a very obvious link to the Council's fruitful congregations theme.

95. The *PW Project* for 2017/18 is to support the Deaconess Training Fund. Again, given the valuable work of deaconesses in the life and witness of both congregations and the ministry and mission of the wider Church, an obvious link to key congregational emphases suggests itself. The continued appreciation of the whole Church is due to *PW Groups* for their significant and generous annual contribution to the ministry and mission of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland at home and overseas.

96. Where possible, Council and *Presbyterian Women* encourage congregations to maximise the opportunities of this increasingly coordinated approach to develop and re-enforce the integration and contribution of women's ministry in the life and witness of the whole congregation.

97. The Council pays tribute to the work of those involved in the Committee, *PW Panel* and the various other groups that oversee all aspects of the work of the organisation. They have shown vision, flexibility and enthusiasm in realising the potential of the new arrangements.

VALERIE STEWART, Convener

MANAGING A MATURING HARVEST

98. In its first two years, the Council has quickly built and gained momentum in a wide range of areas. Its work has significantly grown and expanded.

99. It is exciting to see the way in which congregations are engaging with, and appreciating, so many initiatives which seem to be ‘scratching where they itch’. A rough calculation shows that 293 out of 537 congregations have engaged with at least one programme, event or initiative run by the Council in the last year. Many have engaged in multiple ways. This figure does not include use of resources or the work of individual staff members with single congregations.

Bigger does not always mean better

100. The Council’s expansive remit provides both opportunity and challenge. The opportunity is to coordinate previously disconnected elements of life and witness and react to congregational need in a more coordinated way. The challenge is that the necessary coordination requires careful prioritisation and alignment. Such a process is no more easily achievable, or popular, at Council level than it is in any congregation. Particularly in the aftermath of a significant restructuring, it is challenging. Nevertheless, it will be a necessary part of the next phase of the Council’s life for at least four reasons.

101. Firstly, because congregations are increasingly reporting that they are overwhelmed by the amount of messages coming from the Council. While what is offered is a menu to choose from rather than a diet to be swallowed whole, Council is aware of the unintended negative effect of overload on already stretched congregations.

102. Secondly, administrative capacity is limited. Despite the outstanding ministry of the administrative staff team, it cannot be expected to ever-expand its capacity to deliver more and more programmes and events.

103. Thirdly, Executive Staff, who are the Council’s primary resource, will best be utilised in the service of the Church by delivering on carefully identified essential priorities, rather than ranging across a wide variety of areas without ever embedding any of them in congregational life and witness.

104. Fourthly, the Council will not be able to achieve the necessary coordination and integration of key themes intended by restructuring without slowing down to create space for conversations to identify overlaps.

Pruning for priorities

105. Inevitably, we are entering into a season which requires careful pruning so that what the Council does *‘might be even more fruitful’* (John 15:2). If everything is a priority, then nothing is a priority.

106. The Council set out the following framework to last year’s Assembly as a means of forming an agenda and way of setting priorities on a year to year basis.

(a) Framework for forming an agenda

This will emerge from the following perspectives in interaction with one another:

- (i) A sharper focus in the primary role of resourcing congregations and subsidiary role of supplementing congregational activities
- (ii) A fuller picture of the present with an eye to participation in the existing programme with the number of congregations involved as the key focus
- (iii) A fresh look at presbytery engagement feedback, developing Committee themes, converging and diverging themes, the need to give a lead towards necessary change and making meaning and signalling shifts in the landscape of congregational life and witness
- (iv) A realistic vision which maps types of congregation, operates within capacity to fulfil priorities, acknowledges changes in rhythms of church life, sets expectations and offers a balanced programme of bigger and smaller events.

(b) The next phase of the Council's life and agenda setting

This will involve a gradual rebalancing of Council outputs, retaining a wide range of possible resourcing options, but also the flexibility to choose particular elements on a year to year basis.

107. In addition to this framework, the General Assembly's Priorities Committee has been working to identify overarching priorities for all the Councils and aspects of the denomination's work. This will add an additional, 'bigger picture', filter to the Council's agenda setting.

108. The Council welcomes this development and notes that a similar series of priorities are emerging from the Council's own deliberations, its engagement with Presbyteries and the Priorities Committee process. This can be no accident. It represents a strong, collectively discerned sense of the direction in which God by His Spirit seems to be leading us.

109. There is a moment not to be missed, in which we need to allow God to re-shape congregational life and witness for the challenges of the place and time in which we find ourselves. The ability of the Council for Congregational Life and Witness to offer appropriate support to that process will ultimately rise or fall by our collective willingness to set and trim our sails to catch the wind of the Spirit.

110. Up until now the Events, Training and Resources Panel has been helping the Council develop and improve its effectiveness in programming, event management and coordination. The Council now envisages that it will have a key role in helping prioritise and shape the annual agenda of work.

WEEDS APPEARING AMONG THE WHEAT – OBSTACLES TO DEEPENING IMPACT

Engaging Presbyteries

111. The way in which the Council has sought to listen to the Church has been crucial and will continue to be so. This happens through facilitative

methods of conducting Council and Committee meetings, informally through staff conversations with those ministering in a variety of situations, but also more formally through engagement with presbyteries.

112. At last year's General Assembly the following resolution was passed, aimed at building upon Council engagements with all nineteen Presbyteries during 2015/16:

That the General Assembly instruct the Council of Congregational Life and Witness to send each Presbytery the feedback from their engagement event and request that Presbytery consider its content and engage with the Council in shaping priorities for future support and resourcing in their area.

113. At time of writing four presbyteries have responded with helpful feedback and suggestions of how the Council might provide relevant, focused, support and encouragement to congregations in their area. Conversations with these presbyteries have already started and it is hoped this will lead to specific and locally shaped input from the Council in at least three presbyteries in 2017/18.

114. Council recognises that presbyteries are increasingly burdened by the demands of managing multiple complex vacancies, commissions, consultations and a host of other basic responsibilities of oversight of congregations within their bounds. However, many of the activities listed above are reactive, rather than proactive. The Council desires to work in partnership with presbyteries to make it as easy as possible for them to develop their role as regional hubs for envisioning, equipping and enabling of congregations under their care. Inevitably, if a way to make this happen cannot be found, the Council will find itself working directly with congregations and on a regional, rather than presbytery, basis. Both eventualities would be unfortunate, in that they would further dilute our Presbyterian polity and identity and rob presbytery of the encouragement gained from proactively developing ministry and mission within their bounds.

115. To attempt a more focused and easily accessible engagement with presbyteries, Resolution 2 asks that the General Assembly instruct the Council for Congregational Life and Witness to proactively engage with at least three presbyteries per year on a rotational basis to provide an agreed and accessible programme to envision and equip congregations within their bounds. If agreed, the Council will proactively commence this process in 2018/19.

Structures and participation

116. The Council has a vast number of Committees, Panels, Task Groups and Organising Groups. Having operated this system for over two years, it is questionable whether the present structure best serves delivery of the Council's remit to support congregations in their life and witness. The difficulty of breaking out of silos is in part responsible for the mushrooming of Council material and messages highlighted above. As levels of participation in the central structures of the Church continue to fall, the task of recruiting members to this number of bodies is cumbersome and burdensome. The nature of ongoing participation required by Committee membership, in comparison with more focused and time-limited input to a Task Group undertaking a specific piece of work, does not help make the former an attractive proposition or engaging experience.

117. It is also noticeable that a number of key convenerships have simultaneously fallen vacant. These include convenership of the Council, and of

the Worship, Leadership and Discipleship Committees. The convenership of the Global Mission Involvement Committee has previously changed hands. All of this has happened within three years of what were anticipated as five year terms of service.

118. Conveners have stepped down for a variety of reasons and the Council records its thanks to all those who have served in this way and wishes them well for the new priorities of the next season of their ministries in the service of their congregations and other aspects of the work of the wider Church. However, filling the vacancies has become an increasingly difficult task.

119. As a consequence of these observations of structural impediment to the work, Resolution 3a asks the General Assembly to encourage the Council for Congregational Life and Witness to engage with the General Council to reflect on the structure of Committees, Panels, Task Groups and Organising Groups that best ensures appropriate accountability and ability to deliver its remit to envision, equip and enable congregations for their life and witness.

Communication issues

120. The last year has shown the Council's ability to develop its remit effectively being hampered in two further significant ways. Firstly, there is a need to improve the PCI database so that all future communication to congregations need not be directed through the minister. Secondly, there is a need to have an effective online booking and registration facility for Council events.

121. Both of these issues fall under the remit of the General Council which is tasked with ensuring that support services are being provided to the Councils. efficiently and effectively and dealing with any related policy issues. For the moment, activities are bounded by the constraints of the existing situation.

122. Therefore Resolution 3(b) requests that the General Assembly encourage the Council for Congregational Life and Witness to engage with the General Council to take necessary steps to improve mediums of communication with congregations and facilities for online booking and registration.

A coordinated approach to stimulating congregational prayer

123. Paragraph 74 above highlights an important Council discussion about stimulating congregational prayer. The general issue has been passed to the Worship Committee for further development. However, it is also observable that there is a lack of coordination and a mushrooming of information for prayer going to congregations via a variety of channels and mediums from the Councils of the General Assembly.

124. Having inherited oversight of the compilation of the annual *Prayer Handbook* last year, the Council observes that, as only part of the vast amount of requests for prayer for the work of the wider Church generated for congregational use, it is necessary to review the effectiveness of this situation.

125. Resolution 4 asks that the General Assembly encourage the General Council, on its behalf, to appoint a Task Group, involving representation from the Council for Congregational Life and Witness and other relevant bodies to examine streamlined options for providing information for congregational prayer for denominational mission and ministry and bring recommendations to the 2018 General Assembly.

SEED FALLING ON GOOD SOIL – RIPENING THE FRUITFUL CONGREGATIONS THEME

Ripening the fruitfulness agenda – The Growing in Fruitfulness Initiative

126. The Council notes the Priorities Committee’s focus on investing in the revitalisation and fruitfulness of the Church’s life and witness in changing and challenging times. It enthusiastically welcomes the opportunity to deepen and embed this theme in congregational life and witness as the overall focus of its work.

A vision for small and fruitful

127. Times are both changing and challenging for congregations. The Council has undertaken an examination of existing congregational capacity for developing life and witness across the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The aim has been to gain an impression of overall congregational strength to express God’s life and witness as the local body of Christ so as to more realistically envision, equip and enable the denomination for ministry and mission. A further breakdown of the analysis by presbytery will help nuance content and application of regional training and events.

128. Acknowledging that none of the existing range of available statistics tell the whole story of any congregation, and that they reflect a varying degree of accuracy, the figure for *Attendance at One Communion* has been selected. The thinking is that it is closer to reflecting the ‘core membership’ of a congregation than the figures for Families, Contributors to Weekly Freewill Offering, Persons of All Ages or numbers on Communion Roll.

129. ‘Core membership’ is understood as those who regularly attend Sunday morning worship and either presently serve in the activities of congregational life and witness, or are most likely to be able and willing to do so.

130. It is recognised that this analysis does not take account of age profile and is no indicator of the spiritual temperature of a congregation. Neither can it account for an increasing trend in a few areas to actively associate with the life and work of a congregation but not become a communicant member. In some other areas, the figure for attendance at one communion exaggerates the size of the congregational core due to a culture of only attending on communion Sundays. Where necessary, local knowledge of congregations and presbyteries can account for these peculiarities.

131. While acknowledging these limitations, the Council believes this analysis represents an important snapshot of the configuration of congregations within the denomination and indicator of present capacity for ministry and mission. As such, it gives a sense of the variety of starting points for reshaping congregational life and witness for the changing challenges we face, a necessary qualifier of unrealistic expectations, but also an appreciation of what exists to build upon.

132. Using 2015 statistics, the denomination as a whole shows a ‘congregational core’ of 60,967.

The Presbytery breakdown is as follows:

Ards	5,109
Armagh	3,449
Ballymena	4,922
Belfast North	2,769
Belfast South	2,240
Belfast East	3,681
Carrickfergus	2,807
Coleraine and Limavady	5,004
Derry and Donegal	5,528
Down	2,645
Dromore	2,939
Dublin and Munster	1,571
Iveagh	2,698
Monaghan	1,591
Newry	2,073
Omagh	3,445
Route	3,052
Templepatrick	2,678
Tyrone	2,766

At congregational level, the following picture emerges:

Congregational Core	Congregations	%
Under 75	190	35
75-149	188	35
150-224	89	17
225-299	38	7
300-374	8	2
375+	9	2
Unrecorded	15	3
	537	

133. These figures show 35% of congregations evidencing a 'congregational core' of under 75 members. A further 35% show a figure of under 149 members. If the Council's support for congregational life and witness is to be contextually appropriate and realistic of capacity to deliver on the ground, then it will have to grapple with a significant part of its work involving encouragement of small congregations for fruitful life and witness. These congregations include rural and urban situations, those that have always been small and those who have become smaller, those whose demographic reality means they will always be small and those whose changing context for mission evidences significant potential for numerical growth.

134. The numerical size of a congregation or the scale of its programme of activities in ministry and mission is not, in itself, an indicator of fruitfulness. Large, medium and small sized congregations can all be intentional about being fruitful in their own contexts. They can aim to fully utilise their God-given capacity for deepening their life together and being effective witnesses in their sphere of influence.

135. Unhelpful comparisons and unrealistic expectations do not create environments of hopefulness, rather they usually result in sowing unnecessary discouragement. Scripture brims with examples of how God's Kingdom grows from small beginnings. Council believes this to be a particular Kingdom perspective that needs to be further explored and developed for the present encouragement of many congregations.

136. An initial Council discussion has begun to identify the challenges and opportunities of being fruitful in a small congregation.

137. The Council has authorised a particular piece of work under the theme 'a vision for small and fruitful'. It trusts that, under God, it will nurture small congregations in identifying encouraging steps towards more fruitful life and witness.

Congregations entering a phase of new Ministry

138. Another area in which the Council is increasingly finding itself responding to requests for support is where congregations are entering a phase of new ministry. Particular challenges appear to be arising around the changes that come with the commencement of a new ministry of Word and sacrament. This season manifests the difficulty of a transition which involves both the ending of a ministry with which congregations have become familiar and the opportunity provided to refresh and renew vision for the future. This 'in between' space seems to be presenting itself as both fertile ground for necessary change, but also rocky ground in terms of genuinely embedding it.

139. Embedding the kind of culture change required in congregations for the changing and challenging times in which the Church finds itself is a recurring theme in the Council's conversation with leaders. Moving from envisioning for a different way of seeing things, to equipping for a different way of doing things, to enabling a different way of being church is not easy, quick or straightforward. It requires extraordinary grace, wisdom, patience and resilience.

140. To begin to better understand this dynamic, a focus group of ministers in their first charge has been arranged for 25 May 2017, with the accent on listening to one another and trying to discern what can be learned about the journey of congregational change. It is hoped to continue this conversation with a view to exploring how the Council can be of practical assistance and support in this particular phase of congregational life. One emerging possibility is in the potential application of the *Growing in Fruitfulness* material.

The Growing in Fruitfulness initiative

141. In its report to last year's Assembly, the Council committed itself to continuing to find ways of developing, articulating and cultivating the Fruitful Congregations theme at all levels of Church life.

142. A one year initiative, under the banner, *Growing in Fruitfulness*, was rolled out through twelve regional training nights offering congregations suggestions of how they might use a mixture of flexible materials for prayer, sermons and Bible studies to introduce the theme. A variety of ways to engage whole congregations in discerning God's priorities for the next season of their church life and witness offered a way of focusing congregational energy. The Council staff also provide signposting to ideas and stories to enable congregations to implement the development of cultures and practices which, under God, begin to prepare the ground for a local expression of growing fruitfulness. All of the materials can be viewed online on the PCI website at www.presbyterianireland.org/fruitfulcongregations

143. The Council also committed last year to set *'itself to be a learner in this initiative. Rather than anticipate what its longer term strategy should be, it will engage in a period of reflection on learning gained through partnering with congregations in the initiative before consideration of next steps.'* It is grateful for what it has learned from the thirty or so congregations which it has had the privilege of starting to journey with in this way.

144. One possible application of the model and material suggests itself in the specific circumstances of the period following the establishment of a new ministry referenced above. It may prove particularly useful in helping a congregation and new minister to focus the momentum arising from a new phase of life and witness in a number of collaboratively discerned areas. The material and process offered by the initiative would lend themselves to a Council partnership with congregations in which the latter would work through the preaching and teaching resources provided, allowing the Council to offer focused input at the point of facilitating members in choosing priority areas for the cultivation of fruitful practices of ministry and mission. The Council looks forward to further exploring this possibility in the months ahead.

A Framework for Partnerships for enabling Congregations in their Life and Witness

145. The Council has discussed the desirability of identifying a limited number of partnerships with other organisations which would provide specific enabling for congregations in specialist areas of their life and witness in which the Council does not have capacity to develop expertise.

146. The following framework, defining and setting out requirements for partnership and a range of ways of outworking such relationships is offered:

Definition of a Partner Organisation

147. A partner organisation is one which supplements the provision of the Council for Congregational Witness by sharing specific, specialist support in enabling congregations in their life or witness.

148. Requirements for entering into partnership:

- (a) The partner organisation's correspondence with the primary doctrinal standards of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.
- (b) The partner organisation's ability to offer support at congregational level for the life and witness of local church ministry and mission.

- (c) The partner organisation’s provision of a specialism in ministry or mission which complements, supplements or augments congregational enabling offered by the Council for Congregational Life and Witness.
 - (d) The proposal for partnership be presented to a meeting of the Council of Congregational Life and Witness for approval and reported to the General Assembly.
 - (e) The partnership is terminable by either party at any time.
149. Potential outworking of partnerships:
- (a) Partnership on specific projects and/or pieces of work.
 - (b) Inclusion of congregationally focused projects and/or pieces of work in Council communication.
 - (c) Inclusion of congregationally focused projects and/or pieces of work in Council prayer points.
150. Resolution 1 asks that the General Assembly welcome this framework for partnership working.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE AND WITNESS

APPENDIX 1

Overview of main activities, training and events offered by the Council during 2016/17 in core areas of Congregational Life and Witness

Programme	Venue	Date(s)
PW Forum	Assembly Buildings	10 September 2016
Close to Home Launch	Assembly Buildings	21 September 2016
Commission to Care	Assembly Buildings	24 September 2016
FFP People in Focus	Assembly Buildings	24 September 2016
Children’s Ministry Course	Union Theological College	September to December 2016
Youth Ministry Course	Union Theological College	September 2016 – March 2017
Disciple Makers Network	Assembly Buildings	A series of 4 meetings September 2016 – March 2017
Disciple Makers Network	Ballygawley Presbyterian	A series of 4 meetings September 2016 – March 2017
Pastoral Care Training	1st Comber Presbyterian	1 October 2016

Road Trip	2nd Randalstown	6 October 2016
Handling the Word	Union Theological College	A series of 6 evenings October/November 2016
Road Trip	Exodus, Londonderry	13 October 2016
Road Trip	Ballygawley Presbyterian	20 October 2016
Elders' Roadshow	Harmony Hill Presbyterian	20 October 2016
MAD Weekend	Ulster University, Coleraine	24-30 October 2016
Growing in Fruitfulness (Southern)	Abbey Presbyterian, Dublin	8 November 2016
Growing in Fruitfulness (Belfast)	Cooke Centenary Presbyterian	10 November 2016
Youth Ministry Course Residential	Castlewellan Castle	11-13 November 2016
Growing in Fruitfulness (Border)	1st Armagh Presbyterian	15 November 2016
Growing in Fruitfulness (Antrim)	Greystone Road Presbyterian	17 November 2016
Transform on the Road	Strand Road, Londonderry	18 November 2016
Growing in Fruitfulness (Central)	1st Comber Presbyterian	22 November 2016
Growing in Fruitfulness (North West)	Main Street, Garvagh Presbyterian	24 November 2016
Transform on the Road	Monaghan	25 November 2016
Growing in Fruitfulness (Southern)	Abbey Presbyterian, Dublin	26 January 2017
SPUD Big Gathering	Assembly Buildings	28 January 2017
Summer Impact Team Leaders' Training	Assembly Building	4 February 2017
PW Forum	Assembly Buildings	4 February 2017
Growing in Fruitfulness (Belfast)	Cooke Centenary Presbyterian	9 February 2017
Growing in Fruitfulness (Antrim)	Greystone Road Presbyterian	21 February 2017
Growing in Fruitfulness (Central)	2nd Comber Presbyterian	23 February 2017
Growing in Fruitfulness (Border)	1st Armagh Presbyterian	28 February 2017

Growing in Fruitfulness (North West)	Main Street, Garvagh Presbyterian	2 March 2017
Overflow Evangelism conference	Assembly Buildings	9 March 2017
Transform	Crescent Arts Centre, Belfast	7-8 April 2017
Prepared to Go	Assembly Building	8 April 2017
PCI Family Holiday	Share Centre, Lisnaskea	17-21 April 2017
PW Annual Meeting	Assembly Buildings	4 May 2017
Kids' Big Day Out	Wellington Presbyterian	13 May 2017
Ministry Certificates Graduation	Knock Presbyterian	17 May 2017
Reach	Assembly Buildings	20 May 2017
SPUD Assembly Residential	Derryvolgie Hall	5-8 June 2017
Youth Night	Assembly Buildings	10 June 2017
Full-time Workers' residential	Carrickdale	14-15 June 2017
Impact Training Day	Assembly Buildings	17 June 2017
Teams Commissioning Service	Assembly Buildings	17 June 2017
Impact Summer Team	Ballyweaney	1-9 July 2017
Impact Summer Team	Mullingar	7-16 July 2017
Impact Summer Team	Donegal Town	15-23 July 2017
Impact Summer Team	Abbey, Monkstown	22-30 July 2017
Impact Summer Team	Seaview	29 July-6 August 2017
Impact Summer Team	Whitehouse	5-13 August 2017
Impact Summer Team	St Andrew's, Belfast	5-13 August 2017
Ignite Team	Romania	10-22 August 2017
Impact Summer Team	Friendship House	12-19 August 2017
Impact Summer Team	Dungannon	12-19 August 2017
Worship Academy	Wellington Presbyterian	17-19 August 2017
Impact Summer Team	Grange	12-20 August 2017

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE AND WITNESS

APPENDIX 2

PCI Counselling Framework of Theology, Ethics and Practice

1. **A FRAMEWORK FOR THE MINISTRY OF PCI COUNSELLING**
 - 1.1 This document sets a framework within which the ministry of PCI Counselling will be provided. It seeks to ensure that:-
 - 1.1.1 It is informed by the doctrinal and ethical principles to which the Presbyterian Church in Ireland adheres. This is not to say that the Christian counsellor must explicitly advance all of these positions. It is to say that they cannot offer counselling which actively supports or encourages a client whose expressed wish is to be helped in a direction which is explicitly contrary to those principles.
 - 1.1.2 It locates PCI Counselling as primarily a supplement to the pastoral life of a congregation, providing a level of counselling expertise beyond the pastoral care normally offered by Ministers, Elders and Pastoral Care teams.
 - 1.1.3 It ensures that the service provided operates within generally recognised standards of counselling ethics and practice, as set out in section 6.
 - 1.2 The framework cannot address every situation or issue that may arise in the delivery of the ministry, but it offers boundaries within which the standards of the Church, the practice of counsellors and the wellbeing of clients can be respected and held in tension with integrity.
2. **FOUNDATIONS: DEFINING THE NATURE OF COUNSELLING OFFERED**
 - 2.1 In understanding the nature of the ministry provided, it is helpful to clarify the distinction between three things: (a) pastoral counselling; (b) formal Christian counselling; and (c) counselling undertaken by Christians.
 - 2.2 PCI Counselling is a form of (b) formal Christian Counselling.
 - 2.3 It differs from (a) pastoral counselling in at least three ways. Firstly, it is not counselling undertaken by a pastor or within a pastoral relationship. Secondly, it involves a level of expertise and knowledge which the pastor or pastoral counsellor may not possess. Thirdly, it proceeds by a method which is appropriate to a counselling service or relationship and not by methods which may be appropriate in pastoral counselling. We are aware that these statements are very general, subject to qualifications and make hard-and-fast distinctions which

do not always apply. However, our aim here is not to unpack them in detail; it is to state in general terms that, as a matter of principle, we distinguish between what we are calling pastoral counselling and what we are calling Christian counselling.

- 2.4 PCI Counselling also differs from (c), counselling undertaken by Christians. Broadly speaking, Christians operate both in distinctive ways and in ways which are in common with other people or bodies, who or which may not have a religious affiliation. By ‘counselling undertaken by Christians’, is understood a type of counselling which Christians may offer in common with others, which does not proceed from Christian principles and where Christian convictions have no bearing on the formal approach to counselling. Of course, in many cases, individual PCI Counsellors may operate in a way indistinguishable from other, including non-religious, counsellors. However, when PCI Counselling is considered as a specific institution or body set up by and in PCI, this means that it has a specific foundational theological basis.

3. THE FORMAL THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR PCI COUNSELLING

- 3.1 The formal theological basis for PCI Counselling is provided by the recognised standards of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland as set out in *The Code, Chapter 1, Section 3, The Standards of the Church*.
- 3.2 Other documents approved by the General Assembly with doctrinal or ethical application to any particular issue that might arise in counselling, also act as guides to counselling boundaries and practice.

4. A CORE BIBLICAL FRAMEWORK FOR APPROACHING LIFE ISSUES

- 4.1 The Council for Congregational Life and Witness, under which the ministry of PCI Counselling is offered, has adopted an overall core biblical framework for addressing pastoral life issues. Although the practice of pastoral care and counselling may be outworked by different methodology, the general framework within which they operate as expressions of Christian ministry is the same.
- 4.2 This core biblical framework is drawn from the plotline of the story of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. The key events framing Christian understanding of life issues are creation, fall, redemption and restoration. Each part of the Bible’s unfolding story informs Christian pastoral life and counselling. Essential applications of this framework include the following:
- 4.3 Creation. God made everything and it was good. He made human beings, male and female, in his image. We are relational beings because we are made in the image of God. People have great value because they were made by God. The creation accounts offer valuable insights into how God intended life and the world should be.
- 4.4 Fall. Humankind fell into sin and the resulting brokenness of the world is the reality in which we now live. This is the root cause of all human problems. Those problems fall into three general categories – they

could be the result of our own sin, the result of the sin of others, or simply the suffering associated with living in a fallen world that is not the direct result of our sin or the sin of others. In every case, Christians understand that life and the world is no longer the way it is supposed to be. The Bible's varied descriptions and depictions of sin and its effects offer valuable insights for Christian counselling.

- 4.5 Redemption. Salvation from sin and its effects is offered through the work of Christ on the cross. Christ's redemption enables the forgiveness of our sin. It empowers those who follow Christ to struggle against sin and its effects in their lives. Christ also helps us forgive others just as we have been forgiven. While full redemption from sin and its effects is not possible in this life, Christ's work offers the possibility of radical change through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- 4.6 Restoration. The Christian hope is that all things will finally be restored in Christ. Again, the Biblical picture of that restored life and world offer valuable insights into human wholeness and wellbeing that Christian counselling works towards.
- 4.7 In the ministry of Christian counselling we come not by ourselves but as representatives of Christ with the Holy Spirit at work in and through us. We come motivated by the love of God and with the benefit of the wisdom of His Word. We come recognising the deep realities of problems caused by living as fallen people in a fallen world. We come with the promise of transformation that Christ can bring to human situations. And we come with a sure and certain hope that the effects of sin, even if it is not fully erased now, will one day be gone when all things are restored by God.
- 4.8 While this framework will not be imposed on clients in a coercive or manipulative way, it offers core parameters of what it means to address the issues they raise within a context of Christian understanding.

5. PCI COUNSELLING AS A SUPPLEMENT TO CONGREGATIONAL PASTORAL LIFE

- 5.1 The primary role of PCI Counselling is to offer a necessary, specialist, supplementary ministry to that delivered by congregations in their pastoral ministry or in mission to those encountered in their witness.
- 5.2 As such, while the two ministries are in many ways distinct, it is important to maintain a close relationship between them. Consequently, those clients referred by any congregation for counselling should be offered the option of their Minister, or other primary agent of pastoral support, being kept informed of the progress of their journey.
- 5.3 This may happen by the recipient of support keeping the Minister, or other primary agent of pastoral support, up to date themselves and/or allowing their counsellor to make suggestions as to what ongoing pastoral support they or the congregation could usefully offer. The content of any disclosure will be agreed with the client.
- 5.4 Should a client not want to take up the option of their Counsellor making direct contact with the Minister or other primary agent of pastoral support, their wishes will be respected and confidentiality observed.

6. FRAMEWORK OF COUNSELLING ETHICS AND GOOD PRACTICE

- 6.1 The following basic, recognised standards of counselling ethics and good practice shall be observed by all involved in the delivery of the ministry of PCI Counselling.
- 6.2 Counsellors will be appropriately trained to deliver the ministry provided.
- 6.3 Counsellor well-being, good practice and development.
Counsellors will commit to:
 - 6.3.1 Only operating when they are physically, psychologically and spiritually fit to do so;
 - 6.3.2 Recognising and working within the limits of their competence;
 - 6.3.3 Ensuring accurate note taking and record keeping of counselling sessions;
 - 6.3.4 Making themselves available for regular supervision and support
 - 6.3.5 Regularly attending training and any updates on changes impacting the service provided;
 - 6.3.6 Complying with and operating within any legal requirements;
 - 6.3.7 Responding to any complaint and fully co-operating within any investigation procedure;
 - 6.3.8 Notifying PCI of any reason why they are not fit to practice.
- 6.4 Counsellor-Client Relationship.
Counselling ministry depends upon establishing and maintaining trust and good relationships. To this end, counsellors shall commit to:
 - 6.4.1 Exhibiting essential qualities of respect, empathy, integrity, honesty, transparency, resilience and commitment to appropriate application of biblical wisdom, grace and truth;
 - 6.4.2 Supplying clear and transparent information about the service being provided, including the conditions under which the client or counsellor may terminate the service;
 - 6.4.3 Agreeing a clear contract establishing the boundaries of the counselling ministry to take place;
 - 6.4.4 Respecting privacy and confidentiality, while dealing appropriately with any situation in which clients may be in danger of causing harm to themselves or others or in which the law requires disclosure;
 - 6.4.5 Collaborating with clients and regularly reviewing the progress of the counselling process;
 - 6.4.6 Showing appropriate sensitivity to client culture, beliefs or understanding and avoiding coercive or manipulative approaches
 - 6.4.7 Being especially aware of those not well equipped to take decisions for themselves;
 - 6.4.8 Observing PCI's policies for protection of children and vulnerable adults;
 - 6.4.9 Working in the best interests of the client and minimising any distress, harm or suffering that may result unintentionally from the process;

- 6.4.10 Discussing with the client and obtaining their consent for any referral and subsequent disclosure of information, save in those situations when the law requires disclosure to be made.

COUNCIL FOR CONGREGATIONAL LIFE AND WITNESS

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the General Assembly welcome the Framework for Partnerships for enabling congregations in their Life and Witness.
2. That the General Assembly instruct the Council for Congregational Life and Witness to proactively engage with at least three Presbyteries per year, on a rotational basis, to provide an agreed and accessible programme to envision and equip congregations within their bounds.
3. That the General Assembly encourage the Council for Congregational Life and Witness to engage with the General Council to:
 - (a) reflect on the structure of Committees, Panels, Task Groups and Organising Groups that best ensures appropriate accountability and ability to deliver its remit to envision, equip and enable congregations for their life and witness;
 - (b) identify and take the necessary steps to improve mediums of communication with congregations and facilities for online booking and registration.
4. That the General Assembly encourage the General Council, on its behalf, to appoint a Task Group, involving representation from the Council for Congregational Life and Witness and other relevant bodies, to examine streamlined options for providing information for congregational prayer for denominational mission and ministry and bring recommendations to the 2018 General Assembly.
5. That the Report of the Council for Congregational Life and Witness be received.

FOR INFORMATION

The following body is not under the control of the General Assembly. The report is for information only.

PRESBYTERIAN CHILDREN'S SOCIETY

Dr Paul Gray (Executive Secretary) reports:

1. The Presbyterian Children's Society exists to support Presbyterian children in Ireland. It works mainly through ministers to alleviate poverty and financial hardship for these children and their families. This is done mostly through regular and exceptional grants. The Society is currently assisting approximately 700 children in 370 families in over 200 congregations throughout Ireland.

2. The year 2016 was a significant one for the Society as it celebrated its 150th year. To mark this occasion a number of special events were organised and publications produced. Minister Simon Hamilton MLA opened the Society's exhibition 'Generations of Generosity' in the Linenhall Library and Minister Heather Humphreys TD launched the Society's DVD 'Taking the Edge Off'. In addition to these events there were regional events for the Society's secretaries, breakfast events for ministers, lectures, and a reunion of some of the 'girls' from Johnston House, the Society's children's home which closed in 1985. The year was very successful and culminated in a special Service of Thanksgiving and Celebration with the Moderator of the General Assembly and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young people.

3. The Society produced a range of new resources this year including a DVD which is available from the Society's website [www.presbyterianchildrensociety.org] and an information pack 'A Journey of Generosity and Giving through the Generations'. A history book on the Society was also published. All these resources are available from the Society and two sets of eleven pop up stands which tell the story of the Society over 150 years are available to congregations for loan.

4. Whilst the Society is not under the control of the General Assembly it works closely with the Church through its ministers. It is also working with relevant General Assembly Councils to ensure congregations have appropriate resources to equip them in helping families in financial need.

5. The Society's work is independently supported by Presbyterian congregations and the Society gives thanks to all those who support the Society in any way throughout the year. The Society also welcomes enquiries about how it might assist children and families in need within any Presbyterian congregation. Finally the Society commends its work for the continued prayerful and financial support of the Church.

COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL WITNESS

Convener: Rev Dr T J McCORMICK
Secretary: Mr LINDSAY CONWAY, OBE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. **The Council Report** addresses the general work of Council for Social Witness (CSW) (Strategic Objectives and endeavours to communicate its work to its members, the wider Church and community).

2. **Disability Services Committee** reports on the Day, Residential, Supported Housing and Respite Care in four locations, along with the ongoing and developing work of Kinghan Church for the Deaf. Inspiration from the 'Christmas Cracker' project is shared and the Committee notes the ongoing discussions in relation to The Peacehaven Trust in Greystones.

3. **Older People Services Committee** reports on the extensive work carried out in Residential and Nursing Homes in 9 locations. It also highlights the consistently high quality of residential care provided by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) which is an acknowledged witness within the Health and Social Care world and wider social care sector.

4. **Taking Care Committee** reports on a comprehensive programme of training for leaders, designated persons, ministers, and Taking Care trainers. The Committee is bringing the Adult Safeguarding Policy and Guidelines to this year's Assembly for approval.

5. **Specialist Services Committee** reports on work in 3 sheltered housing locations with those with addictions, and/or offending behaviours. Initiatives to address issues such as Suicide Awareness and Domestic Abuse are being developed in partnership with Flourish and the Safe Church initiative.

MAIN COUNCIL REPORT

6. It is difficult to illustrate the diversity and challenges of Social Witness in a report to the General Assembly. It always appears inadequate, given the size of the work and the breadth of the services. Any attempt to keep the wider Church well-informed will always fall short of telling the whole story. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland is recognised for its provision of a first-class care service. The Council is regularly informed of reports from RQIA, highlighting the dedication, professionalism and personal commitment of so many CSW staff.

7. The Council is actively seeking to be true to that unique aspect of our call to action – what would God have us do in a Christ-like way? That's why the Church is different in what we do and how we do it, not special, simply different.

8. The Council strives to give the best possible care, to work hard at being a good employer, to cope with inadequate funds from Trusts, to encourage involvement from families, and to nurture good relationships with other agencies.

9. The Long Service and Recognition Awards event on 8th December 2016 was another celebration of long service and dedication of staff and volunteers – a recognition of Social Witness both in congregations and the Council. For example, the Staff Commitment and Dedication Award was awarded to a member of staff with 20 years' service, who was described as having "the patience of a saint, who promoted the independence of residents and always went the extra mile." The Involvement Award went to a Youth Leader who displayed confidence beyond her 22 years – "Living and Sharing God's work in the schools and wider community" and the Unsung Hero Award went to a volunteer in one of CSW homes, for many years – going in and out twice a week – sharing his interest in music and drama. In total there were 13 awards recognising the work and witness of staff and volunteers – the people who make it all happen.

10. The Council has actively pursued different ways to engage with Council and Committee members. Different days and times have been tried with little or no noticeable change in attendance. A questionnaire has now gone to all Council and Committee members, seeking their feedback.

11. The Council will commence the next Strategic Planning Exercise for 2018 – 2023 at the 2017 October Council meeting. This will afford an opportunity for Council and Committees, Staff and Service Users to engage with and directly influence the work and witness of Council activities.

12. Council Conveners and Staff are grateful for the numerous opportunities they have in sharing the work and witness of the Council with congregations.

13. The uncertainty at Stormont, and the fact that no budgets are being set are making the whole Social Care Sector nervous and many voluntary, community and faith groups are feeling very vulnerable.

14. The routine work of Council within Social Care is staff intensive. Training is the key to good practice for all staff. As well as mandatory training there is a wide range of training being delivered – Induction, together with a number of Master Classes in a range of topics – Death and Dying, Nutrition, Diabetes.

15. Close working links have been developed with the Council for Public Affairs, having recently worked together on the Church's response to a Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland consultation, in particular addressing guidelines on Spiritual Abuse, Bullying, Disability Issues and E-Safety.

16. The Council upheld a resolution from the Older People Services Committee that the new home in Garvagh should be called 'Trinity' and that particular areas will retain the names of Ard Cluan and York.

17. Welfare Reform is impacting thousands of claimants as the reform reaches full implementation. Both the Council for Social Witness and the Council for Public Affairs remain connected with the changes in benefits through the Irish Council of Churches (ICC).

18. A number of Council Units are rented from Housing Associations. Both Council and Committees have had occasions to discuss the poor level of service in relation to maintenance and repairs. The Council congratulates Fold and Helm Housing Associations, which have now merged and are known as Radius Housing.

19. The Flourish Project – "A Churches Initiative on Suicide" continues to assist and equip those working with the aftermath of suicide. It is currently under review by the Health Promotion Agency.

20. The Convener and Secretary are members of the Priorities Committee and have been engaged in setting the denominational priorities, which will be presented at this year's General Assembly.

21. The Council hosted an event on the subject of "Dementia and Faith", a conversation on how dementia is impacting church life. Professor June Andrews in her keynote address challenged the churches on how we should be more accepting for those who have dementia.

22. To enable the Council to follow the Gospel imperatives of "loving one another" (John 13:34), to "love thy neighbour" (Luke 10:27), to "look after the orphans and widows" (James 1:27) – requires the support of both Church and state. Equally a church as a caring community must be resourced from both Council and state. The Good Samaritan offering to settle the final account with the Innkeeper (Luke 10:35), illustrates sustainability of care. The story of the Good Samaritan is not about one good deed, but sustaining the care.

23. The Strategic Plan of the Council for Social Witness, presented as an Appendix to The General Assembly (2015), has three vital applications:

- (a) to enable the Council to stay focused on the work and responsibilities remitted to it by the General Assembly;
- (b) to give a structured account of the work of the Council to the General Assembly;
- (c) to relate to statutory agencies, regulatory authorities, service-users and others, the particular focus and ethos of the Church's work in this particular area.

Thus the work of the Council and its Committees is presented within the framework of The Strategic Plan.

24. Strategic Objective: *"The Council shall deliver an effective Social Care service for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and to the wider community by the provision of Residential, Nursing, Supported Housing, Respite and Day Care and Community Based Programmes."*

25. To fulfil the remit given by The General Assembly, and the responsibilities of Social Witness to all service users and staff, Council staff have ongoing interaction with a diverse range of regulatory and statutory bodies and the wider voluntary sector. In particular: Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA); Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC); Criminal Justice Inspectorate (CJI); Probation Board Northern Ireland (PBNI); Supporting People Initiative (NI Housing Executive); and Health and Social Care Trusts, and partner housing associations.

26. Throughout the year Inspection Reports have commended the standard and range of care that is provided and several have had no recommendations for further action. This standard of care is appreciated by service users and their families and is respected by other service providers, one evidence of which is the request to take over the Peacehaven Trust in Greystones.

27. In the Homes and Units a range of opportunities and resources are provided for ministry and spiritual nourishment, including daily devotional times, weekly worship, Bible study, and distribution of devotional books and literature. This aspect of ministry is appreciated by residents, service users, tenants, their relatives, and staff.

28. The Council continues to value the professional skill, diligent commitment and human tenderness of staff. This is foundational to the care that is offered. In addition to regular training and professional development, the Social Witness Awards Ceremony recognising Long Service and Outstanding Contributions is an inspiration to all.

29. The work of the Council also relies on the faithful support of a vast number of volunteers: the Local Support Committees, “Friends of” groups, and volunteers in the “Getting on Board” programme. CSW continues to develop the role of volunteers in CSW projects and in an increasing number of both familiar and innovative projects initiated by congregations, groups and individuals. This will engender further engagement and deepen the sense of partnership throughout the Church.

30. A major piece of work has been the completion of the Congregational Guidelines for Adult Safeguarding. With the benefit of the help of leading professionals in associated bodies, a robust policy and valuable resource is being delivered (see Appendix 1). In the next year this will be rolled out across the Church.

31. The Council benefited from a visit from the Commissioner for Older People, addressing concerns about exploitation, scams and a ‘suckers’ list’. This is an issue to be addressed further in the coming year. The issues of Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking have also been considered with the appropriate committees developing information and resources. The hosting of a conference titled ‘Faith and Dementia’ with others in the Faith and Social Work sectors was both informative and timely in view of increased awareness of the issues dementia presents for individuals, families, churches and society at large.

32. All of this work is heavily dependent upon the professional standing and immeasurable commitment of Lindsay Conway, Linda Wray, Deborah Webster, Denise Keegan, Laura Kelly and David Hooks who guide, develop and enhance all of CSW’s work. The day to day functioning of the Council is facilitated by Julie Sykes (Office Manager), Gail Gamble, Wilma Steele, Jennie Telford, and Cathy Mullin; to each Council expresses sincere thanks.

33. **Strategic Objective:** *“Business and Finance Panel – will monitor the Financial Management, Personnel Functions, Information Technology and Property Management of the Council supported by the Finance and Staffing Commission.”*

34. The financial climate in which the Council operates remains challenging. The Business and Finance Panel, in monitoring financial, property and personnel issues has kept the realities of current budgets and the necessities of future provision before CSW.

35. Considerable time has been given to the finance and staffing implications of relocating Ard Cluan and York House to Trinity House in Garvagh. In making progress the Council is aware that the transition will impact the budget for at least two further years.

36. The endeavours to maintain budgetary control are further complicated by a lack of clarity in future funding arrangements by some external bodies and agencies. The uncertainty of the future payment of the Special Needs Management Allowance is ongoing and the extension of the National Living Wage has brought additional pressures on the finances.

37. **Strategic Objective:** *“The Council shall effectively communicate to its members, the wider Church and community the work, services and achievements of the Council.”*

38. The Council continues to work towards a revitalised communications policy which includes newssheets and updates, website, and prayer bulletins. The Council believes that the investment of staff time and finance in such a programme will expand the awareness of the work of CSW, encourage prayer support and stimulate engagement and support.

39. While CSW has neither the resources nor expertise to address every situation CSW is developing a signposting initiative to give accessible information to members of PCI, and be a help to the whole Church and a benefit to many individuals.

40. During this year the Council has had helpful engagement with other PCI Councils and Departments and appreciates the developing sense of collaboration with, in particular, the Council for Congregational Life and Witness, the Council for Public Affairs, Communications, Information Technology, Finance and Personnel Departments, the Assembly Buildings Management Team and the General Secretary’s Department.

41. A comment of John Stott in ‘Christian Counter Culture’ (IVP 1978 p.118): *“Do-gooders’ are despised in today’s world, and, to be sure, if philanthropy is self-conscious and patronising, it is not what Jesus meant by ‘doing good’. The point he is making is that true love is not sentiment so much as service - practical, humble, sacrificial service. As Dostoyevsky put it elsewhere, ‘Love in action is much more terrible than in dreams.’”*

42. **Strategic Objective:** *“Disability Services Committee – will deliver a high standard of Day, Residential, Supported Housing and Respite Care in all of our Units. Oversee the Ministry of the Kinghan Church and wider Ministry to the Deaf. Contribute to the Disability, Health and Wellbeing work of the wider Church in partnership with the Council for Congregational Life and Witness.”*

- (a) By expanding the ‘Christmas Cracker’ respite initiative throughout PCI congregations. (49)
- (b) By supporting the ongoing ministry of the Kinghan Church. (50)
- (c) By promoting deaf awareness throughout the Church. (51)
- (d) By exploring opportunities to establish outreach to the Deaf Community. (50)
- (e) By the ongoing development of our ministry with the deaf community. (50)
- (f) By promoting Lawnfield House as an all-year Respite Service. (47)
- (g) By exploring opportunities for development at the Aaron House site. (45, 46)
- (h) By encouraging the integration of people with Additional Needs in organisations and congregational life. Raise awareness of Disability issues throughout PCI including carers/ issues. (56)

Residential Care – for those with Learning Disability

- Aaron House, Dundonald – 16 beds

Residential Respite Care – for those with a Learning Disability; Physical Disability, Sensory Impairment and Older People

- Lawnfield House, Newcastle – 20 beds
- Aaron House, Dundonald – 2 beds

Day Care – for those with Learning Disability

- Aaron House – 9 service users

Supported Living

- Willow Brook, Coleraine (learning disability) – 9
- Topley Terrace, Coleraine (physical disability)

DISABILITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

43. The Committee received very positive and encouraging reports from Aaron House, Lawnfield House, Willow Brook/Topley Court and the Kinghan Church, over the past year.

44. The Committee has now met in all the CSW facilities under their care.

45. Aaron House continues to provide a high standard of Residential, Day and Respite care. It has been a difficult year for everyone connected with Aaron House due to the passing of two residents. The Committee took great encouragement to hear of the appreciation of the families concerned for the care given to their loved ones by the staff in the Home. The Committee welcomes the appointment of Isabel Harper as Home Manager.

46. One of the service-users in Day Care at Aaron House had his art exhibited at Lisburn Civic Centre. The Lord and Lady Mayoress had visited Aaron House at Christmas and were impressed with his work, resulting in the Art Exhibition.

47. Occupancy levels in Lawnfield House continue to improve but more still needs to be done to maximise uptake of this valuable resource in order to make the Home more financially secure. Recent articles in both the *Herald* and *Wider World* have helped to promote the work and improve the potential take-up of places. Lawnfield, with a small core group of permanent residents and as a specialised centre for Respite and Short-Time Care, together with Holiday placements, is very attractive to the wider care sector. Permission was given for the re-registration of the bungalow for “Supported Living”.

48. Willow Brook and Topley Terrace continue to provide a high standard of service, supporting young adults living in their own homes. The Friends of Willow Brook were presented with the Director’s Award for services to Willow Brook at this year’s CSW Recognition Awards ceremony. The Moderator visited and conducted a Harvest Services for Willow Brook residents, friends and family.

49. ‘Christmas Cracker’ was run four times in three locations this year – twice in McQuiston Memorial, once in Bangor West and once in Hillsborough. The Disability Services Committee identified a number of possible locations to which the initiative might be extended in the next couple of years and is taking steps to make contact. Hillsborough congregation is planning a pilot “Summer Cracker” in 2017.

50. The Kinghan Church continues to provide ministry to the deaf community in Belfast and Ballykelly. The Committee recognised the Ministry of the Rev Glen Jordan and thanked him for his six years of Ministry in Kinghan. Mr Jordan has been installed as Minister in the congregations of Bellaghy and Knockloughrim.

51. The Council has agreed to the formation of a Task Group, drawn from Council and South Belfast Presbytery, to totally review the Church's Ministry to the deaf.

52. The Committee had written to the Planning Group regarding a couple of matters about the plans for the 2017 Residential Assembly. These include: the provision of signing for deaf people during the main sessions; and, with the focus on making disciples of all people, the inclusion of some thought about how to disciple people with learning/intellectual disabilities during the seminars. Suggestions were submitted for a couple of speakers who could make a very positive contribution to such seminars.

53. The Committee discussed the inclusion of the Special Education sector in the work of the State Education Committee of the Council for Public Affairs and agreed that it be raised with its Convener.

54. The value of deputation about the work of the DSC was discussed and it was felt that 'roadshow' type events should be considered by the Council incorporating a number of areas of its work as a way of reaching as many people as possible across the church.

55. Progress regarding Peacehaven continues to be slower than expected due to legal matters. It is now hoped that the handover can be fully completed later in 2017. The Council is in the process of registering with the Health Information and Quality Authority (ROI equivalent of RQIA).

56. Discussion took place about the need to find ways of implementing the Committee's Strategic Objective regarding equipping congregations for integrating people with additional needs, and ministry to people with learning disabilities. Collaboration and cross-working with the Council Congregational Life and Witness will assist in this important objective.

57. **Strategic Objective:** *"Older People Services Committee – will deliver a high standard of day, residential, nursing and respite care to all our users and campaign and raise awareness on behalf of older people issues and services. Support the development of the Pastoral Support of those requiring support in their own homes."*

- (a) To continue to consider the relocation of Ard Cluan House and York House. (68-69)
- (b) To continue to challenge Government Policy in relation to 'Transforming Your Care' pertaining to older people. (63, 66, 67)
- (c) To explore opportunities to provide Home Care Services.
- (d) To train all staff and volunteers in dementia awareness and to develop awareness in the wider Church on dementia. (59)
- (e) To attain an overall occupancy rate of 95%. (62)
- (f) To increase the number of volunteers in the Homes to 250.
- (g) To provide respite/day care/holiday accommodation for an additional 50 residents.
- (h) To establish Activities Coordinators in each of the Residential Homes.

Residential Care – for older people

- Adelaide House, Belfast – 45 Beds
- Ard Cluan House, Londonderry – 13 Beds
- Corkey House, Belfast – 35 Beds

- River House, Newcastle – 29 Beds
- Sunnyside House, Bangor – 45 Beds
- York House, Portrush – 32 Beds
- Nursing Care – for Older People
- Harold McCauley House, Omagh – 32 Beds

Supported Housing – Older People

- St Andrew Bungalows, Mallusk
- Tritonville Close, Dublin

OLDER PEOPLE SERVICES COMMITTEE

58. The Council of Social Witness continues to provide residential and nursing care for older people in its various homes in Northern Ireland and in Dublin. At present Older People Services homes provide 229 beds of which 50 are for residents with a diagnosis of Dementia. During the course of 2016 there were 295 “permanent” residents, of whom 70 were privately funded, and 225 “care managed”. In addition there were 63 “respite” residents, of whom 18 were privately funded and 45 “care managed.” Among the group of residents were 12 centenarians. Harold McCauley (Nursing Home) in Omagh will be celebrating its twenty fifth anniversary in December 2017.

59. Ongoing staff training is a regular part of the professional programme, and the Christian ethos is vital in what is an important part of the Church’s mission to older people.

60. Recent inspection reports from the Regulation Quality and Improvement Authority (RQIA) have been most encouraging and it is obvious that this ministry to older people is carried out by a dedicated and willing staff in a thoroughly professional manner in all locations.

61. The Moderator of the General Assembly, Rt Rev Dr Frank Sellar, and Mrs Sellar, have visited most of the CSW Units during the year. The visits were welcomed by residents and staff alike, who took great encouragement from the Moderator.

62. Homes have reached their targets in relation to 95% occupancy, resulting in a more encouraging financial footing.

63. Healthcare and its cost, and not least the cost of care of an increasingly older population, is often in the news. At a time when some residential/nursing homes have had to close, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland continues to provide residential and nursing care for older people in its various homes in Northern Ireland and in Dublin. Recent reports from RQIA of inspections of CSW Homes have included very few recommendations and no requirements, and it is obvious that this ministry to older people is carried out by a dedicated and willing staff in a thoroughly professional manner. The Committee welcomed the 4% increase in fees in relation to Residential and Health Care.

64. The “Caring for our Older Members” event at the General Assembly 2016 had been well received and greatly appreciated by those who were present. It was also noted that the Assembly minutes solemnly record that the Moderator was presented with a “tiddlemuff” by Mr Conway.

65. The “twiddlemuff” is a clear example of the ability of our Church to respond in a practical way. An initiative which started with the 3C’s Craft, Chat and Coffee, group in West Church Bangor, has spread, mainly through Presbyterian Women in the provision of “twiddlemuffs” to homes and hospitals.

66. Eighty copies of a questionnaire distributed at the Assembly were returned. From these it emerged that throughout PCI there are indeed many organisations and gatherings at congregational level that seek to care variously for the social, pastoral and devotional needs of older members, and there are also teams that visit older members at home. Quite a few congregations have members involved in visitation or the provision of worship services in local residential or nursing homes.

67. The Dementia Garden at Corkey House is now complete, enhancing and improving the quality of life for residents. At the NI Amenity Council Awards Ceremony in Armagh, Sunnyside House came top in the Residential Home category in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust Region and River House was runner-up in the same category. Ard Cluan House and Adelaide House received commendations. Applications are now being submitted for 2017.

68. The relocation of Ard Cluan House in Londonderry and of York House in Portrush was a stated strategic objective of the Board of Social Witness since 2007. These have been wonderful Homes for the residents in terms of care and community, but in an age of increasing regulation and ever more stringent requirements for Health and Safety, they are fast becoming unfit for purpose. For reasons of age and size and configuration they have been run on a deficit, something which was long since recognised to be unsustainable.

69. The Older People Services Committee requested that the Council for Social Witness proceed with the purchase of the Garvagh Care Home to replace and relocate York House and Ard Cluan.

70. The Council purchased and took possession of the 67-bedded nursing home at Garvagh in September and is occupied with the process of reconfiguring it as a residential home with every room en suite and with a dedicated dementia wing. Other changes to the layout are planned to allow for communal areas and a suitable venue for worship services.

71. There was a good response to the competition to suggest a name for the new home. Much thought had gone into the suggestions, drawing from local townlands, place-names and Scripture. The Committee agreed on the name ‘Trinity House’, both symbolic of the coming together of three homes and giving the home a clear Christian identity. The names of Ard Cluan and York will be retained within Trinity House, giving the home a link with our history.

72. The Council was more than aware that the Ard Cluan residents, staff and residents’ relatives were less than happy at the prospect of having to travel to Garvagh, particularly in winter. This resulted in the Presbytery of Derry and Donegal calling a Special Meeting to discuss the situation. At this meeting the Secretary and Finance Manager, the Residential and Supported Services Manager and the Convener of Older People Services were present.

73. Presbytery and the Ard Cluan Local Support Committee have brought some legal issues to the attention of Council; these are currently being addressed.

74. The final design and specification of the new home has now been agreed and the final tender accepted, with a provisional completion date of September 2017.

75. The entire process of this relocation has involved and continues to involve the Assembly Buildings staff in much additional work; but they have continued to engage with all parties and with every aspect of the task with their accustomed professionalism, diligence, compassion and Christian faith. The Committee sought God's guidance for the best possible outcome for all concerned in this context as well as in all the work of Older People Services in its various Homes.

JOHN SEAWRIGHT, Convener

76. Strategic Objective: *“Taking Care Committee (The Safeguarding Programme of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland) – creating a safe environment for all our members, users, volunteers and staff.”*

- (a) To provide training for those working with or in contact with children and adults at risk.
- (b) To prepare for Access (NI) applications going online and the portability scheme. (86)
- (c) To review current policies and devise relevant responses to Safeguarding issues.
- (d) Organise conferences and seminars in conjunction with the Council for Congregational Life and Witness.
- (e) To raise awareness of Child Protection Issues.
- (f) To develop a training programme for Kirk Sessions. (82)
- (g) To appoint a network of Taking Care Ambassadors.
- (h) To develop a Taking Care Sunday strategy.
- (i) To develop a working relationship with our Public Protection partners.
- (j) To develop a Safeguarding strategy for adults at risk of harm, who attend our congregations and participate in activities. (89, 90)
- (k) To continue to build relationships with other faith and voluntary groups. (88)
- (l) To raise awareness of Human Trafficking and Domestic/ Sexual Violence.

TAKING CARE COMMITTEE

77. The Committee acknowledges that the child protection programme (Taking Care) for PCI has been built up over 20 years on a firm foundation of guidelines, policies and practices. There is constant monitoring and amendment to all aspects of the contents and regular updating of information and its methods of delivery.

78. The Taking Care programme requires that Leaders and Staff are always vigilant and constantly striving for best practice at all levels of congregational life and witness. The next development is safeguarding of all adults who are at risk of harm, abuse or exploitation within the members and users of congregations. Guidelines have been compiled and training on all aspects of these wide-ranging

topics will be required.

79. Foundation Training events are arranged at different venues for new leaders. Last year 600 people received this training. Refresher training, of which there were 98 sessions in 2016, is ongoing.

80. Training is provided by accredited trainers. There are 4 trainers' evenings per year where the Programme Co-ordinator provides feedback from the sessions and deals with any problems. Quality assurance is being implemented and each trainer will be assessed every three years. Six new trainers have completed a course of instruction to become accredited.

81. Information seminars regarding Garda Vetting at venues in the Republic of Ireland took place: 69 people attended. Garda Vetting is now a legal requirement and the process went online on 11th April 2016.

82. Kirk Session training modules have been piloted and will soon be available. As the Charity Commission NI has now designated Elders as Trustees, it is vital that they are informed of their responsibilities regarding child protection.

83. The Taking Care Office has one clerical staff member, Cathy Mullin. She has received 988 Access NI forms for processing, the largest number from any organisation apart from the GAA. She deals with day-to-day enquiries, arrangements, training dates and provides Taking Care literature to congregations when requested, together with relaying information to her programme co-ordinator.

84. The workload in Taking Care increases rather than diminishes. The Committee is conscious that the present staff level is critical and have requested an urgent Staff Review.

85. The Committee drew Council's attention to the fact that the Committee has no Republic of Ireland members to represent their congregations in matters which are specific to this region. After consideration, the Committee suggested that an Advisory Task Group be formed to assist with this situation.

86. Portability, a scheme that will reduce the number of Access NI checks that individuals will require, will come into operation in the later part of 2017 or early 2018, a facility that PCI and others have lobbied on for a considerable time.

87. A congregational audit of the Taking Care Programme is planned for October 2017 and this will provide information that will assist in the overall assessment of Safeguarding needs throughout PCI.

88. The Faith Group of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland continues to meet to discuss mutual topics and to offer support. The Group has hosted "Lunchtime Seminars" and has produced Guidance for Faith-Based Groups – Use of Social Media and other E-Based Communication. A Safeguarding Sunday strategy is currently being drawn-up and will be ready in the Summer of 2017.

89. The Adult Safeguarding Task Group has completed the Adult Safeguarding Policy and Guidelines for congregations. At the core of the Policy is the Taking Care of All statement that was passed at the General Assembly in 2016 "Christ calls us to love, care for and value everyone." "This gospel imperative of loving our neighbour as ourselves leads us to respect all as individuals, treating each with dignity and empowering them to reach their full potential. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland seeks to reflect Christ's compassion for everyone and to safeguard all those who come into contact with the mission and ministries

of the Church, by preventing harm and protecting those at risk.”

90. The Policy and Guidelines set out the Key Messages and Underpinning Principles as they relate to the church, defines abuse, clearly stated Do’s and Don’ts and how to report concern. (See Appendix 1 for full text).

DR PAMELA MARSHALL, Convener

91. **Strategic Objective:** “*Specialist Services Committee – will deliver a high standard of service to those with Addictions, Offending Behaviours and who require Supported Housing.*”

- (a) Establish a closer collaboration between Thompson House, Carlisle House and Gray’s Court.
- (b) Develop a Crime Reduction and Life Skills Programme for Thompson House. (93,94)
- (c) Develop the Fresh Start Programme in partnership with the Northern Ireland Prison Service. (99)
- (d) Develop a link with Prison Chaplains and contribute to the development of Community Chaplains.
- (e) Establish stronger links with Juvenile Justice Centre.
- (f) Include work of Flourish! Churches’ Initiative on Suicide.
- (g) Raise awareness of Domestic/Sexual Violence. (Reports 2016, 96, 98)
- (h) Explore with Oaklee/Trinity the refurbishment of Carlisle House.

Work with people with Addictions

- Carlisle House
- Gray’s Court

Work with Offenders

- Thompson House
- Fresh Start Initiative at Hydebank Wood Prison and Young Offenders Centre

SPECIALIST SERVICES COMMITTEE

92. The Specialist Services Committee oversees the work of Thompson House, Carlisle House and Gray’s Court, These Units provide a high standard of service for those with Addictions, Offending Behaviours and those who require additional Supported Housing to assist their transition and integration back into society. They continue to promote and encourage service-users to engage in the spiritual opportunities available, alongside their current therapies and the practical professional advice on offer.

93. Thompson House continues to provide much needed accommodation and a wide range of valuable voluntary programmes for service-users. Staff at Thompson House have noticed a significant increase in the complex issues service-users present with, eg alcohol, drug, mental health and personality disorders. As a result management and staff have introduced and now implement positive Safeguarding Support Structures when required.

94. Thompson House, having run the Christianity Explored programme for a number of years, have changed to the new Christian study material entitled

'Life Explored'. Again, management have identified that an increasing number of service-users have little or no biblical knowledge and this new material (published by Christianity Explored) will seek to address this issue.

95. Carlisle House continues to provide a six-week residential treatment programme for people with alcohol and drug issues. Installation of new emergency lighting, a fire alarm system and the refurbishment of the heating system to gas is now complete. Recent Open Mornings over a number of days have been well received with 289 attendees, of which 245 individuals were service-users and family members, plus 44 substance abuse practitioners. The therapy programme on offer is wide-ranging, and consists of interactive, creative and complimentary therapy group sessions, in addition to advice given on healthy eating, plus a Housing and Benefits Clinic.

96. Specialist Services continues to highlight the issue of Domestic and Sexual Violence in our society. The Committee is actively seeking to engage with Women's Aid on this issue.

97. Funding and the financial pressures of the work of Specialist Services have been discussed at length. Some encouragement has been evidenced in the financial turn-around over the past 24 months, with the move to Regional Funding, benefiting Carlisle House in particular. The Committee has taken under consideration that if Carlisle House was able to offer two extra beds it would increase its financial viability considerably.

98. Safe Church, an initiative with Women's Aid is a project that addresses the issue of Domestic and Sexual Violence is being rolled out throughout local churches.

99. The Fresh Start Programme, in collaboration with the Northern Ireland Prison Service, continues to utilise the use of volunteers in working with Hydebank Wood College.

100. The Committee discussed a recent statement made by Cheryl Lamont, Chief Probation Officer of the PBNI "that 70% of those currently on probation have an issue with drugs and/or alcohol." This affirms the observations of Thompson House staff, since the majority of new residents accessing their services arrive with support workers in place to assist them in accessing local drug/alcohol services.

101. Gray's Court remains at full occupancy, offering a valuable resource for individuals in recovery, being able to stay for up to two years.

JOHN STANBRIDGE, (Acting Convener)

COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL WITNESS

APPENDIX 1

Adult Safeguarding: Congregational Policy and Guidelines

TAKING CARE OF ALL

1. Christ calls us to love, care for and value everyone.
2. This gospel imperative of loving our neighbour as ourselves leads us to respect all as individuals, treating each with dignity and empowering them to reach their full potential.
3. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland seeks to reflect Christ's compassion for everyone and to safeguard all those who come into contact with the mission and ministries of the Church, by preventing harm and protecting those at risk.

Introduction

4. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has 539 congregations with around 250,000 people attending worship and a range of other activities. Our Child Protection Guidelines were adopted by the General Assembly in 1996 and were further developed on the launch of Taking Care and establishment of a Taking Care Office in 2006. Every congregation has a named designated person for child protection and adheres to the stated guidelines as laid down by the General Assembly.

5. This Policy and Guidelines, together with our well-established Taking Care Programme, will ensure that we reduce the risk of harm, abuse or exploitation for all within the Church. The Presbyterian Church has a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of harm, abuse and exploitation.

6. As a Church we have a duty to protect all who are members or participate in the life and work of our church community. Harm, abuse or exploitation can happen anywhere, even in churches. Safeguarding is everyone's business and should be an integral part of congregational life and monitored by Kirk Sessions. It should not be seen as another burdensome policy, but as the living out of the Gospel imperative to love and care for one another.

7. The Pastoral Care of members, church based activities and events will be the main context of many of our concerns. Doing nothing is not an option; better to share a concern than run the risk of a serious event going unreported.

8. This response will involve us as a Church discussing our concerns and, when necessary, reporting them to the appropriate person and cooperating with Statutory Bodies, whilst ensuring that the appropriate support is afforded to all parties concerned.

9. Our churches have a significant presence in our communities. Individuals, families and groups participate in activities every week. They have a right to feel safe and secure and when systems fail we have a duty to act immediately.

10. *“As a denomination, it is vital that we ensure that all of our members and visitors are protected from abuse, exploitation or neglect and the risk of harm. Safeguarding adults is complex and challenging and it is vital that we work in partnership with other agencies to protect all.”*

11. The term “safeguarding” is used in its widest sense; that is, to encompass both activity which prevents harm from occurring in the first place and activity which protects adults at risk where harm has occurred or is likely to occur without intervention.

12. These guidelines are for anyone within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland who is working with adults at risk, whether they are in a paid position or are a volunteer.

Examples:

- Ministers
- Elders
- Deaconesses
- Volunteers
- Staff Members
- Pastoral Care Workers
- Pastoral Team Members

13. Kirk Sessions, Presbyteries, General Assembly Councils and the General Assembly are responsible for ensuring the implementation of, and compliance with these guidelines.

The guidelines aim to:

- (a) Raise awareness of harm to adults at risk.
- (b) Define what harm is and how it might be recognised.
- (c) Explain what process should be followed within PCI if there is concern that an adult at risk might be experiencing harm.
- (d) Set out how the Presbyterian Church in Ireland aims to prevent harm taking place and protect those who are at risk from harm. Key Messages

14. **Safeguarding is for all** – As a Church we are now familiar with the whole concept of Child Protection. We are to apply those good sound principles in the area of Adults. Adult Safeguarding is much more than the care of Older People and those with Disabilities. These Guidelines will assist us to keep safe all those over the age of 18 who are at risk of harm.

15. **Taking Care of All** – demands that we strive to prevent harm and protect those at risk:

We have a duty to:

- (a) Protect, as well as a duty to care;
- (b) Adopt a zero tolerance approach to all forms of harm/abuse/neglect/exploitation;
- (c) Deliver training;
- (d) Report concerns immediately;
- (e) Understand that a delay may place individuals at further risk;
- (f) Co-operate and be in partnership with other agencies;
- (g) Take our responsibilities seriously as stated within the policy;
- (h) Appropriately share information that may assist in the protection of others and in the promotion of good practice.

16. Who is responsible for ensuring implementation of and compliance with Taking Care of All?

- General Assembly
- Presbytery
- General Assembly Councils
- Kirk Sessions

17. These guidelines move away from the concept of “vulnerability” in adulthood and towards establishing the concept of “risk of harm” in adulthood. In doing so, the guidelines place the responsibility for any harm caused with those who perpetrate it and not with the person who has been harmed.

18. Harm resulting from abuse, exploitation or neglect violates the basic human rights of a person to be treated with respect and dignity, to have control over their life and property, and to live a life free from fear. Harm can have a devastating and long lasting impact on victims, their families and carers. It is the impact of an act, or omission of actions, on the individual that determines whether harm has occurred.

19. Any action which causes harm may constitute a criminal offence and/or professional misconduct on the part of an employee.

20. Adult safeguarding is based on fundamental human rights and on respecting the rights of adults as individuals, treating all adults with dignity and respecting their right to choose.

21. It involves empowering and enabling all adults, including those at risk of harm, to manage their own health and well-being and to keep them safe. It extends to intervening to protect where harm has occurred or is likely to occur and promoting access to justice. All adults at risk should be central to any actions and decisions affecting their lives.

22. **Preventative Safeguarding** includes a range of actions and measures such as practical help, care, support and interventions designed to promote the safety, well-being and rights of adults which reduce the likelihood of, or opportunities for, harm to occur. Effective preventative safeguarding requires partnership working, that is, individuals, professionals and agencies working together to recognise the potential for, and to prevent, harm. Prevention is therefore the responsibility of a wide range of agencies, organisations and groups; indeed it is the responsibility and concern of us all as good citizens and neighbours, including those who may be at risk of harm, must be alert to the individual’s needs and any risks of harm to which they may be exposed. Prevention will strive towards early intervention to provide additional supports at all levels for adults whose personal characteristics or life circumstances may increase their exposure to harm.

23. **Protective Safeguarding** will be targeted at adults who are in need of protection, that is, when harm from abuse, exploitation or neglect is suspected, has occurred, or is likely to occur. The protection service is led by HSC Trusts and the PSNI. The input of other individuals, disciplines or agencies may be required, either in the course of an investigation of an allegation of harm or in the formulation and delivery of a care and protection plan.

24. Effective preventative safeguarding requires partnership working and is the responsibility of everyone – individual/staff/volunteer/Minister/Deaconess/Pastoral Care Worker/Elder and all teams and organisations that come into contact with adults.

DEFINITIONS

25. **It is important to understand what we mean when we talk about adult safeguarding.**

26. In **Northern Ireland** an adult at risk is defined in the government policy.

Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership (July 2015) defines an “**Adult at risk of harm**” as a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their personal characteristics which may include, but are not limited to, age, disability, special educational needs, illness, mental or physical frailty or impairment of, or disturbance in, the functioning of the mind or brain. Life circumstances may include, but are not limited to, isolation, socio-economic factors and environmental living conditions.

An “**Adult in need of protection**” is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

- (a) Personal characteristics
- (b) Life circumstances
- (c) Who are unable to protect their own wellbeing, property, assets, rights or other interests?

Previous safeguarding policies focused on protection and the term “vulnerable adult”. This policy moves away from the concept of “vulnerability” and towards establishing the concept of “risk of harm” in adulthood. It places the responsibility of harm caused with those who perpetrate it.

27. In the **Republic of Ireland** the National Policy Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse (December 2014) states that a **vulnerable person** is “an adult who may be restricted in capacity to guard him/her against harm, exploitation or to report such harm or exploitation”. Restriction of capacity may arise as a result of physical or intellectual impairment. Vulnerability to abuse is influenced by both content and individual circumstances.

In other words some can be vulnerable to abuse at some stage in their lives, depending on their age, disability or need for support.

28. **What do we mean by “abuse”?**

Abuse is ‘a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to another individual or violates their human or civil rights’.

Abuse is the misuse of power and control that one person has over another. It can involve direct and indirect contact and can include online abuse

29. **What do we mean by “harm”?**

Harm is the impact on the victim of abuse, exploitation or neglect. It is the result of any action whether by commission or omission, deliberate, or as the result of a lack of knowledge or awareness which may result in the impairment of physical, intellectual, emotional, or mental health or well-being.

Harm resulting from abuse, exploitation or neglect violates the basic human rights of a person to be treated with respect and dignity, to have control over their life and property, and to live a life free from fear. Harm can have a devastating and long lasting impact on victims, their families and carers. It is the impact of an act, or omission of actions, on the individual that determines whether harm has occurred.

Any action which causes harm may constitute a criminal offence and/or professional misconduct on the part of an employee.

30. What are the main forms of abuse?

Abuse can take many forms. The most commonly cited forms of abuse are:

- (a) **Physical Abuse**
 - (i) Physical abuse is the use of physical force or mistreatment of one person by another which may or may not result in actual physical injury.
 - (ii) This may include hitting, pushing, rough handling, exposure to heat or cold, force feeding, improper administration of medication, denial of treatment, misuse or illegal use of restraint and deprivation of liberty.
- (b) **Sexual Violence and Abuse**
 - (i) Sexual abuse is any behaviour perceived to be of a sexual nature which is unwanted or takes place without consent or understanding.
 - (ii) Sexual violence and abuse can take many forms and may include non-contact sexual activities, such as indecent exposure, stalking, grooming, being made to look at or be involved in the production of sexually abusive material, or being made to watch sexual activities. It may involve physical contact, including but not limited to non-consensual penetrative sexual activities or non-penetrative sexual activities, such as intentional touching (known as groping).
 - (iii) Sexual violence can be found across all sections of society, irrelevant of gender, age, ability, religion, race, ethnicity, personal circumstances, financial background or sexual orientation.
- (c) **Psychological/Emotional Abuse**
 - (i) Psychological/emotional abuse is behaviour that is psychologically harmful or inflicts mental distress by threat, humiliation or other verbal/non-verbal conduct.
 - (ii) This may include threats, humiliation or ridicule, provoking fear of violence, shouting, yelling and swearing, blaming, controlling, intimidation and coercion.
- (d) **Financial Abuse**
 - (i) Financial abuse is actual or attempted theft, fraud or burglary. It is the misappropriation or misuse of money, property, benefits, material goods or other asset transactions which the person did not or could not consent to, or which were invalidated by intimidation, coercion or deception.
 - (ii) This may include exploitation, embezzlement, withholding pension or benefits or pressure exerted around wills, property or inheritance.
- (e) **Institutional Abuse**
 - (i) Institutional abuse is the mistreatment or neglect of an adult by a regime or individuals in settings which adults who may be at risk reside in or use. This can occur in any organisation, within and outside the HSC sector. Institutional abuse may occur when the routines, systems and regimes result in poor standards of care, poor practice and behaviours, inflexible regimes and rigid

routines which violate the dignity and human rights of the adults and place them at risk of harm. Institutional abuse may occur within a culture that denies, restricts or curtails privacy, dignity, choice and independence. It involves the collective failure of a service provider or an organisation to provide safe and appropriate services, and includes a failure to ensure that the necessary preventative and/or protective measures are in place.

- (f) **Neglect**
 - (i) Occurs when a person deliberately withholds, or fails to provide, appropriate and adequate care and support which is required by another adult. It may be through a lack of knowledge or awareness, or through a failure to take reasonable action given the information and facts available to them at the time.
 - (ii) It may include physical neglect to the extent that health or well-being is impaired, administering too much or too little medication, failure to provide access to appropriate health or social care, withholding the necessities of life, such as adequate nutrition, heating or clothing, or failure to intervene in situations that are dangerous to the person concerned or to others particularly when the person lacks the capacity to assess risk.
- (g) **Exploitation**
 - (i) Is the deliberate maltreatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over another person; to take advantage of another person or situation usually, but not always, for personal gain from using them as a commodity?
 - (ii) It may manifest itself in many forms including slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour, domestic violence and abuse, sexual violence and abuse, or human trafficking.

This list of types of harmful conduct is not exhaustive or listed here in any order of priority. There are other indicators which should not be ignored. It is also possible that if a person is being harmed in one way, he/ she may very well be experiencing harm in other ways.

31. Are there any other **related definitions** we need to be aware of?

There are related definitions which interface with Adult Safeguarding, each of which have their own associated adult protection processes in place.

It is important that congregations are aware of the following:

- (a) **Domestic Violence and Abuse**
 - (i) Domestic violence and abuse is threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on one person by another where they are or have been intimate partners or family members, irrespective of gender or sexual orientation.
 - (ii) Domestic violence and abuse is essentially a pattern of behaviour which is characterised by the exercise of control and the misuse of power by one person over another. It is usually frequent and persistent.
 - (iii) It can include violence by a son, daughter, mother, father, husband, wife, life partner or any other person who has a close relationship

with the victim. It occurs right across society, regardless of age, gender, race, ethnic or religious group, sexual orientation, wealth, disability or geography.

- (b) **Human Trafficking**
 - (i) Human trafficking involves the acquisition and movement of people by improper means, such as force, threat or deception, for the purposes of exploiting them.
 - (ii) It can take many forms, such as domestic servitude, forced criminality, forced labour, sexual exploitation and organ harvesting.
 - (iii) Victims of human trafficking can come from all walks of life; they can be male or female, children or adults, and they may come from migrant or indigenous communities.
- (c) **Hate Crime**
 - (i) Hate crime is any incident which constitutes a criminal offence perceived by the victim or any other person as being motivated by prejudice, discrimination or hate towards a person's actual or perceived race, religious belief, sexual orientation, disability, political opinion or gender identity.
 - (ii) Victims of domestic violence and abuse, sexual violence and abuse, human trafficking and hate crime are regarded as adults in need of protection.

32. **Adult Safeguarding Champion**

Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership requires us to have an identified Adult Safeguarding Champion in place.

The role of the Safeguarding Champion is to:

- (a) Provide information and support for congregations on adult safeguarding within the organisation.
- (b) Ensure that congregations disseminate the policy and guidelines and support implementation.
- (c) Design and deliver training.
- (d) Provide advice and support to volunteers who have concerns about the signs of harm, and ensure that it is reported.
- (e) Establish contact with the Taking Care Champion.
- (f) Establish contact with the relevant Health and Social Care Trust in respect of any safeguarding concerns.

33. **Recognising, Responding and Recording Adult Safeguarding Concerns**

Ministers, Pastoral Care Workers or volunteers who are concerned about someone who may be experiencing harm or abuse must report promptly

There are a variety of ways that you could be alerted that an adult is experiencing harm:

- (a) They may disclose to you as a Minister, Elder, Pastoral Worker or Friend.
- (b) Someone else may tell you of their concerns or something that causes you concern, following a visit or conversation.
- (c) They may show some signs of physical injury for which there does not appear to be a satisfactory or credible explanation.

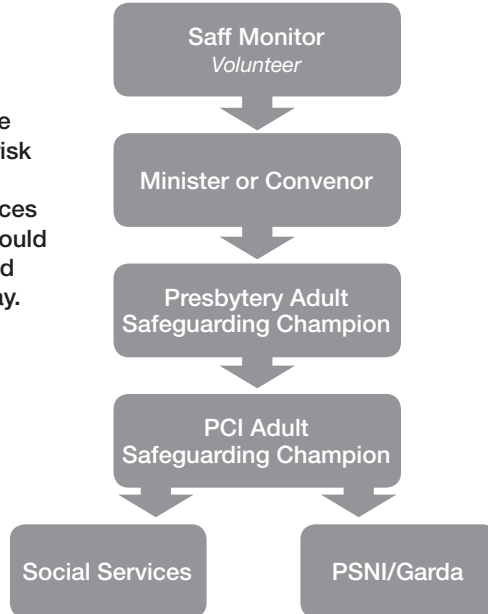
- (d) Their demeanour/behaviour may lead you to suspect abuse or neglect.
- (e) The behaviour of a person close to them makes you feel uncomfortable (this may include other members of the congregation or organisation, a volunteer, peer or family member) or through general good neighbourliness and citizenship.

Being alert to potential abuse plays a major role in ensuring that adults are safeguarded and it is important that all concerns about possible abuse are taken seriously and appropriate action is taken.

- (i) **Responding:** Staff/Volunteers who find themselves dealing with an abusive setting may well have different reactions. Some may feel anger towards the abuser; others may block it out and may even deny it has happened, while some may become withdrawn and difficult to communicate with. Therefore it is vital that staff/volunteers are supported.
- (ii) **Reporting:** Staff or volunteers who are concerned about someone who may be experiencing harm or abuse must report promptly these to the Minister of the Congregation in which they are working (or convener of vacancy if applicable). The Presbytery Adult Safeguarding Champion should then be contacted. If they are concerned that it is a safeguarding issue then the PCI Adult Safeguarding Champion should be contacted who will make a report to the police or social services if appropriate

REPORTING

If at any time an adult at risk is in danger, Social Services or Police should be contacted without delay.



24 hour Helpline +44 (0)28 9041 7235

- (iii) Recording: If a staff member/volunteer is concerned that an adult is experiencing harm, then they should keep a written record of their observations, conversations and/or action points. Any written record (hard copy or electronic) must be kept confidential.

Note: This will depend on our discussions in relation to the Safeguarding Champion and the role of the Designated Person.

34. Support for Staff

Staff/Volunteers who find themselves dealing with an abusive situation may react in different ways. Some may feel anger towards the abuser; others may block it out and may even deny it has happened; while some may become withdrawn and difficult to communicate with. Therefore it is vital that staff/volunteers are supported.

35. Confidentiality

Staff/volunteers must not breach confidentiality by discussing safeguarding cases with others inappropriately.

36. Adult Protection Services

Northern Ireland

- (a) Health and Social Care Trusts and the PSNI are the lead agencies with responsibility for adult protection.
 - (i) Each HSC Trust will have an Adult Protection Gateway Service which will receive adult protection referrals.
 - (ii) HSC Trusts will be the lead agency in terms of the co-ordination of joint Adult Protection responses.
 - (iii) Within each HSC Trust, responsibility for Adult Protection rests with the Executive Director of Social Work, and the lead profession within HSC Trusts is social work.
- (b) The PSNI will be the lead criminal investigation agency and a report should be made to the PSNI where a crime is alleged or suspected.
 - (i) A joint Protocol will guide interagency referral, consultation and information exchange and working arrangements and will provide clarity in respect of the roles of the PSNI and HSC Trusts in the delivery of the adult protection response.
 - (ii) The Joint Protocol will outline when and how other agencies will be engaged for the purpose of an adult protection investigation and protection planning.

Republic of Ireland

- (c) Health Service Executive

A Safeguarding and Protection Team (Vulnerable Persons) will be established in each Community Healthcare Organisation (CHO). The Safeguarding and Protection Team will work collaboratively with services and professionals in promoting the welfare of vulnerable persons and act as a resource to personnel and services having concerns regarding vulnerable persons.
- (d) An Garda Siochana

An Garda Siochana must be informed if it is suspected that the concern or complaint of abuse might be criminal in nature; this may become apparent at the time of disclosure or following the outcome of the preliminary assessment.

37. **Vetting**

Northern Ireland (Access NI)

- (a) Roles which require an Enhanced Disclosure Check (against the barred lists):
 - (i) Providing personal care, eg washing, toileting.
 - (ii) Assistance with general household affairs, eg paying bills or shopping on their behalf.
 - (iii) Transporting to a Health Care Appointment, eg taking an adult to and from their GP appointment on behalf of the church. Please note that if a friend takes their neighbour to a hospital appointment this would be a personal arrangement and therefore they would not need to be vetted.
- (b) Roles which require an Enhanced Disclosure Check (NOT barred lists):
 - (i) Visiting adults at risk regularly, ie every week in their own home.
 - (ii) Driving a church minibus on a regular basis where the majority of those on the bus are considered to be at risk.
 - (iii) Taking a group on an overnight stay where the majority of those on the holiday are considered to be at risk.
- (c) Roles which DO NOT require an Access NI check:
 - (i) Elders visiting their district.
 - (ii) Those delivering a hot meal to an individual (note the difference in delivering a meal and feeding the adult).
 - (ii) A friend or neighbour taking someone to hospital for an outpatient appointment.
 - (iv) Volunteers at a lunch club for older people.

Republic of Ireland (Garda Vetting)

According to The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 and 2016, "Any work or activity which is carried out by a person, a necessary and regular part of which consists mainly of the person having access to, or contact with, children or vulnerable adults" needs to be vetted. This is a legal requirement.

38. **Training**

- (a) It is recommended that all staff/volunteers within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland who are working with adults at risk whether they are in a paid position or are a volunteer should attend adult safeguarding training on a regular basis. The training will be relevant to their role in a church based setting working with adults.
- (b) Training seminars will be organised by the Council for Social Witness. This training will be based on the Volunteer Now Keeping Adults Safe programme and facilitated by those trained to deliver the programme.
- (c) Training seminars will also be provided for the Presbytery Adult Safeguarding Champions.

39. **Annual Report**

The Adult Safeguarding Champion must compile an annual Adult Safeguarding Position Report. This will include the number of referrals made to HSC Trusts and the number of adult safeguarding discussions where the decision

taken was to not refer to HSC trust. For this reason it is important that Presbytery Adult Safeguarding Champions maintain contact with the Adult Safeguarding Champion for PCI.

40. **Underpinning Principles:** All Adult Safeguarding activity must be guided by five underpinning principles:

- (a) **A Rights-Based Approach:** To promote and respect an adult's right to be safe and secure; to freedom from harm and coercion; to equality of treatment; to the protection of the law; to privacy; to confidentiality; and freedom from discrimination.
- (b) **An Empowering Approach:** To empower adults to make informed choices about their lives, to maximise their opportunities to participate in wider society, to keep themselves safe and free from harm and enabled to manage their own decisions in respect of exposure to risk.
- (c) **Person-centred Approach:** To promote and facilitate full participation of adults in all decisions affecting their lives taking full account of their views, wishes and feelings and, where appropriate, the views of others who have an interest in his or her safety and well-being.
- (d) **Consent-driven Approach:** To make a presumption that the adult has the ability to give or withhold consent; to make informed choices; to help inform choice through the provision of information, and the identification of options and alternatives; to have particular regard to the needs of individuals who require support with communication, advocacy or who lack the capacity to consent; and intervening in the life of an adult against his or her wishes only in particular circumstances, for very specific purposes and always in accordance with the law.
- (e) **Collaborative Approach:** To acknowledge that adult safeguarding will be most effective when it has the full support of the wider public and of safeguarding partners across the statutory, voluntary, community, independent and faith sectors working together and is delivered in a way where roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability are clearly defined and understood. Working in partnership and a person-centred approach will work hand-in-hand.

COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL WITNESS

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the General Assembly note the rise of the number of residents with dementia, both in the homes run by the Council for Social Witness and by other providers; call on the Governments in both jurisdictions to provide adequate funding and resources for those residents; and instruct the Councils for Social Witness and Public Affairs to pursue this matter in the ensuing year.

2. That the General Assembly approve the 'Adult Safeguarding Policy and Guidelines' (Appendix 1 of the Report of the Council for Social Witness).

3. That the General Assembly welcome the 'Who's Calling Initiative' (a scheme to prevent scams and financial abuse of the elderly) launched by the Commissioner for Older People in Northern Ireland.

4. That the General Assembly give thanks to God for the work and witness of Ard Cluan in Londonderry and York House in Portrush and seek the prayers of the Church as residents and staff relocate to Trinity House in Garvagh.
5. That the Report of the Council for Social Witness be received.

COUNCIL FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Convener: Very Rev Dr TN HAMILTON, OBE
Secretary: THE CLERK

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Council for Public Affairs met on five occasions since the 2016 General Assembly to receive reports from its Committee, Panels and Task Group; to consider responses to public consultations; and to discuss its wider strategy of engagement on issues of public significance.

2. The **State Education Committee** considers matters of state education in Northern Ireland. The Committee reports developments in relation to support for controlled schools, jointly managed church schools and educational underachievement. The report also refers to work done by the Transferor Representatives' Council (TRC), through which the Presbyterian Church in Ireland works with the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland on matters of education policy in Northern Ireland.

3. The **Peace and Reconciliation Panel** handles matters of public policy that are relevant to peacebuilding and reconciliation. The Panel reports on a submission to the Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition and plans for its future work.

4. The **Republic of Ireland Panel** is responsible for matters of public policy in the Republic of Ireland. The Panel reports on developments in education and ongoing debate about the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution of Ireland.

5. The **Dealing with the Past Project Task Group** is responsible for taking forward the project agreed by the 2016 General Assembly to record and examine Presbyterian responses to the Troubles. The Task Group reports on the significant progress it has made to date.

CONVENER'S INTRODUCTION

6. The work of the Council for Public Affairs remains extremely demanding due to the spectrum of complex public issues that call for Christian reflection and input. Upon its establishment in 2015, the Council sought to address a broad range of issues through a variety of task groups. This initial operating model served the Council well in getting its work up and running, though the need for greater prioritisation soon became clear. The Council's structure has now been streamlined into the Committee, Panels and Task Group that report below. The Council plans to establish two further panels: a Life Issues Panel which would deal with matters such as the beginning and end of life, and a Social Justice Panel to address issues such as poverty, social security and housing.

7. The Council continues to build relationships across civic society. Throughout the year the Council Convener, Public Affairs Officer, Clerk and Moderator have taken opportunities to engage with elected representatives, officials from government departments, parachurch organisations and others.

8. A strong partnership has been maintained with Union Theological College in organising events under the theme of *The Church in the Public Square* (CIPS). A series of six seminars ‘On Being Human’ were held in the autumn of 2016, exploring a range of issues from gender and sexuality to the ethics of improving human nature through applied science. All seminars were well attended and demonstrated the Church’s willingness to create space for rigorous and informed discussion of topical issues. Equipping members of the PCI and others to think Biblically about issues facing society remains a key priority of the Council and, at the time of writing, planning for future CIPS events is underway. Materials from past events (including audio and video recordings) are available at www.presbyterianireland.org/publicsquare.

9. Since the 2016 General Assembly the Council has responded to the following public consultations:

- Ecclesiastical Exemption from Listed Building Consent, Department for Communities, written submission.
- Programme for Government Framework, The Executive Office, written submission.
- Proposals for the provision of strategic support to the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland, Department for Communities, written submission.
- Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill, Committee for Communities, written and oral submissions.
- Citizens’ Assembly’s call for evidence on the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution of Ireland, written submission.
- Draft Strategic Area Plan for School Provision – ‘Providing Pathways’, written submission (through the TRC).
- Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition’s call for evidence, written submission.
- Regional Child Protection / Safeguarding Policies and Procedures, Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland, written submission.

10. Public Affairs has benefited from close working relationships with other Councils, particularly the Council for Social Witness, and is grateful to the staff of other Councils who have willingly given of their time to help draft consultation responses and assisted the Council for Public Affairs in various ways. It is hoped these relationships can be further strengthened in the year ahead.

11. As this report was being finalised, a snap General Election in the UK has been agreed by Parliament for Thursday 8 June (during General Assembly week). This adds to the political uncertainty around the talks in Northern Ireland designed to restore a devolved administration. In this highly unpredictable situation, further council resolutions will be included in a Supplementary Report to the General Assembly.

STATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

12. The State Education Committee (SEC) has met formally on three occasions since the last General Assembly, with sub-committee meetings held to expedite responses to government policy consultations. The work of the Committee has been within four broad areas:

Issues to and from the Transferor Representatives' Council (TRC)

13. The TRC continues to represent the policy interests of the PCI, the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church. Mr Andy Brown (SEC Convener), Mr Gavin Norris (Public Affairs Officer), the Rev Dr Colin McClure and Mr Uel McCrea have continued to contribute to the work of the TRC Executive throughout the year, which has included:

- TRC representation on the Education Authority;
- TRC representation on the General Teaching Council;
- The relationship between TRC and the Controlled Schools' Support Council;
- Christian ethos in education;
- Fair Employment and Treatment Order (FETO) teacher exemption;
- The Certificate in Religious Education;
- Teacher stress;
- Support for the delivery of Religious Education in schools;
- Training and support for Transferor Governors;
- Areas of mutual interest with representatives of the Catholic Trustees, including jointly managed church schools;
- Transfer to post-primary education;
- Educational disadvantage and underachievement, with particular reference to Protestant working-class boys;
- The increasing difficulties faced by teachers, principals and governors regarding the role of the Christian faith in education;
- The role of collective worship in schools.

14. In September 2016 the TRC briefed the NI Education Committee on its role and work. In December 2016 the TRC made a written submission to the consultation on the Draft Strategic Area Plan for School Provision – 'Providing Pathways', which called for a holistic approach to planning involving health, social services, youth provision etc. The submission also highlighted the need for capital investment to encourage and support imaginative solutions, and stressed the importance of small schools to many isolated and vulnerable communities.

Controlled Schools' Support Council

15. Following the 2016 report to the General Assembly, the Committee received a presentation on the Controlled Schools' Support Council from its Interim Chair, Mr Uel McCrea. This was a most useful meeting, allowing members to be better informed and providing a forum for questions to be addressed. The discussion considered the place of religion and the growth of other religions in schools; the pressure for secularisation; the success of the controlled

sector in sharing and integration; the purpose and value of ethos; and the need for congregations to engage in a real sense with education in local communities.

16. The vision of the CSSC is to support controlled schools, 'in providing high quality education for children and young people to enable them to learn, develop and grow together within the values of a non-denominational Christian environment'.

17. A support body for controlled schools was strongly advocated for over many years by the TRC and the establishment of the CSSC on 1st September 2016 ends a longstanding deficit in the education system and puts in place a body tasked with effectively meeting the needs of controlled schools. Inter alia, the CSSC will provide a representational and advocacy role for controlled schools; work with schools within the sector to develop and maintain its collective ethos; work to raise educational standards; assess ongoing provision within the sector; and participate in the planning of the schools' estate.

18. In January, the Conveners of the Council for Public Affairs and the State Education Committee wrote to all PCI ministers, urging them to use their influence with school governors in their congregations and local communities to encourage uptake of CSSC membership amongst local controlled schools, and to encourage local controlled schools to give careful and prayerful consideration to nominating a potential Director and to send representatives to the CSSC AGM.

19. The inaugural AGM took place on 8th March 2017 and was an historic event, with representatives and greetings from partner organisations joining with members to launch the new organisation. Tributes were paid to those who had worked so hard to bring the CSSC from idea to reality and this report wishes to acknowledge the particular contribution of the Clerk, the Rev Trevor Gribben, for his significant leadership in this regard. The AGM elected its Directors, ratifying the PCI nomination of the Convener of the SEC as one of the three TRC representatives on the Board. The SEC is pleased to report that since the CSSC became operational on 1 September 2016, almost 90% of controlled schools have already taken up membership.

Jointly managed church schools

20. In the past few years, interest has been expressed from some controlled and maintained schools in establishing jointly managed church schools, in which both the representatives of the Transferor Churches and the Catholic Church working together have a joint and balanced role in the management of the school. The Department of Education has been working closely with the TRC and representatives of the Catholic Trustees to consider how this might be implemented. Such a school would likely come from the amalgamation of former controlled and Catholic maintained schools, but may also be an entirely new school.

21. The ethos of the school, arrangements for worship and approach to RE must be agreed prior to any proposal being brought forward. It is the expectation that the ethos would be within a Christian framework which respects both the religious ethos of the Catholic Church and Transferor Churches and where neither ethos would predominate. The school's ethos should contribute to the wider goals of the school and be clearly defined and understood by parents, pupils, staff, governors and the local community. It should also be consistent

with a commitment to promote equality, good relations and diversity within the school and its community.

22. The TRC has set up a Jointly Managed Church Schools Working Group with representatives of the Catholic Trustees to consider what such an ethos would look like. In the course of these deliberations, each denomination has been active in the scrutiny of a Draft Ethos Statement, with the SEC holding a meeting specifically to discuss the statement and recommending the document to the Council for Public Affairs, which fully discussed and endorsed it.

Social disadvantage and educational underachievement

23. At the time of writing, planning is underway for a round-table event for education representatives of the main Protestant denominations on the issue of educational underachievement, particularly in areas of social disadvantage. The event will consider the response of the churches at TRC, denominational and local level to tackle these issues, and provide a forum to discuss best practice in terms of raising standards and highlighting the value of education in local communities.

Further comments

24. As a committee of the Council for Public Affairs, the SEC is keen to build and consolidate relationships with others working on education issues in the public square. As reported, the Convener is now a Director of the CSSC, and remains active in a variety of other bodies. He is engaging with others keen to see faith at the core of education and will be delivering a seminar on ethos and values in education at the Christianity and Culture Summer School at Stranmillis University College. The Public Affairs Officer – as the PCI’s de facto ‘Education Secretary’- has provided support to the SEC and TRC throughout the year, drafting papers and consultation responses, preparing for meetings and committee appearances, and representing both bodies at meetings with various stakeholders in education. The Convener and Committee wish to record their warmest thanks to Gavin for all of his work for and on behalf of the SEC and TRC.

25. 2016/17 has been another busy year in education: as always for pupils and students it has brought its successes and disappointments, and for parents it has brought joy and pain. For schools, governors, principals and teachers, however, it has been extremely challenging and it seems that the teaching profession has become even more beleaguered over the last twelve months.

26. It is our prayer that those involved in the educational provision for our children and young people will know God’s blessing and be assured of the support of PCI and its State Education Committee in championing their efforts. We pray that God will continue to call many Christian people into the profession and that He will impress upon them the value, honour and privilege of serving Him in the field of education.

ANDREW BROWN, Convener

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION PANEL

27. The Peace and Reconciliation Panel was established in the autumn of 2016, replacing the Task Group on Community Relations and Reconciliation. The establishment of a Panel reflects the importance placed on this area of work by Council members.

28. Few a year ago would have anticipated the political convulsions locally, nationally and internationally of recent months. The breakdown of our own political institutions after ten years of relative stability will have come as a major disappointment to many in the community. But we are a people of hope; and it was in times of turmoil and uncertainty that Jeremiah was encouraged by God “to seek the peace and prosperity of the city”.

29. And so the Panel was encouraged to see the roll out of the “Vision for Society”, drafted by the Panel’s predecessor Task Group last year and adopted by the General Assembly in 2016. The Rev Stephen Johnston, on behalf of the Good Relations Panel of the Council for Congregational Life and Witness, has led on making the Vision and associated resources available through the PCI website and, as our political leaders seek a way forward, the Panel commends these for the prayerful consideration and action by Presbyteries and local congregations.

30. The Panel has engaged with the Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition which was established following the Stormont House Agreement in 2015. The Council for Public Affairs subsequently responded to an invitation from the Commission to provide an initial submission to inform their deliberations. In addition, members of the Panel met with an MLA who was planning to bring forward a Private Members Bill on the regulation of flags.

31. The Panel acknowledges the importance of ensuring that the Christian perspective on reconciliation is promoted in the public square. The Council Convener has taken a number of opportunities in public fore to explain the scriptural understanding of reconciliation and how this relates to civic reconciliation.

32. The recent inter-party talks have highlighted a range of outstanding issues which continue to frustrate political progress. The Panel will continue to identify, prioritise and seek to develop positions on those which are viewed as most relevant for the PCI.

EDGAR JARDINE, Convener

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND PANEL

33. Though a small minority in the Republic of Ireland, Presbyterians are honoured as having had a distinctive influence by our presence and witness. As its name suggests, the Panel is responsible for addressing issues of public policy in the Republic of Ireland. It has met on two occasions since the last General Assembly. Its work has been focused on possible changes in the education system and the ongoing debate in Irish society about the future of the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution.

Education

34. The Panel is blessed to have an Education Subgroup made up of members with a professional background and/or academic interest in education.

35. Section 7(3)(c) of the Equal Status Act 2000 allows faith based schools to make preferential provision on admissions for children of their faith – i.e. where a school is oversubscribed, the Board of Management may afford a priority to children of families of a particular religious denomination in preference to others. The rationale is that if, for example, an oversubscribed Protestant school is prohibited from using religion as an admissions criterion, it would be difficult for the school to maintain a Protestant ethos among the school community or to remain, to any significant extent, a school of that religion.

36. In January 2017, the Minister for Education and Skills, Mr Richard Bruton TD, set out four possible approaches for changing the rules on school admissions to faith based schools which, if enacted, will diminish or remove the role of faith in determining admissions to oversubscribed faith based schools. The approaches outlined are:

- (a) **Catchment Area:** This would prohibit religious schools from giving preference to children of their own religion who live outside the catchment area over non-religious children or children of other faiths who live inside the catchment.
- (b) **Nearest school rule:** This would allow religious schools to give preference to a religious school only where it is that child's nearest school of that religion.
- (c) **Quota system:** This would allow a school to set a certain proportion of places for children of its own religion.
- (d) **Outright prohibition:** An outright prohibition on faith based schools using religion as a factor in admissions, which would mean that all places would be allocated based on other factors.

37. The Minister subsequently announced a consultation process to hear views from education stakeholders. Given the impact of these proposed changes for schools under Presbyterian and Protestant patronage, the Panel and its Education Subgroup felt it important to make a submission to the Department. The Subgroup drafted a response for consideration by the Panel and the Council, and this was submitted in March 2017. In formulating the response the Panel and Subgroup were mindful of the 2014 General Assembly Resolution: *That the General Assembly express thanks to those who fulfil demanding responsibilities in the oversight of the small but significant number of schools in the Republic of Ireland under Presbyterian Patronage and call upon the Government to ensure that its policy protects minority rights and enables ongoing access to, and the sustainability of, schools with a Protestant ethos.*

38. The following key points were made in the Council's submission:

- (a) As part of their witness and work in the community, Presbyterians have sought to provide a place of education for their own children and the wider community.
- (b) The idea that a School under minority patronage might be forced to abandon their policy of admitting those who belong to their own faith must be anathema in any society that wishes to respect a minority community.

- (c) The possible changes outlined do not address the major problem of an absence of capacity within some areas of high population growth.
 - (d) The Presbyterian community in the Republic of Ireland is a dispersed one, therefore educating children in a school of the desired ethos has often been costly and has required considerable sacrifice by Presbyterian families.
 - (e) To deny any pupil of any Protestant denomination access to a school specifically set up to accommodate such pupils, on the basis that it is 'fairer' to accommodate instead a pupil of the majority faith (for whom there are a wide variety of schools available already) or to a pupil (or family) of no faith is simply not acceptable.
 - (f) A 'Catchment Area' or 'Nearest School Rule' may work for some minority faith schools, but the boarding system espoused by many minority schools effectively extends their catchment area to the entire island.
 - (g) A quota system would undermine rural schools completely, and would further undermine those schools that are currently oversubscribed with students from minority faiths.
 - (h) The Department notes that change "*would also require exemptions for Gaelscoileanna and special schools.*" If such exemptions are to be justified on the basis that the very purpose of such schools is to serve the communities for which these schools are set up, then this equally applies to minority faith schools. Prioritising Protestant applications when there is over-subscription is a must for Protestant schools, as is prioritising Irish-speakers for *Gaelscoileanna*. These are not discriminations but foundational principles.
 - (i) The status quo which has existed to this point – the ability of a school of faith to grant places to those of that faith under the Education Act 1998 and the Equal Status Act – is the only way in which minority faith schools can continue to serve their communities unhindered.
39. At the time of writing it is unclear how the Minister will proceed. However, a meeting has been requested with him to follow up on the Council's response.
40. The Panel anticipates further debate in the coming months and years on issues such as patronage and the place of RE in schools. The Panel's Education Subgroup will continue to monitor developments and respond appropriately.

Eighth Amendment of the Constitution of Ireland

41. The Eighth Amendment of the Constitution of Ireland was passed in 1983. It reads:

The State acknowledges the right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal right to life of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect, and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate that right.

42. In 1992 the Supreme Court ruled, in *Attorney General v. X*, that abortion is permitted under the Constitution only where pregnancy presented 'a real and substantial risk to the life, as distinct from the health, of the mother', including where the risk was through suicide. This was enshrined in legislation

in the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act 2013. The 2013 Act defines the ‘unborn’ as existing from implantation in the womb until ‘complete emergence... from the body of the woman’. This conforms to the Irish Supreme Court judgment of Roche -v- Roche and ors [2009] IESC 82 on the beginning of pregnancy.

43. The Irish Government established a Citizens’ Assembly in 2016 to consider the possible retention, reform or repeal of the Eighth Amendment, as well as several other issues facing Irish society. The Assembly is a body comprising the Chairperson and 99 citizens, randomly selected to be broadly representative of the Irish electorate, and it will report and make recommendations on each topic to the Houses of the Oireachtas for further debate by elected representatives. A submission to the Citizens’ Assembly on the Eighth Amendment was formulated by the Panel, agreed by the Council for Public Affairs and submitted in December 2016. The Assembly is due to meet at the end of April 2017 to formulate and vote on recommendations to the Oireachtas regarding the Eighth Amendment.

44. The PCI opposed the insertion of the Eighth Amendment into the Constitution of Ireland, with the General Assembly passing the following resolution in 1982:

That the General Assembly is firmly opposed to indiscriminate abortion, but does not believe it wise to insert a clause banning abortion into the Constitution of the Irish Republic. The State’s regulation of this and other matters affecting morals should be a matter for legislation by the Dáil and the Senate, and not for definition in the Constitution.

45. A further General Assembly resolution on the matter was passed in 1983:

That the General Assembly reaffirm their resolution of last year (1982 Minutes, p.77) that they are “firmly opposed to indiscriminate abortion, but do not believe that it is wise to insert a clause banning abortion into the Constitution of the Irish Republic”. If, however, a Referendum on this subject is held, the Assembly encourage those of its members who are entitled to vote to do so in accordance with their own judgement.

46. Historically, the reformed perspective on the issue of abortion has been nuanced, and this is reflected in General Assembly resolutions of recent decades. In 1982 the General Assembly declared their ‘opposition to abortion on demand for purely social reasons, or as a means of birth control’, but recognised that there are ‘exceptional cases where medical abortion might be necessary’. The PCI has since recognised the need to allow for termination of pregnancy in extreme cases when allowing the pregnancy to proceed will threaten the life or have a catastrophic effect on the health of the mother, and has acknowledged that the law in Northern Ireland – which permits termination of pregnancy when the mother’s life or permanent or long-term health is at risk – strikes a careful and fine balance between the need to protect the life of the unborn and the need for proper care of the mother. The report of the Abortion Task Group, welcomed at last year’s General Assembly, rejected additional grounds for abortion in cases of ‘fatal fetal abnormality’ and sexual crime, albeit with modifications. In terms of the former, the report concluded that it is consistent with the position of the PCI to accept that we cannot categorically rule out abortion just on a sanctity of life principle in those cases of anencephaly where it takes the form of complete incapacity for either sentience or consciousness. In terms of sexual crime, the report concluded that steps taken to prevent implantation, where there has been

a risk of conception, also cannot be categorically ruled out on a sanctity of life principle, and that different positions on this are consistent with the PCI's position that human life begins at conception.

47. There is a lack of clarity about the legal consequences of repealing the Eighth Amendment. Some believe that the Oireachtas would become the sole judge of the circumstances in which legislation should permit abortion. Others contend that a pre-1983 position revives, whereby the unborn still have implied rights under the Constitution. Furthermore, there is a third view that a simple repeal would remove or severely limit the power of the Oireachtas to constrain the circumstances in which abortion could be prohibited.¹

48. Therefore, in formulating a submission to the Citizens' Assembly the Panel had to take cognisance of the General Assembly's position on the Eighth Amendment and the role of the Constitution in 'matters affecting morals'; the PCI's position on abortion; and legal opinion on the consequences of retaining, reforming or repealing the Eighth Amendment.

49. On the one hand, the General Assembly has resolved that matters such as abortion should not be dealt with through the Constitution. On the other hand, there exists legal opinion that a simple repeal of the Eighth Amendment would have to be interpreted as an unqualified decision to remove protection for the unborn, resulting in abortion on request – a situation that would be in contravention of the General Assembly's position. Furthermore, the Panel was conscious that the current law, shaped by the Constitution, does not allow for termination of pregnancy in some of the exceptional circumstances recognised by the PCI. The submission to the Citizens' Assembly therefore recommended that the Eighth Amendment be reformed to provide access to abortion in extreme cases, where continuation of the pregnancy threatens the life of the mother or will have a catastrophic effect on her physical or mental health, and that in such cases, the most stringent safeguards should be provided.

50. It is highly unlikely that this is the PCI's final position and submission on the issue. As indicated above, the Citizens' Assembly will make a recommendation which will then be discussed by both Houses of the Oireachtas. There is a good possibility that a question on the future of the Eighth Amendment will then be put to the people in a referendum, though at this point we do not know what that question will be. The PCI will need to review its position accordingly through the Panel and Council.

TREVOR MORROW, Convener

1 See Brian Murray, 'Legal Consequences of Retention, Repeal, or Amendment of Article 40.3.3 of the Constitution', paper produced for the Citizens' Assembly, available at www.citizensassembly.ie/en/Meetings/Brian-Murray-s-Paper.pdf

DEALING WITH THE PAST PROJECT TASK GROUP

51. The Task Group is responsible for taking forward the project agreed by the 2016 General Assembly, and is comprised of the Moderator, Clerk, Rev Tony Davidson (Convener), Very Rev Dr Norman Hamilton, Mrs Valerie Stewart, Mrs Catherine Bell, Mr Sam Pollock, the Rev Professor Bill Addeley and Mr Gavin Norris.

52. An Academic Advisory Group and Reference Group of current and former Moderators act as a sounding board for the Task Group and monitor the quality and progress of research. The Academic Advisory Group is comprised of The Rt Hon The Lord Alderdice, the Very Rev Principal Stafford Carson, Prof Ian McBride, Dr Duncan Morrow, Dr Ethel White and Dr Gillian Wylie. The Reference Group is comprised of the Very Rev Principal Stafford Carson, the Very Rev Drs Rob Craig and Trevor Morrow and the Rt Rev Dr Frank Sellar.

53. The Task Group applied successfully to the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs Reconciliation Fund and has secured the partnership of Queen's University Belfast in delivering the requirements of the project. The project is entitled 'Reconciliation through Dealing with the Past: Learning from Presbyterian Responses to the Troubles'. At the time of writing, the Task Group is working with Dr Gladys Ganiel (the lead researcher) of QUB in recruiting a research assistant. The project will be academically rigorous and conform to the associated ethical standards.

54. Approximately 100 participants will be interviewed. A letter has been sent to every active minister asking them to identify potential interviewees who were affected by events that took place during the period 1968-2000. Categories of interviewees include: ministers and their spouses; victims and survivors with their families; members of the security services and their families; personnel in emergency and health services and their spouses; politicians; former paramilitaries, some of whom may have served prison sentences; some with valuable insights who may have left the Presbyterian Church; and some "critical friends". The Task Group has also been keen to identify "quiet peacemakers" i.e. when anarchy reigned on the streets they may have kept order in schools, in government and in community and commercial life; these might include civil servants (in local or central government), business people, teachers, social workers, youth workers, local Councillors and journalists, those involved in civic life, or the arts and sport, Loyal Orders or the voluntary sector, and mediators in local disputes. The Task Group has worked with the Academic Advisory and Reference Groups in deciding the proportion from each category that will make up the approx. 100 interviewees, keeping in mind that some will fall into more than one category. The Task Group has also been mindful of the need to maintain a gender and geographical balance.

55. The Task Group would like to thank all those who are willing to help the Church in this project. It is aware of the courage and potential pain involved in remembering stories from a troubled time in our history, but is also aware of the good will and commitment of ministers to pastor those in their local congregations who are most vulnerable.

56. The project has a projected timescale of two years. It is the hope of the Task Group that the project will help to encourage a wider culture of story-telling, so that future generations would have archived a history of the Troubles which emerges out of the experience of Presbyterians in Ireland. Attentive listening should also help to discern any past shortcomings and enable the Church to be better resourced to know where to place its energies in the future.

57. The Christian's primary memory is the memory of Jesus Christ. All memories have to be filtered through his life, death and resurrection. The Project will help to assess how the Church responded to the Troubles according to its own Biblical standards, as well as contribute more effectively to wider societal discussions on dealing with the past. The Task Group prays that the project will be a source of healing to our Church and wider society, and bring glory to our Lord Jesus Christ who has called us to be peacemakers in our time and place. As a result of this project about the past the Church should be able to speak with greater understanding and confidence about our future.

TONY DAVIDSON, Convener

COUNCIL FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the General Assembly welcome the establishment of the Controlled Schools' Support Council as a dedicated advocacy and support body for Controlled Schools and strongly encourage the development and maintenance of the Controlled Sector's warm, open, Christian ethos.

2. That the General Assembly thank those who serve as Transferor Governors in schools as they manage increasing and exceptional demands on their time and energy, and the outworking of budgetary uncertainty and decreasing resources.

3. That the General Assembly recognise the need to address educational underachievement and call for the identification of public policies and practical measures that will raise standards and promote the value of education.

4. That the General Assembly:

- (a) note the four potential 'options' in relation to admissions for denominational schools put forward by the Minister for Education and Skills;
- (b) recognise the difficulties that Protestant and other minority faith schools would face if any of the four 'options' were introduced;
- (c) call again upon the Irish Government to ensure that its policy protects minority rights and enables ongoing access to, and the sustainability of, schools with a Protestant ethos.

5. That the Report of the Council for Public Affairs be received.

COUNCIL FOR TRAINING IN MINISTRY

Convener: Rev NJ McCULLOUGH
Secretary: Rev TJ STOTHERS

Executive Summary

1. The **Ministerial Studies and Development Committee reports** on the still small number of applicants for the ministry and a revised format for post ordination training.
2. The **Union Theological College Management Committee** reports on the activities of the College including an encouraging Quality Assurance Agency report and the near-completion of the stonework restoration.
3. The **Reception of Ministers and Licentiates Committee** reports on its work of assessing the applications of ministers who wish to be retained without charge.
4. The **Deaconess Training and Selection Panel** reports on the selection of three new trainee Deaconesses.
5. The **Accredited Preacher and Auxiliary Minister Panel** reports on the training of further Accredited Preachers and Auxiliary Ministers and its intention not to train any more Auxiliary ministers at this time.
6. The **Pastoral Care of Manse Families Panel** reports on its distribution of the book *Zeal without Burnout* to all active ministers.
7. The **Conciliation Panel** reports on its involvement in an increased number of cases and the production of Bible study material.

Convener's Introduction

8. It is anticipated that The Council for Training in Ministry will have met on five occasions since the 2016 General Assembly to receive reports from its Committees and Panels.
9. The Council is aware of the many demands placed upon Union Theological College and its staff. The report from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education has highlighted how well these demands are being met and the high levels of satisfaction expressed by the students is very encouraging. The Council is grateful for the hard work of all the College staff during this past year and especially for the leadership of Principal Carson.
10. The Council acknowledges the planned retirement of Professor Stephen Williams at the end of the summer. Prof Williams has served in the College for 23 years and has not only been key in shaping the theological thinking of many students but has also served as a valuable theological resource for the wider Church. The Council is grateful for his service.
11. This has been the first year in which applicants for the ministry needed to have completed the Accredited Preacher course before commencing their studies. This requirement, agreed by the 2013 General Assembly, was designed to help applicants test their gifts and provide the opportunity for better assessment

of character and competency. It did mean that applicants were known much better by the time of interview. The Council is aware however, that this is not what the Accredited Preacher Scheme was originally designed for.

12. The recent trend for smaller numbers of applicants for the ministry continues with only five applicants this year of whom the Council are recommending all five. It is likely that there will only be 17 students for the ministry in College in 2017/18, the lowest number for many years. While there remains an excess of licentiates compared to vacancies, should the trend continue there will soon be an undersupply of ministers for PCI. Ministers, elders and other leaders are encouraged to identify suitable people with potential ministry gifts, disciple them and provide them with opportunities to test and develop their gifts, so that they might explore whether God is calling them to ordination. This should also be a cause for prayer by the whole Church.

13. The reducing number of students meant that the number of congregations seeking assistants was greater than the students available and it is regrettable that some congregations will have to meet staffing needs in other ways. The Council remains deeply grateful for congregations and supervising ministers who play a vital role in the training of our licentiates and assistants.

14. The Linkage Commission's Effective Contemporary Ministry Task Group highlighted the need for specialised training to meet the demands of some of the ministry situations in Ireland. One of the ways in which the Council is addressing this is by assigning some of the students to Congregations in particular missional contexts where it is believed existing gifts and interests can be developed. Some of the costs of this will be borne by the Central Ministry Fund.

15. The Council again highlights the role of Auxiliary Ministers and commends this to the wider church. Seventeen have been trained and to date only one post has been created.

16. The Council notes the retirement of the Rev Dr Bill Parker from the Convenership of the Ministerial Studies and Development Committee. Dr Parker has led this Committee for seven years (partly under the Board of Christian Training) and has overseen significant changes in the selection and training of students for the ministry during that time.

17. The Council also notes the retirement of the Rev Stephen Moore from the Convenership of the Finance, Personnel and Administration Panel. The Panel has overseen the College stonework restoration together with significant changes in College staffing and the Council is grateful for his leadership.

STUDENTS' BURSARY FUND

The Rev Mark Russell, Students Bursary Fund agent writes:

18. The Student Bursary Fund exists to make financial provision for students for the ordained ministry and their families, during their time of study.

19. In the academic year September 2016 – June 2017 there are 26 students in receipt of grants. 25 are studying at Union and one at Westminster Theological Seminary. The cost to the fund of grants, fees and all other expenses for this period will be £397,000. This is being met through offerings at services of Licensing, of Ordination and Installations of Ministers and Elders and through personal and

congregational donations as well as congregational assessment. Thanks are due to all members of the church who generously support the Students Bursary Fund.

20. All those who have responsibility for planning a service of Licensing, of Ordination and Installation are asked to ensure that full use is made of the Students Bursary Fund literature (available from reception in Assembly Buildings), especially the Gift Aid envelope. Experience has shown that where literature is handed out at an earlier service, those attending the special service are more likely to make use of the Gift Aid scheme. It would be appreciated if any unused literature could be returned to Assembly Buildings following the service.

21. *The Rev Nigel McCullough writes:*

The Council notes the intention of Rev Mark Russell to step back from the role of Students' Bursary Fund agent at the end of June 2017 after serving for almost three years. The Council is very grateful for careful and approachable way in which he has carried out this work and wishes him well in expanding congregational responsibilities. The Rev Adrian Moffett will take over as Students Bursary Fund Agent from July.

MINISTERIAL STUDIES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

22. The Committee on Ministerial Studies and Development continues to oversee the selection process and course requirements for students for ordained ministry, the training of licentiates, the post-ordination programme for those just ordained, in-service training for ministers and pre-retirement courses for ministers.

23. The Dean of Ministerial Studies and Development, the Rev Dr David Allen, acts as Secretary to the Committee, advises prospective candidates and works with students in training according to the Regulations of the General Assembly.

24. In the academic year 2016-2017 there were 27 students under the care of Presbyteries, as listed in the appended Schedule (Appendix 1). In addition, two Deaconesses are presently at the probationary stage of their training.

MINISTERIAL STUDIES

Ministry Applicant Recruitment Day

25. In its 2014 General Assembly Report, the Committee reported that it had discussed capping student numbers because of the high numbers of applicants for ordained ministry (Reports 2014, page 207). Three years later the Committee is planning a Ministry Applicant Recruitment Day because of the sharp downturn in applicant numbers. History shows that such peaks and troughs are not uncommon but a long term reduction in applicant numbers could lead to significant problems. The Committee therefore believes that a recruitment day is a wise course of action, but is also very aware that the prayers of God's people about this important matter are essential.

Ministry Application Information and Consultation Day

26. A Ministry Application Information and Consultation Day was held on 9th January, 2017. The Panels had opportunity to have initial conversations with the applicants and also meet with the vocational consultants from HealthLink360 to get their feedback from interviews with the applicants. This was the first year that the vocational consultant was involved at this earlier stage in the application process and it proved to be most helpful in identifying issues to be explored with the applicants at formal interviews in April. In addition, the applicants had seminars on *Called and Qualified* (by Principal Carson), *Bible Reading and Journaling* (by Prof Gibson), and *Leadership* (by Rev James Hyndman).

Interviews

27. The interviews of five candidates were held in Union Theological College on Monday 10th April and Tuesday 11th April 2017. The Interviewing Panels comprised: Ministers – Amanda Best, Robin Brown, Karen Campbell, Daryl Edwards, Andrew Faulkner, David Leach, Niall Lockhart, George McClelland, Dr Ivan Patterson; Elder - Mr Joe Campbell. The Rev Nigel McCullough acted as Chairman, the Rev Dr Bill Parker as Secretary, and the Rev Dr David Allen as DMSD. The Rev Jim Stothers, Secretary to the Council, was also present.

28. Having completed the interviewing process, all five candidates are being nominated to the General Assembly by the Council.

Mentoring of Applicants and Students

29. The current psychological tests for applicants, and on occasion students, often highlight important character and behavioural issues. This has led the Committee to explore the feasibility of setting in place a mentoring programme for each student during the college years.

Ministry Student Placements

30. Beginning with the academic year 2017-2018, Queen's University, Belfast 2nd Semester examinations will be completed by late April. This means that 1st Year Ministry students could begin a summer assistantship in May and conclude it in September. In light of a longer summer assistantship, the part-time winter placement could be removed to allow an uninterrupted focus on academic studies. The Committee believes that such arrangements would present opportunities to enhance, improve and strengthen not only ministry formation initiatives for ministry students, but the academic procedure as well. The Committee *agreed* that this option should be explored positively.

Biblical Languages

31. In the academic year 2010-2011 the Biblical languages curriculum was revised and has continued to be monitored and adjusted. As reported at last year's General Assembly the Committee agreed that there would be a full formal review of the Introduction to Biblical languages Course-Unit in the academic year 2016-2017 and this is being done with the goal of equipping Ministry students to use the original languages appropriately and effectively.

Supervising Ministers

32. A training and orientation day for Supervising Ministers was held in the Training and Resource Centre at Union Theological College on 5th October 2016. Thirteen ministers attended. The Committee agreed that, in light of the encouraging Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education findings, there is a need for more rigorous training for Supervising Ministers, plus a shift to a more evidence-based assessment by Supervising Ministers regarding assistants. The Committee also agreed that speaking to Kirk Sessions as well as to Supervising Ministers about expectations regarding the training of assistants would be helpful.

Remuneration of Summer Assistants

33. The remuneration of Summer Assistants was increased from £260 per week to £300 per week, the first increase since 2014.

PTFI Graduation and Timing of Licensing

34. The current timing of the Presbyterian Theological Faculty, Ireland (PTFI) graduation and services of licensing makes the task of marking assessments and approving students extremely difficult to complete within the required time-frame and fails to meet proper academic rigour. The Committee agreed that this was an unsatisfactory situation and that the matter should be raised with PTFI. PTFI since has indicated that it intends to move the graduation service to the end of June from 2018 onwards. As this would have implications for the awarding of an honorary degree to an incoming Moderator, the Moderator's Advisory Committee was informed of PTFI's intention. The Committee is aware that granting Certificates for Licensing at the end of June will also have implications for when services of licencing may take place.

MINISTERIAL DEVELOPMENT**Post-Ordination Training**

35. The 2016 General Assembly instructed the Council to '...develop a sustainable residential format with a clear emphasis on both training and spiritual renewal for post-ordinands in their first five years of ministry' (Minutes, p36, resolution 5). At the time of writing, a joint course for all post-ordinands, using Assembly Buildings and Jury's Hotel is arranged for 9th-11th May, 2017. The programme is to be led by the Rev Dr Mark Welsh, speaking on missiology, and the Rev Dr Martyn Cowan and the Rev Dave Clawson, addressing the subject of worship. The middle day of the training conference is open to other Ministers. These arrangements allow for the use of the Church's facilities, reasonably priced accommodation to cater for all five year-groups, and a church-wide ministry day for interested parties.

Sabbaticals and In-Service Training

36. The Committee has found it necessary to clarify the 2016 guidelines concerning the sabbatical and in-service training scheme with regards to the issue of claiming expenses. This has been by way of reminding those who apply for the scheme of the relevant section of the Committee's report to the 2011 General

Assembly: As a consequence of an increasing array of scenarios concerning applications for sabbatical leave and In-Service training, the Committee has sought to bring a greater degree of clarity concerning the claiming of expenses. While it is acknowledged that Ministers may need to find 'space' to engage in study or reflection away from the manse, thus incurring travel costs and rental charges, it was felt that travel outside Ireland or the UK should be facilitated only if a Minister genuinely needs to visit a specific location or engage in a particular context for the actual purpose of that sabbatical or In-Service training. The Committee agreed that this is an appropriate, and indeed necessary, restriction on claims for travel and/or accommodation. (Reports, 2011, p. 203.)

Pre-Retirement Residential

37. This annual residential seeks to equip ordained Ministers and their spouses as they anticipate the transition from full-time ministry to retirement. It is available from the year in which the Minister reaches the age of 63. A residential was held from 15th-17th November, 2016 with 12 Ministers and their spouses attending. The Committee wishes to express its appreciation to the facilitators, the Very Reverend Dr David and Mrs Hazel Clarke and the Rev Bill and Mrs Margaret Sanderson. Another residential is planned for 2017.

WJM PARKER, Convener

UNION THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

38. The Committee welcomed the appointments last summer of Dr Zachary Cole and Dr Martyn Cowan to the academic staff and is delighted with their contribution to Biblical Studies and Historical Theology respectively, and to the life and witness of the College in general. As Dr Cowan was a licentiate of our Church, the Council issued a Call and he was ordained and inducted as Lecturer in Biblical Studies on 9th December, 2016.

39. The major triennial Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education visit took place in October. The report indicated that the College continues to meet UK expectations in terms of academic standards and student learning opportunities, alongside good practice reflected in 'the culture of supporting students and the meticulous care taken to foster personal growth and academic attainment' and 'the strong sense of community'. The Financial Sustainability, Management and Governance element of the report required a resolution to be passed by the General Council that it will ensure, on an on-going basis, that UTC will receive sufficient funding to guarantee that all students who enrol have the opportunity to finish their courses.

40. In line with its overall review of academic provision, Queen's University commissioned a review of Theology by an external panel. While concerns remain about some aspects of the report, both the Institute of Theology and the Faculty have focused on its positive elements, e.g., the opportunity to promote theology to a wider student base (through offering a module that would be available to all students in Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences such as 'Religion, Faith

and Society: perspective on belief'), and the opportunity to re-invigorate the BD programme by reconstructing it under the 3 areas of Biblical Studies and Biblical Languages, Systematic Theology and Church History, and Ministerial Praxis.

41. Discussions continue around the review of Presbyterian Theological Faculty, Ireland courses to bring them into line with the Framework for Higher Education.

42. During the current academic year there are 25 ministry students at Union, 5 in first year, 7 in second year and 13 in third year. There is a total of 157 Queen's undergraduate students studying theology at Union (spread across three years) and 30 Queen's postgraduate students. Concern was expressed again over the low number of applicants for the Ministry.

43. A series of seminars on 'Being Human' was held in the College in autumn 2016 under the umbrella of 'The Church in the Public Square', drawing an average attendance of well over 100 each evening. A two-day Luther Conference to mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation was held in Queen's Elmwood Hall at the beginning of February, and again was well supported. The lectures at both events were of a high standard and appreciation was expressed by many who attended.

44. During the academic year 2016/17, Prof Laurence Kirkpatrick was on sabbatical leave during the 1st semester and Prof Drew Gibson during the 2nd semester. Prof Stephen Williams has given notice of his intention to retire at the end of the summer. Steps were taken to draw up Job Description and Personnel Specification for Professor of Systematic Theology and to advertise the position. An able academic and an insightful theologian, Prof Williams has served both the College and the wider church with distinction and Christian integrity for 23 years.

45. A high turnover of administrative staff combined with continuing heavy workload meant a challenging year for College administration. Further permanent appointments were put on hold pending the outcome of inquiries into the turnover of staff.

46. With two additional members of academic staff requiring space, the administration area was moved downstairs to former classrooms 1 and 2 which were converted accordingly. This enabled all academic staff to be located together on the first floor, with all administrative staff located together on the ground floor. An associated reception desk adjacent to the front door has proved beneficial to visitors and regular users alike.

47. A new disabled WC facility was completed at a cost of c.£55,000. Since no budget was in place for this unexpected expenditure, permission was sought from the Priorities Reference Panel which agreed that permission be granted, but that it be funded either out of College reserves or from the Magee Fund (which is under the control of the College Management Committee). In view of the possibility of other students in the future with disability, it was agreed to obtain a costed survey of the College re accessibility compliance.

Stonework Restoration

48. The stonework project began on 20 January 2014. Phase 1 was completed on 1 July 2015, Phase 2A on 15 April 2016, and, at the time of writing, Phase 2B is due to be finished by the end of April 2017, with the temporary gravel

parking areas removed and the grass restored. While this greatly improves the visual appearance of the College, it significantly reduces the availability of car parking for staff and visitors.

49. During Phase 2B dust penetration of the rooms from stone cutting was a serious problem, caused significant inconvenience to staff and required a lot of remedial work by the IT Department. The Committee is grateful to all staff for their patience and forbearance particularly in recent months, and also for their co-operation over the course of the entire project.

50. A summary of stonework restoration costs is as follows.

- Total estimated final cost: £2,188,873 plus overdraft interest £34,178
- Total grants: £983,610 (NIEA £403,610, Trustees Discretionary Fund £580,000)
- Net estimated final cost: £1,239,411

51. It should be noted that the entire project has been funded without any appeal to the church at large or any assessment on congregational funds. The Committee remains very grateful for the grants made available, but points out that the remaining balance has had to be funded by dipping substantially into its own reserves - a combination of the sale of shares in the General Investment Fund (GIF) and the Magee Fund. In addition, a long-standing overdraft on the Training Resource Centre will also be eliminated through the sale of shares in the GIF. This means that in the future the College will not be able to rely on the same level of investment income to balance its accounts, but will be dependent on the United Appeal to cover the short-fall through an increased annual grant.

HA DUNLOP, Convener

RECEPTION OF MINISTERS AND LICENTIATES COMMITTEE

52. The Committee met four times since the 2016 General Assembly.

53. Seven people contacted the Committee during the year requesting information on transferring ministry to PCI. Two people have filled in the enquiry form and begun the process of formal application after completing the exploration week in PCI.

54. The Rev. Gunther Andrich has begun his two-year assessed assistantship at Elmwood in Lisburn alongside further studies in Union College.

56. One of the Committee's responsibilities is to deal with requests from Presbyteries for the retention of the status licentiates and ministers without charge. The Code, Par 219 (3)(a) states:

“On accepting a full-time appointment which is not under the jurisdiction of the Assembly, a licentiate or minister without charge shall be deemed to have resigned from his position in the Church...”

57. The General Council at its October 216 meeting recommended as follows to the Council for Training in Ministry: “that a Minister without Charge who is in a “full-time appointment which is not under the jurisdiction of the Assembly” be deemed to have resigned from his/her position in PCI unless there are exceptional reasons to act otherwise.” (original emphases)

58. Accordingly, the Committee adopted a more rigorous approach than previously, and required Presbyteries to give exceptional reasons for retention in their annual reports. Before discussing specific cases, the Committee agreed that a licentiate or minister would normally be retained if they meet any of the following criteria:

- (a) they are retired and retain a communicant membership of a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.
- (b) they have moved into 'without charge' status since the last Presbytery report.
- (c) they are working for a para-church organisation or in a similar form of service to the wider church.

In addition, the General Council had also recommended to the Council for Training in Ministry that if any licentiate is continuing actively to seek a call, that will qualify as an exceptional reason to retain him or her. As well as applying this as a criterion for licentiates without charge, the Committee factored it into consideration of the retention of ministers without charge.

59. A list of recommendations is included in Appendix 2.

60. The Committee is grateful for the way in which Presbyteries have thoughtfully and conscientiously dealt with applications and encourages this to be maintained in the years to come.

61. The Rev Jared Stephens applied to be received from the United States as a Transferring Minister in 2015. It is with great regret that his assistantship was terminated earlier this year after failing to satisfy the Committee of his ability to carry out a successful ministry in PCI.

62. Following the removal of some paragraphs from the Code at the time of the implementation of the new structures in 2014, the Committee is aware that there is a need to have a more fully defined process for receiving Transferring Ministers. Operating principles have been drawn up and will be used over the coming year. It is intended to refine these in the light of experience and present them for approval to the 2018 General Assembly. In the meantime an overture is submitted to make clear the necessity for a Transferring Minister to complete successfully any necessary course of study and/or assistantship before eligibility can be declared.

63. Code Par 190(2)(a) states that a vacant congregation may 'be supplied only by ministers, licentiates, accepted students for the ministry, accredited preachers or elders of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland or by ministers of sister Churches having regular arrangements for ministerial eligibility in this Church.' This last category is now anachronistic. An overture is submitted to enable the Committee to declare ministers of other churches eligible to so supply on a case by case basis, paralleling what already happens with those employed as temporary assistants under Code Par 81(3).

A FAULKNER, Convener

RECOGNISED MINISTRIES

The Rev Dr WJP Bailie, Mission Africa, writes:

64. Mission Africa (The Qua Iboe Fellowship) is one of Ireland's oldest mission agencies. In 2017 we celebrate the 130th anniversary of the founding

of the Mission by Samuel Bill, an Irish Presbyterian from East Belfast. His faithful service in Nigeria led to the establishment of a denomination – The United Evangelical Church (formerly Qua Iboe Church) – that now has some 1700 congregations, 1300 pastors and ministers and a membership of in excess of one million.

65. The mission concentrates on three areas of ministry: 1) evangelism and Church planting; 2) the strengthening of existing Church bodies through theological education; 3) medical and compassionate ministry, including a child sponsorship programme. These ministries are carried out in partnership with various evangelical African denominations, and often with like-minded western mission agencies. At the centre of all that we do is a clear commitment to making known the Gospel of Christ.

66. The mission continues its work against a background of numerous challenges, particularly the scarcity of financial and personnel resources. Nevertheless, we continue to send out full time missionaries. We continue to operate a short-term programme of teams and medium term placements. We also continue to operate branches in Scotland and England. Mission Africa is a member of Global Connections (Evangelical Missionary Alliance) and Mission Agencies Partnership. I am particularly pleased to report a close working relationship with the Council for Global Mission.

67. As Chief Executive I have responsibility for strategic planning; pastoral care of Missionaries; administration of personnel and finance; partner relations with a variety of Churches and agencies, and I am particularly involved in promoting theological education in Africa.

68. I am also grateful to be able to record that my status as a Minister in recognised service permits me to play an active role within my Presbytery (Ards) and in the Council for Training in Ministry. I am particularly glad to serve the Church through part-time teaching at Union Theological College.

The Rev Dr Ruth Patterson, Restoration Ministries, writes:

69. This past year has seen my involvement in many conferences, retreats, speaking engagements, as well as spiritual direction and prayer ministry. As an ecumenical canon in St Anne's Cathedral I attend the chapter meetings and various services and it is my privilege to preach once a year.

70. As part of the Presbytery of South Belfast, I value the prayerful support of fellow clergy and elders and also appreciate the sense of community with my sisters in ministry.

71. Faith and Friendship, an outreach branch of Restoration Ministries, celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. Since 1997, in a quiet but effective way, in six groups across the country, it has provided an opportunity for people to meet together on a regular basis to share their faith in an atmosphere of friendship. Understanding, trust and respect have been nurtured over the years as we have met to share and pray. Faith and Friendship provides an atmosphere that is grounded in faith, expressed in friendship and nurtured by the Spirit.

72. The International Federation Assembly of L'Arche, the movement founded by Jean Vanier, is taking place this year (June 2017) in Queen's University, Belfast. The mission of L'Arche is to make known the gifts of people with learning disabilities, working together towards a more human society. Over

the last eighteen months of planning, Restoration Ministries has been involved in offering background support and, as one of the four international church representatives, I will be speaking and leading some of the worship at this event.

DEACONESS SELECTION AND TRAINING PANEL

73. The Panel continues to grow into its role as it selects and trains deaconesses and oversees them during training.

74. A restructuring of PW required that Mrs Charlotte Stevenson would no longer continue as secretary to the Panel and grateful thanks must be expressed to her for her excellent service. Mrs Pauline Kennedy (Women's Ministry and PW Development Officer) was welcomed to the Panel to bring the perspective of PW.

75. The oversight of Deaconesses completing their training continues. On the completion of her second year of study Miss Rachel Cubitt began her Probationary Year on 1st June, 2016 in the congregation of Newmills. Having completed her studies on 31st December, 2016 Mrs Heidi England began her Probationary Year from 1st January 2017 and continues to serve in the congregations of Anahilt and Drumlough. They become eligible to receive a call on 1st September 2017 and 1st January 2018 respectively.

76. The request of the Council for Mission in Ireland to select three new Trainee Deaconesses for training has been concluded. Six short-listed applicants were interviewed on 4th April 2017. The Panel was impressed with the calibre of all six applicants. On the recommendation of the Panel, the following were accepted by the Council for Training in Ministry as candidates for the office of Deaconess under the care of Presbytery, as per the Code Par 303(4)(c):

Mrs Paula Burrows;

Mrs Louise Davidson;

Mrs Sylvia Santos-Bryce.

They will begin their studies at Union Theological College in September 2017.

77. In consultation with the Faculty at Union Theological College the Course to be completed by Trainee Deaconesses has been significantly redesigned. Thanks must be expressed to Principal Carson and the College Faculty for the careful thought and planning that has been given to these changes.

78. Consideration is being given to the academic and financial implications of training changing from two years of full-time College study plus a Probationary Year, to one year full-time at College plus two years of placements and part-time study.

RL BROWN, Convener

ACCREDITED PREACHER AND AUXILIARY MINISTRY PANEL

79. The Panel handles all aspects of the selection, training and ongoing development of the Accredited Preacher Scheme and the Auxiliary Ministry Scheme.

80. There are 7 Auxiliary Ministry trainees who have completed their classroom training course in 2016/17 and are currently completing their written assignments. Their preaching and mentoring phases are also in progress.

81. Due to the lack of Auxiliary Ministry posts being created, the Panel is not planning a 2018 course, but this situation is being kept under review for the following year. Publicity to highlight the benefits of the scheme is ongoing.

82. The Accredited Preacher Scheme continues with 24 candidates having been interviewed and approved by the Council. They will attend the APS intensive course in July 2017 and begin mentoring after that.

O McAULEY, Convener

PASTORAL CARE OF MANSE FAMILIES PANEL

83. An annual meeting with Licentiates has now become a regular part of the Panel's work. This usefully provides insight for Licentiates into some of the practicalities of Manse life, what can be expected as they transition into ordained ministry and what this will mean for them and their families.

84. In December 2016, following the Panel's recommendation, the book 'Zeal without Burnout' by Christopher Ash was given to all active Ministers. The Panel is grateful to the support given by The Moderator, Dr Sellar, in the accompanying letter. The book acknowledges that each person is different (at various stages of ministry and with many complex issues going on in our home and work circumstances). It was given as an encouragement and a help to those in Ministry to maintain zeal without giving up.

85. At the February meeting of the Panel the Moderator Dr Sellar and his wife Claire shared some of their observations from visiting many Manses during the year of office. The lack of someone to talk with was evident. The growing culture of individualism rolls over into church life manifesting itself in ministers and congregations becoming more congregational than Presbyterian – removing themselves from the support they need to maintain a healthy and fruitful ministry. Ministers do not always feel safe enough to be open about how they are feeling, or to be cared for by other Presbyters.

86. The Panel realises that there is a need to provide adequate Pastoral Care for Ministers and Manse Families but that there is no one model of care that fits all. However the Panel feels that the present situation does not meet the need. Too many Ministers and their families are 'falling through the net' and the Panel continues to look at ways in which this situation can be addressed.

G FARQUHAR, Convener

CONCILIATION PANEL

87. The Conciliation Service has been involved with a slightly increased number of cases this year. The Panel continues to work to raise awareness of the support which the Service can offer at congregational and Presbytery levels. Twice a year, update training is run for conciliators to ensure that they are equipped for this sensitive work.

88. Conciliation Service members also have a training role. The purpose of this is to support the development of skills and procedures around handling conflict well and to provide information about the Service itself. Conciliators have delivered a variety of courses to Kirk Sessions and Presbyteries over the year. Two days of training were also provided for licentiates.

89. In addition to this, four Bible studies have been developed, one linking to each of the main courses. These have been gathered under the heading, "Maintaining Healthy Congregations", and are available on the PCI website. They can be used by any congregational group but may be most useful where a Kirk Session or other leaders have participated in a full training course and want to share some of the learning more widely in the congregation.

M POTTER, Convener

COUNCIL FOR TRAINING IN MINISTRY

APPENDIX 1

SCHEDULE OF STUDENTS

ARDS	David Morrison	Union
	Richard Tregaskis	Union
ARMAGH	John Graham	Union
BALLYMENA	James Porter	Union
	Chris Wilson	Union
NORTH BELFAST	Philip Houston	Union
	Gareth Keaveney	Union
SOUTH BELFAST	Andre Alves-Areias	Union
	Seth Wright	Union
EAST BELFAST	Sam Bostock	Union
	Andy Downey	Union
	Ben Johnston	WTS
	Steve Kennedy	Union
COLERAINE AND LIMAVADY	John Torrens	Union
DERRY AND DONEGAL	Robert McFaul	Union
	Jonny McKane	Union

DOWN	Peter Burke	Union
	Michael McCormick	Union
DROMORE	Robin Aicken	Union
	Jamie Maguire	Union
	Philip Poots	Union
DUBLIN AND MUNSTER	John Brogan	Union
	David Curran	Union
	Kevin Hargaden	-
NEWRY	David Bingham	Union
	Campbell Mulvenny	Union
ROUTE	Richard Morrison	Union

COUNCIL FOR TRAINING IN MINISTRY

APPENDIX 2

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING LICENTIATES AND MINISTERS WITHOUT CHARGE

Presbyteries have sought authorisation for the retention of the following as recognised licentiates or ministers without charge under Code Par 219(3)(c) (i), and the Council for Training in Ministry makes recommendation as detailed.

Ards

Rev Dr SI Dennis to be retained as Minister without charge
 Rev Simon Henning 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)
 Mr KJ Ward to be retained as Licentiate without charge

Armagh

Rev Dr Michael McClenaghan to be retained as Minister without charge
 Rev JWP McConnell to be retained as Minister without charge

Ballymena

Mr SW Orr to be retained as Licentiate without charge

North Belfast

Rev LE Carroll to be retained a Minister without charge
 Rev JSB Drennan to be retained as Minister without charge (retired)
 Rev Dr LH Eagleson to be retained as Minister without charge
 Mr David McCarthy, to be retained as Licentiate without charge

Rev CI McKnight to be retained as Minister without charge (retired)
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

South Belfast

Rev CH Deering to be retained as Minister without charge
Rev JD Maxwell to be retained as Minister without charge
Rev JA Peacock, to be retained as Minister without charge

East Belfast

Rev PP Campbell to be retained as Minister without charge
Rev WJ Harshaw to be retained as Minister without charge
Rev Dr DJ Montgomery to be retained as Minister without charge
Rev BJ Walker to be retained as Minister without charge

Carrickfergus

Mr CMS Barron to be retained as Licentiate without charge
Rev RJ Gilkinson to be retained as Minister without charge

Derry and Donegal

Rev RA Mulholland not to be retained as Minister without charge
Rev KG Patterson to be retained as Minister without charge
Rev JC Teeney to be retained as Minister without charge

Down

Rev CG Anderson to be retained as Minister without charge
Rev Samuel Armstrong to be retained as Minister without charge (retired)
Rev RN Stewart to be retained as Minister without charge (retired)
Rev GR Stockdale to be retained as Minister without charge

Dromore

Rev WJ Todd to be retained as Minister without charge

Iveagh

Rev EG McAuley to be retained as Minister without charge (retired)

Monaghan

Rev DJM Boyle to be retained as Minister without charge

Newry

Rev BAH Wilson to be retained as Minister without charge

Omagh

Rev JA Gordon to be retained as Minister without charge

Route

Rev Dr Victor Dobbin to be retained as Minister without charge (retired)

Templepatrick

Rev Dr WJM Parker, to be retained as Minister without charge

Tyrone

Rev WI Ferris, to be retained as Minister without charge.

NOTE: Since last year the following are no longer recorded as Licentiates or Ministers without charge:

DECEASED**Coleraine and Limavady**

Rev JD Mark

Route

Rev William Brown

ORDAINED

East Belfast (transferred to **Armagh** after last General Assembly as Licentiate without charge)

Dr Martyn Cowan

NO REQUEST TO RETAIN RECEIVED FROM THEIR PRESBYTERY**Ards**

Mr Edward Kirwan

South Belfast

Rev KA Drury

East Belfast

Rev DR Baker, Messrs SE Cowan and Paul Orr

Newry

Rev DB Murphy

Tyrone

Mr JA Dunn

COUNCIL FOR TRAINING IN MINISTRY

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the General Assembly express their appreciation of Professor Stephen Williams for his work as Professor of Systematic Theology and wish him a long and happy retirement.

2. That the following candidates, their nominations having been sustained by the Council for Training in Ministry, be accepted as students for the Ordained Ministry, and placed under the care of their Presbyteries:

Name	Congregation	Presbytery
Philip Boyd	Bloomfield	East Belfast
Richard Hill	Richhill	Armagh
John McCracken	Abbey Monkstown	North Belfast
James O'Neill	Ballyrashane	Coleraine and Limavady
Mark Rodgers	Wellington	Ballymena

3. That the General Assembly encourages members of the Church to pray concerning applications for the ordained ministry.

4. That the General Assembly notes the intention of the Presbyterian Theological Faculty, Ireland, to move its Graduation Service to the end of June from 2018.

5. That the recommendations concerning those whose retention as Licentiates and Ministers without charge has been sought by Presbyteries be adopted.

CONSOLIDATED RESOLUTION

6. (a) That the assessment for the Ministerial Development Programme be set to raise £100,000.

(b) That the assessment for the Students' Bursary Fund be set to raise £380,000.

7. That the Report of the Council for Training in Ministry be received.

COUNCIL FOR GLOBAL MISSION

Convener: Rev DR S E HUGHES

Secretary: Rev W S MARRS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Council for Global Mission (CGM) is tasked with enabling the co-ordination and delivery of global mission as determined by the General Assembly, and especially where it is beyond the ability of the local congregation and not being handled by other mission councils, partners or agencies. The Council provides a threshold or bridge between denominational life and its global context, not least the mission of PCI's partners around the world.

2. The Council's Assembly Committees, Panels and Task Groups take forward their work creatively, with the faithful and able support of the Mission Department staff team.

3. PCI Fit for Purpose theme 2016/2017 was "A Community of Global Concern." The Council worked closely with the Council for Congregational Life and Witness as they addressed this theme for 2016/17, seeking to encourage congregations to recapture new vision for God's mission globally. A number of events highlighted in this report have taken place throughout the past year and global mission resources been made available with the aim of the wider church being more fully envisioned, equipped and engaged for global mission, not least through the much valued support of the United Appeal which makes so much of this work possible.

4. Looking back on the past year the Council's attention has been focused on a number of areas:

- (a) Outreach Ministries have been considering more fully the challenge of building teams to sustain church-planting initiatives whilst endeavouring to keep the local church well informed about the Council's outreach work in its different forms.
- (b) Initiatives in Leadership Development meant that Leaders in Training from Kenya, Pakistan and Hungary have been practically and prayerfully supported in their studies in the UK, together with many other Leaders in Training engaged in studies in their home or a neighbouring country. A day conference posed the question of those who come from overseas to live and study in Ireland, "How do others see us?"
- (c) A wide range of global concerns are being addressed, not least the situation in the Middle East where PCI's attention was drawn through a conference, run in conjunction with the Bible Society entitled "Hope Unexpected!". Tackling issues of persecution, migration, climate change and how PCI relates to other world faiths are very much in focus.
- (d) Generous support for world development through the 2016 Appeal 'Reclaiming: Hope' that focussed attention on issues of global poverty

and the impact of climate change. PCI members showed their concern and support in the way they responded to the Moderator's Appeal for emergency relief for drought stricken countries in East Africa.

- (e) Underlying issues in relation to the sending of **mission personnel**, reviewing and developing **partnerships**, setting **priorities** and resourcing the work through **staffing** and **finance** are never far from the Council's agenda.

5. The Council for Global Mission met on 11 October 2016 and 15 March 2017 and reports to the General Assembly on the work of its Committees, Panels and Task Groups as follows:

Outreach Ministries Committee

Par 6 to 11

Main Issues: Resourcing church-planting and evangelism; informing the church at home.

Leadership Development Committee

Par 12 to 23

Main Issues: Exploring partnership opportunities; Supporting Leaders in Training; encouraging vision for global mission amongst local church leaders.

Global Concerns Committee

Par 24 to 51

Main Issues: Islam; Syrian conflict; Refugee crisis; Environment.

World Development Committee

Par 52 to 64

Main Issues: World Development Appeal; Moderator's Special Appeal (Nepal).

Business and Finance Panel

Par 65 to 70

Main Issues: Finance; Staffing; Overseas Visits.

Personnel Panel

Par 71 to 83

Main Issues: Memorial Minutes; Appreciations; Call to missionary service; Member Care Development.

Grants and Projects Panel

Par 84 to 86

Main Issues: Distribution of grants to partner churches and organisations.

Persecuted Church Task Group

Par 87 to 102

Main Issues: Standing with and learning from persecuted Christians

Principles of Partnership Task Group

Par 103

Main Issues: The principles by which PCI engages in global mission partnerships

Vision Building Task Group

Par 104

Main Issues: Establishing Council for Global Mission priorities

OUTREACH MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

6. A prayer for mission opportunity and advance: “Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, ‘Oh, that you would bless me indeed and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I may be free from pain.’ And God granted his request.” 1 Chronicles 4:10. Jabez’ prayer is a template to pray for global mission; for opportunities and growth and for God’s presence and protection for PCI’s mission personnel.

7. **Church Planting and Evangelism Initiatives:** In sharing some reflections from his time on sabbatical in Porto, Portugal, Rev. Robert Bell expressed that what he found there was mission on the front-lines. Portugal is an incredibly difficult place for evangelism and there is virtually no support network in the area for PCI’s mission personnel. Church plants in this context are small and often perceived to be a cult, making even those who might be interested wary of joining. Working alone, mission personnel can feel isolated and lonely; while there can also be greater effectiveness working together as a team preferably made up of both expatriates and nationals.

8. The Council noted that James and Heather Cochrane began church-planting in Porto as part of a team ministry, in collaboration with the Christian Presbyterian Church of Portugal and European Christian Mission. Now that the mission family from European Christian Mission have returned to their home in Australia, it is absolutely crucial that the team be strengthened. In order to continue to develop the church planting initiative in Porto, the Council agreed to commit whatever resources are required to sustain an adequate team in that context, trusting that God would provide the funding required to continue this work.

9. Many of the comments made about the challenge of church planting in Portugal apply to much of Southern Europe. There will also be implications for Steve Anderson and the outreach work in Torre del Mar. This outreach among local Spanish people and expatriates continues to progress slowly but steadily, and would benefit greatly from a team approach.

10. Turning to church planting conversations in general: Representatives of the Council for Global Mission’s Outreach Ministries Committee, of the Council for Mission in Ireland, and church planting practitioners, both local and global, shared together in church planting conversations with Martin Robinson of ForMission College on 13 February 2017. Some key themes have now been identified as being relevant to the Council for Global Mission’s current and future involvement in church planting:

- (a) **The need to contextualise the church planting strategy for each location.** This involves listening for what God is doing in the location and becoming aware of what he is doing in the culture. It often involves building trust and gaining the tacit permission to evangelise from the local community. It can also involve finding a key local person who becomes part of the planting team.
- (b) **The challenge of identifying and preparing church planters.** The gifting of church planters is not the same as that of pastoral ministers. Planters are often more entrepreneurial and ‘apostolic’, and as a result sometimes marginal to normal church structures. Currently PCI does not have a ready means of identifying and training such people and

sometimes may default to putting those gifted and trained for pastoral ministry into a church planting role. Creative models may need to be utilised to deploy church planters, such as bi-vocational ministry and by conferring 'missionary elder' status.

- (c) **Resourcing church plants.** Church planting requires significant organisational determination and the commitment of significant resources. Resources need to be invested in order to achieve the breakthrough to reaching a critical mass of people and becoming socially accepted. The issue of social acceptance for the new church is particularly relevant in contexts where the new church may be viewed with suspicion by the majority population.
- (d) **Partnering.** The assumed understanding of a partnership approach, in which PCI global mission personnel work within the structures and under the authority of the local partner, may have to be reviewed in certain situations. This would not deny the existence of local churches, nor the implications of planting churches in their area, but would take into consideration factors such as the relative strength and capacity of the partner church and their experience in church planting. In certain cases partnership may imply helping the local partner develop their capacity and enthusiasm for outreach and church planting.
- (e) **Planning.** Whilst church planting is always God's work and PCI must be responsive to his leading, some amount of planning is necessary. In order to allocate limited resources, consideration must be given as to the amount of resource that should be allocated in each location. Thus a specific, locally contextualised plan should be developed for each church planting project. Currently PCI does not have much expertise in this and ought to make use of it from external sources.

11. **Informing the church at home:** There was a good deal of positive feedback on the 'People in Focus' event held in Assembly Buildings in September 2016 which was presented by Paul Clarke. The key to such events is having personnel at home and available at the right time. It was noted, as is common in many church events, younger people were not well represented in the audience. Some creative approaches need to be explored so as to better inform and engage the church and in particular children, teens and young adults with global mission. Best practice would involve cooperation with other Councils to reach the target audience. The answer may not always be the organising of another event, but perhaps seeking a global mission presence at existing events for these age groups.

DAVID STEELE, Convener

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

12. **Partnership Explorations:** A request for partnership was received from the Southern Theological Seminaries (STS), a mission agency based in N. Ireland that supports the evangelical church in Argentina. The Committee concluded that it could not recommend a partnership arrangement at this time but that it was open to further discussion. The Committee is exploring the possibility

of a partnership with the Theological Education by Extension College, based in Johannesburg, South Africa, with a view to mission personnel being sent by PCI to serve in that context.

13. **Leaders in Training Panel:** The panel has continued to make recommendations for scholarships to support Leaders in Training:

- (a) Rev Maqsood Kamil (Presbyterian Church of Pakistan) had to return to Pakistan after he was refused a visa extension to remain in the UK to complete his theological studies. He is, however, able to continue researching and writing his PhD in Pakistan. It is anticipated that he will be permitted to return for short periods of study to the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies and for his oral examination.
- (b) Rev Eric Njuru (Presbyterian Church of East Africa) has successfully completed his PhD studies in Globalisation at Union Theological College and successfully defended his thesis with the examiners asking for only minor changes. He will submit his amended thesis from Kenya.
- (c) Paul Kawale (Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Nkhoma Synod) hopes to complete his PhD in Global Health at Edinburgh University in July or November 2017.
- (d) Rev Jorum Mugari has now returned to Zimbabwe. He was awarded an MPhil for his studies in Old Testament at Union Theological College and is now teaching at the Theological College of Zimbabwe.
- (e) Rev Eniku Kovács from the Hungarian Reformed Church had a worthwhile sabbatical, spending two months with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. She spent time with congregations and projects engaged with urban and migrants' mission, seeking to learn lessons for her context in Hungary.
- (f) Amon Chanika, National Director of Scripture Union Malawi has attended summer schools at Redcliffe College, Bristol and is presently writing up the thesis for his Master's degree in Global Leadership.

14. The Committee identified a need to broaden the spread of Leaders in Training from partner churches around the world. Study in the UK and Ireland is relatively expensive and the Committee continues to review the issue of pastoral care for those who come to study in this context.

15. The fluctuations in the value of Sterling as a result of the vote for Brexit has impacted the level of funding received by Leaders in Training. The reality is that once a scholarship has been set it is not normally possible to amend the amount awarded owing to constraints of budget.

16. The Panel is in the process of introducing an evaluation for Leaders in Training.

17. The Lindsay Memorial Fund continues to consider funding applications in regard to Christian students from Africa recommended to PCI by partner churches.

18. A conference on the theme of "A Community of Global Concern: As Others See Us" was held on 30 March 2017. Rather than, as in past conferences, asking overseas speakers to tell us about the mission of their churches, Jacob Thomas (Belfast Bible College) and others were asked to share about their experience in Ireland and to encourage conference participants to relate more effectively in a cross-cultural way.

19. **Global Envisioning Panel:** The Panel keeps under review the Council's contribution to the Missiology Short Course and the Licentiate Training Day.

20. A visit by a group of seven ministers to Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary in April 2017 was facilitated by Rev Dr Mark Welsh. Looking ahead, a strategy is to be formulated for future trips in a way that will encourage PCI leaders to think globally. The Panel hopes to liaise with the Dean of Ministerial and Development Studies at Union Theological College to highlight opportunities for ministry students and ministers to include a global element in their ministerial training or sabbaticals.

21. Links with the Hungarian Reformed Church continue through an Erasmus student expected to attend Union Theological College and a doctoral student who would like to spend some time at the College in order to complete his research and writing up on homiletics.

22. It is hoped to enable some overseas visitors to attend the Special Assembly in August 2017.

23. In addition to a number of overseas visits, as highlighted in the Business and Finance Panel Report, having a leadership development dimension, it was noted that in the past year Rev Dr Patton Taylor visited Nigeria under the auspices of Mission Africa. Rev Dr Ian Hart, at the invitation of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, planned to return to Vanuatu in the South Pacific to teach at Talua Ministry Training Centre, the theological college of the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu from August to November 2017.

JOHN FARIS, Convener

GLOBAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

24. When God called Abraham and told him to leave all that was familiar and go to another land, He promised to bless Him: "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you." (Genesis 12:2a) Not only that, in being blessed, Abraham will be a blessing to others. God tells him: "I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing." (v2b) That blessing will resonate to the ends of the earth and Christians today are included among the beneficiaries: "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (v3b)

25. As people of God's covenant blessing, PCI members are called to be a blessing to others and, in turn, are blessed by others from other parts of the earth. Much of the work of the Committee over the past year has been a reminder that PCI does not exist in isolation but is both the recipient and purveyor of blessing in the global community.

26. The four constituent Panels of the Committee have actively embraced this challenge; each taking on significant pieces of work. Respective conveners and all the members of the Panels are to be appreciated for their commitment to supporting PCI's global vision.

27. There have been significant and shifting dynamics in the world stage during the past year. The vote by the United Kingdom to leave the European Union and the election of Donald Trump as US President being two of the most notable. They certainly have grabbed media attention.

28. The danger is that other less glamorous but equally important issues get overlooked. Potentially devastating famine situations in Yemen, Somalia and South Sudan have almost crept up unawares. On-going conflicts in Syria and culture-shaping global challenges such as migration, climate change and Islam can readily be ignored. Not by the Panels of the Global Concerns Committee!

29. The **World Faiths Panel**, under the Convenership of Rev Robin Quinn, has been exploring how to respond to Islam; in particular on this island. There are growing numbers of Muslims living in Ireland – both North and South – with significant communities in a number of urban centres in both jurisdictions. The Panel is working towards a greater understanding of the location and composition of these communities so that PCI in turn can bless them with the blessing God has given to PCI.

30. The Panel's primary focus at this time, working in collaboration with the Global Mission Involvement Committee, is to support congregations and church members so that they are better equipped to understand, relate to, engage with and evangelize people of other faiths who are living here in Ireland. To this end the Panel has been gathering and assessing resources on Islam as they seek to draw together suitable materials which they can confidently recommend and promote.

31. Last year's General Assembly coincided with the beginning of Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting, so "30 Days of Prayer for the Muslim World", a resource enabling informed prayer, was distributed to all Assembly members. This year Ramadan is from 27 May and the same resource has been offered to all congregations.

32. The Panel is planning to raise awareness and review resources through PCI Church publications. Members of the Panel and the Global Mission Involvement Committee have recently undertaken a 6-week course entitled "Friendship First" produced by Interserve, and consideration is being given to piloting this course to a number of congregations in one Presbytery in the autumn.

33. The **International Relations Panel**, convened by Rev Dr Donald Watts, has continued its focus on the Syrian situation and its effect on surrounding countries, especially Lebanon. PCI's main partner in the region is the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL).

34. Aware that partners can sometimes be swamped by interested people from outside the region, the Panel has been seeking to work in co-operation with the United Reformed Church and the Church of Scotland. One meeting of representatives of the three churches was held last November in Edinburgh and it is hoped to jointly support and encourage the work of NESSL. This includes the setting up of schools in Lebanon for Syrian refugees. The Panel is pleased to note the support being given to this work by the Youth and Children's Project.

35. The Panel also noted that on 3rd July 2016 the Presbyterian Church in Damascus celebrated the 150th anniversary of its founding, largely through the work of missionaries of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The Congregation continues to meet, although the building has suffered bomb damage. Good wishes of support were sent to the congregation through its minister, Rev Boutros Zaour. The Panel appreciates that Presbyterian Women were able to send a tangible gift of support. It is hoped to develop this contact in the future.

36. An inspiring and well-supported Conference, “Hope Unexpected”, was held in Assembly Buildings on 26th January, 2017, in co-operation with the Bible Society in Northern Ireland. The main speaker was Mike Bassous, General Secretary of the Lebanese Bible Society. His message of hope in difficult circumstances was a blessing to all those who attended. The participants’ responses to that conference will help to shape the Panel’s work in the future.

37. The Panel also continues to keep under review developments in Israel/Palestine. The complexities of the situation, the sensitivities involved and PCI’s own history is a reminder of the need to listen carefully in order to better understand the situation before arriving at any conclusions.

38. The **Intercultural Relations Panel**, convened by Rev Helen Freeburn, continues to engage with the interface between local culture and the challenges and opportunities of those coming from other nations. Global migration, in its many guises, and influenced by a range of push and pull factors, continues unabated.

39. An estimated 244 million people live outside of their country of birth, a 200% increase in the past half century. Approximately 34,000 people are forced to leave their homes every day because of conflict and persecution. This has led to over 65 million displaced people worldwide with over 21 million of these refugees.

40. Although the vast majority of displaced people live either in their own country or neighbouring countries, significant numbers seek a better life in Europe. They are joined by hundreds of thousands of others seeking to escape poverty and corrupt governments. Sadly, and despite the attempts of the international community, including naval vessels from the UK and ROI, over 5,000 lost their lives trying to cross the Mediterranean into Europe in 2016. Everyone a person, related to someone and precious to God.

41. A relatively small number make it to this island. An even smaller number make a connection with PCI congregations. Those who do often make a significant contribution to church life, as evidenced in a number of congregations in both jurisdictions.

42. The Panel, conscious of considerable negative coverage of migration, has embarked on developing a resource for use by congregations, and this is being progressed in consultation with the Global Mission Involvement Committee. This resource, based on the Book of Ruth, will invite participants to engage with this Old Testament book through the eyes of immigrants, and consider what it teaches God’s people about how best to respond to other nationals today.

43. It is envisaged that it will include Bible study material for use in small groups and DVD clips relating stories of immigrants contributing to and blessing Presbyterian congregations. Initially the materials will be web-based with hard copies of the materials potentially being produced at a later date.

44. Aside from the Panel, but under the auspices of the Global Concerns Committee, and in conjunction with the Council for Global Mission and the Council for Congregational Life and Witness, a meeting was held to discuss PCI’s response to refugees. Denise Wright from Embrace and Geoff Philips from Barnardo’s provided a brief overview of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. As of March 2017 seven groups, making a total of 441 refugees, have come under the terms of this scheme and have been dispersed

across the Province. (Over 600 refugees have been received in the ROI in the same period).

45. Given that English language and befriending are two crucial areas where churches can be involved, it was agreed to start pilot projects in two areas where Syrian refugees have been placed. Churches will be invited to provide premises and suitable volunteers will be sought from amongst church members. Other voluntary bodies will provide necessary training and support.

46. In addition, and given that many Presbyterians are already involved at a local level, it was agreed to map what is happening as a denomination across the Island.

47. The Panel also acknowledged the work being done by Embrace, a Christian charity which seeks to inform and resource Churches in Northern Ireland about engagement with immigrants.

48. The **Stewardship of Creation Panel**, under the convenership of Rev John Hanson, has begun its work of responding to last year's General Assembly resolution "*That the Stewardship of Creation Panel be encouraged to develop a Biblical position on the causes and effects of climate change and report to the 2017 General Assembly.*"

49. Significant progress has been made, but rather than provide an incomplete report to this year's Assembly, it was agreed to provide an interim response outlining *The Biblical Basis for the Stewardship of Creation*. This report is attached as Global Mission Appendix 1 and forms the context in which the Panel will address all other issues relating to creation care, including climate change.

50. Further, the Panel was tasked with drawing up a checklist of environmental considerations for the Congregational Consultation Process. This has been done.

51. Finally, the Panel reviewed PCI's relationship with Eco-Congregations Ireland. The contribution of Joe Furphy over the years was noted with gratitude. The importance of ensuring that resources produced by ECI are biblically based was also highlighted.

RICHARD KERR, Convener

WORLD DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

52. The 2016 World Development Appeal was launched on Tuesday, 11 October 2016 under the strapline, Reclaiming Hope! As part of the Committee's ongoing attempt to acknowledge the complexities inherent in ongoing sustainable development work, as well as the strong foundation of hope such development creates, the 2016 Appeal centred on the particular challenges faced by communities in post-conflict situations.

53. At the same time, the Committee sought to continue to highlight the ways in which the effects of climate change are making themselves felt in almost every aspect of sustainable community development, and in almost every context.

54. The partner highlighted in this year's Appeal materials was **PROCARES** (Programme for Capacity-Building and Reconstruction in El

Salvador). El Salvador is continuing to address the long-term after effects of a lengthy civil war, and PROCARES works with resettled refugees in the Jiquilisco Bay region. The second project about which information was provided was ACEV (Evangelical Action) in Brazil, which works with some of the country's poorest and most isolated populations in the semi-arid northeast, and who are addressing a range of climate justice issues.

55. The Committee is pleased to report that at the meeting held on Thursday, 9 February 2017, it was able to disburse £400,000 from the 2016 Appeal (£200,000 to Tearfund and £200,000 to Christian Aid).

56. The small amount remaining in the account for the Moderator's Special Appeal for Nepal (just under £10,000) was divided three ways between Tearfund, Christian Aid, and the local partner, the United Mission to Nepal (UMN), as previously agreed. The account for the Special Appeal for South Sudan has been fully paid out, and is now closed.

57. The Committee expresses its warm gratitude to the congregations and individuals whose generosity and interest have once again given a public account of the hope that is in Irish Presbyterians, and continue to bear a powerful witness to PCI members' trust in God's grace and sustaining care for all people and all creation.

58. Three Council for Global Mission partner projects were also supported with Appeal funding this year. The UMN received £10,000 for an inter-faith peacebuilding project (this was the second year of a two-year commitment agreed last year); the Christian Church of Sumba was allocated £9,100 for provision of appropriate farming technology (hand tractors) to enable farmers to respond more effectively to altered environmental conditions due to climate change (The Christian Church of Sumba is very active in the area of climate justice and environmental protection); and £9,100 was allocated to development work in early childhood education in Zambia Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian.

59. The Committee notes that a Special Appeal for East Africa was launched by the Moderator on 16 March, 2017, in response to the worst drought in East Africa in over half a century. It is expected that funds received will be channelled through PCI's partners Christian Aid, Tearfund and the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan's Relief and Development Agency. All are already engaged in longer-term sustainable development work in the affected regions, and are thus well-placed to direct additional efforts to the unfolding crisis.

60. The 2017 Appeal will continue to engage with the complexities of long-term sustainable development in fragile states, with a focus on partners in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

61. The Committee recognises that members and congregations of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, through the annual World Development Appeal, are supporting and sustaining some of the best development work being done anywhere. It is taking place within communities which have often suffered the most destructive and systemic forms of injustice, and yet who are showing themselves to be resilient and determined in building a different future together.

62. It is therefore the Committee's intention, over the coming years, more intentionally to highlight not just the work being supported by the Appeal in any given year, but the progression and development of the work in which PCI's partners are engaged, over a number of years. In the case of the Democratic

Republic of Congo this might involve, for example, a progression from work designed to address gender-based violence on the ground, to the development of further educational opportunities for women, leading to the creation of more sustainable livelihoods; and in the longer term, to the eventual re-construction of elements of civil society which recent conflicts have all but destroyed.

63. This “jubilee” work of re-balancing and “making right” all economic and other structures that tend over time to injustice, is a discipline which God has commanded, and in which both Christian and civil partners are engaged together in the World Development Appeal. The Committee looks forward to a deepening journey with these partners, a growing understanding of what can be learnt from them, and ongoing support for them.

64. In the meantime, as it continues to do the work with which it has been entrusted by the General Assembly, the Committee is grateful for the prayers and welcomes the interest of the wider church.

KATHERINE MEYER, Convener

BUSINESS AND FINANCE PANEL

65. **Mission Partnership Panel:** Reflecting on the work of its Grants and Projects Panel, the Council agreed that the Panel should be thanked and discharged and a new Mission Partnership Panel established. In addition to ongoing grants and projects work, this new Panel should develop the strategic overview of PCI’s global mission partnerships and the drawing up of the annual programme of overseas visits and visitors.

66. **Finance:** The Council records its deep appreciation for the United Appeal funding received each year that makes possible so much of its work, together with the whole-hearted support and generous grant received annually from Presbyterian Women. Council for Global Mission accounts for the year 2016 indicate a net deficit on the Income and Expenditure Account of £36,819. The adverse impact on the value of Sterling as a result of the vote for Brexit highlights the importance of identifying potential new sources of income and of taking further steps towards cost-cutting in the coming year. The Council agreed that application should be made for membership of Misesan Cara, an organisation that now provides the recognised channel by which faith-based development work can access Irish government funding.

67. **Mission Department Staffing:** The Council is very grateful for the dedicated service of all Mission Department Staff, not least during the past year in which a number of staff have been experiencing very significant challenges and changes at home, on top of a heavy workload. Special thanks are expressed to Mrs Evelyn Craig, Administrative Assistant (part-time), who retired on 31 December 2016 after 19 years of service in Assembly Buildings. Evelyn’s role was taken up by Mrs Emma Love who commenced work on 9 January 2017. Mrs Kathryn Anderson, Administrative Assistant (part-time) commenced maternity leave on 12 October 2016 and Miss Marjorie Coulter has been serving in this role on a temporary capacity since 25 January 2017. Departmental Staff Meetings were held periodically throughout the year.

68. **Visits to overseas partners:** The following overseas visits have been made since the General Assembly 2016:
- Helen Johnston to Spain, to facilitate a retreat in Bilbao for mission personnel based in Western Europe, 29 August to 1 September 2016
 - Rev Uel Marrs to Kenya and Zambia, to meet with PCI partners and mission personnel, 20 to 27 August 2016
 - Mrs Jean Farlow and a PW team to Spain, to visit the French family in Bilbao, 13 to 18 October 2016
 - The Moderator, Rt Rev Dr Frank Sellar, together with his wife, Claire, and daughter, Ruth, to Nepal to meet with the United Mission to Nepal and PCI mission personnel, 14 to 28 November 2016
 - The Moderator, Rt Rev Dr Frank Sellar, accompanied by Very Rev Dr Ivan Patterson, visited the Hungarian Reformed Church from 30 January to 1 February 2017 for 500th Anniversary celebrations of the Reformation.
 - Rev Uel Marrs to Kenya for PCEA's Partners' Mission Conference from 20 to 24 February 2017.
 - Helen Johnston to England, to meet with the Benjamin family in London, 9 March 2017
69. The following visits are being planned for later in the year:
- Rev Dr Peter McDowell to visit Myanmar in July 2017, to meet with the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar
 - The Moderator to visit Zambia, to meet with the Zambia Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian in July/August 2017
 - Rev Uel Marrs to visit Malawi, to meet with the Synods of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, in August 2017
70. The following overseas visitors were hosted:
- Joel Hafvenstein, Executive Director of the United Mission to Nepal, 26 September 2016.
 - Dr Imad Shehadeh, Principal, Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary, 4 May 2017.

PERSONNEL PANEL

71. The Personnel Panel have met twice since the last General Assembly.

72. **Mission Personnel:** As children of God and part of the family of PCI, the Panel gives thanks to God for Mission Personnel currently serving overseas, for those who have joined, for those whose role has changed, and for those who have passed on from this world's service.

73. Details of Mission Personnel who are currently serving with the Council are found in Global Mission Appendix 2, which also highlights their varied roles, locations, and the partner churches, agencies and institutions with whom they share their lives and service.

74. Under the Inspire category (less than one year) of service the following people joined the PCI global mission family. Chris and Rachel Humphries, members of Tartaraghan Presbyterian Church, were interviewed, commissioned

and served in outreach roles during July and August 2016 in Porto with Comunidade de Pedras Vivas of the Christian Presbyterian Church of Portugal. Laura Mulligan from Ballinderry Presbyterian Church was interviewed, commissioned and is due to complete her service in supporting student work based in Bilbao with GBU during the summer of 2017. Prior to joining the team in Spain, Laura served for 4 months with Comunidade de Pedras Vivas in Porto, Portugal. Steve and Rosie Kennedy, together with their two daughters served for over one month in Cluj with the Transylvanian Church District of the Hungarian Reformed Church during the summer of 2016: the Kennedy family are members of Orangefield Presbyterian Church. Rev Robert and Christine Bell from Ballyclare Presbyterian Church were interviewed and jointly supported by the Council for Training in Ministry for Robert's two month sabbatical in Porto. Building on the academic focus of this period, they were involved in both mission study and practical application during their time with the Comunidade de Pedras Vivas.

75. Under the Integrate programme (more than two years) of service, Peter and Jayne Fleming from First Coleraine Presbyterian Church were interviewed and accepted as candidates for service in Nepal. Peter for the role of Integral Mission Advisor with the United Mission to Nepal, and Jayne for a teaching role with the Kathmandu International Study Centre. During the latter part of 2017 they will be involved in preparation before their planned departure to Kathmandu in early 2018. At the time of writing, Presbytery confirmation and dates of commissioning have not been finalised.

76. Appreciation was recorded for Neil and Sara Kennedy who served in Malawi from June 2008 until September 2016, following their resignation from the Council. Appreciation was also recorded for Ron and Hilary McCartney who served in Pakistan from January 2008 until December 2016, following their retirement from service. On behalf of PCI the Panel thanked both Neil and Sara, and Ron and Hilary for their hard-working, self-sacrificing and joy-filled service in these two very different countries.

77. A Memorial Minute noting sympathies expressed in respect of former Mission Personnel, Miss Wilma Birnie, who served in Malawi 1982-1987 and died on 24 September 2016, was recorded by the Panel.

78. **Human Resources/Personnel and Member Care Development:** The work of the Panel has been progressed by a number of task groups during the past year with three significant pieces of work presented to the Council for final decisions during its meeting in March 2017.

79. **Review of Terminology to describe Mission Personnel serving overseas:** After receiving guidance and direction from the Council in October 2015, the Panel embarked on reviewing the terminology used to describe Mission Personnel. A report detailing the need and rational underlining this task, together with the methodology and steps involved in completing the task, was received by the 2016 General Assembly (Reports, pp.325-6) Dividing the task into two phases, the Panel completed their work and presented the findings to the Council meeting in March 2017. They are as follows:

Process: The Panel identified key people for consultation on this issue as members of the Global Mission Council, Presbyteries, PCI Mission Personnel and Mission Partners.

Phase 1 – Consultation with Presbyteries and PW Representatives narrowed the list of possible names to two: Global Mission Worker or Overseas Mission Worker.

Phase 2 – Consultation with PCI Mission Personnel and Mission Partners resulted in the preferred name of Global Mission Worker.

80. Through the consultation process the Panel has demonstrated a willingness to listen to the Church via its representatives on the CGM and those in overseas locations. The Panel has heard theological arguments both to support and to oppose a move to any change in terminology. Anecdotal evidence has suggested that any proposed change in this area is a difficult consideration for many Presbyterians as it appears to challenge the ‘biblical’ use of the word missionary, however, the Panel also noted that the word missionary is not mentioned in the Bible. The Panel has also reflected on the debate by the then Overseas Board some 30 years ago which, while recognising the changing world and the need to move from the word ‘missionary’ when relating to church partners, agencies and institutions, did not recommend any change to the Code. Consequently Global Mission Council and PCI policies, guidelines and procedures since then have used different terminology without any major concerns being expressed. Nevertheless, the Panel have noted that since the debate some 30 years ago things both within PCI and externally have changed significantly. The main influences of change that affect the use of the word ‘missionary’ can be summarised as follows:

- (a) Before the most recent structural changes, the then Board of Mission Overseas had ‘hands-on’ control of the publication of much of the documentation in relation to PCI mission personnel. There was consistency among documents and communications under the management of that team and this was important to ensure mission personnel received a consistent message from their sending denomination. This was particularly important when information was published on the Web, in magazines and on Prayerline.
- (b) The countries to which PCI sent mission personnel in the 1970s, 80s and early 90s were significantly different from today. The majority of mission personnel served in countries in Africa which were considered ‘Christian’ and ‘safer’ than some of the countries receiving mission personnel today.
- (c) Political unrest was not as prevalent and subversive organisations were not as active in their infiltration in opposition to the gospel. Even today parts of Kenya are experiencing this change.
- (d) There was no internet in those days and most expressing interest in how personnel operated on the mission field did so out of wholesome motivation whereas it is not so easy to make that claim today. Mission personnel, PCI congregations and PCI as a denomination all have a ‘cyber’ profile which is readily assessable to anyone anywhere in the world.
- (e) Many congregations within PCI have people working overseas for other mission agencies and the terminology used by those agencies for these people varies, for example: mission partner, mission co-worker, fraternal worker. Despite these changes within other sending organisations, it

has been the custom and practice in many PCI congregations to refer to these people using the generic term “missionaries”. Where this happens the mission agency or the person sent by the congregation has a personal relationship with that congregation. Therefore explaining the reasons why they need to be referred to as a ‘mission partner’ rather than as a ‘missionary’ seems more effective than for those sent by PCI. This may be due to the number of terms used by PCI (in the Code: missionary, on the website: people, in magazines: mission personnel to name just a few), or because the relationship with the congregation is not so personal. Because PCI as a denomination sends members of PCI overseas, not every congregation has a personal knowledge of each person sent. If those sent are not personally known to the congregation, the congregation may have to rely on information given by the Council for Global Mission Council or the denomination as a whole (e.g. reports from the General Assembly). The use of a number of terms to describe them is unhelpful and maybe unsafe.

- (f) The Panel accepts that a consistent approach throughout PCI will not guarantee the safety/security of mission personnel serving overseas but it will make it more difficult for organisations seeking to disrupt the work of the gospel.

81. The Council for Global Mission approved the term Global Mission Worker and recommends this be agreed by the General Assembly for official use in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

82. **Pastoral Companion Guidelines for Mission Personnel** were finalised and approved by the Council. Building on the previous model of Pastoral Advisors, the Pastoral Companion model is designed to provide Mission Personnel with appropriate support for the duration of their journey from candidacy, through service, to resignation or retirement. A Pastoral Companion’s relationship with Mission Personnel is based on a personal covenant and is one of networking support with the Personnel Panel. To supplement this model of constant support, the Council is committed to organising a retreat for Mission Personnel. Based on available resources these will be held each year in a different region of the world on a three-year rotating basis, meaning Mission Personnel will be able to attend a Council-led retreat every three years in a region close to their overseas location.

83. **Retirement Guidelines for Mission Personnel** were finalised and approved by the Council.

VALERIE CLARKE, Convener

GRANTS AND PROJECTS PANEL

84. The Grants and Projects Panel reports directly to the Council. It distributes individual grants of up to £5,000 per year to partner churches and organisations for projects of strategic importance. It should be noted that all applications for study scholarships are now dealt with by the Leaders in Training Panel.

85. In 2017 the Grants and Projects Panel will be allocating grants totalling £53,289 to a range of partners across the regions of Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

86. The Panel is reviewing the grant application process, including the funding criteria to ensure that they are in line with the Council's priorities and that they provide a robust framework within which the Panel can assess applications.

HEATHER CLEMENTS, Convener

PERSECUTED CHURCH TASK GROUP

87. **Introduction:** The remit of the Persecuted Church Task Group is to consider "how PCI best responds to the persecuted church." Identifying with the persecuted churches in the spirit of Hebrews 13:3 is a Christian duty which will not only encourage those suffering, but also has great potential to strengthen the members of PCI spiritually.

88. Standing with the persecuted church will...

- (a) Help to dispel the myth that Christians have a right to health and healing.
- (b) Teach Christians who have not experienced persecution how to deal with suffering and yet remain faithful; how to love, forgive, and pray for their enemies; and to experience grace, mercy, and love within suffering.
- (c) Reveal what true discipleship should look like.
- (d) Inform prayer, not simply praying for suffering to stop but for strength in the midst of suffering.
- (e) Highlight the great value of sending emails and letters to persecuted Christians.
- (f) Mean more than words can express to persecuted Christians who receive encouragement.

89. This report follows on from the one which appeared in the 2016 Annual Reports, page 321, in which it was stated that the Task Group's approach requires 1) a greater awareness of and a definition of "the Persecuted Church," 2) working alongside agencies and partner churches and 3) a two-pronged strategy for the way forward that involves individual congregations and the denomination as a whole.

90. **Persecution and the "Persecuted Church":** Persecution involves restrictions imposed upon worship, witness and Christian living. It operates on a sliding scale, often beginning with discrimination, harassment, then loss of freedom to express the faith, loss of job or no access to jobs, detention, imprisonment, torture and finally martyrdom.

91. While it is notoriously difficult to define persecution it is possible to categorise persecution in terms of physical affliction, loss of freedom and economic disadvantage.

- Physical affliction: causing physical pain, injury or mutilation, the kidnap of family members, forced marriage, torture and martyrdom.

- Loss of freedom: the use of arrests, interrogations, imprisonment, and other means of detention as well as surveillance and searches.
- Economic disadvantage: confiscation of finances, property or possessions and also the exclusion from government services or benefits and loss of employment.

92. It is recognised that it is better to speak of ‘that part of the Church that is persecuted’ or perhaps ‘churches under persecution’ rather than ‘the Persecuted Church’. It is also recognised that the Council for Global Mission’s new Mission Partnership Panel may wish to carry forward the discussion on persecution on behalf of the Council.

93. **Agencies and Partner Churches:** While there are various agencies at work with churches and Christians facing persecution, PCI must maintain its contacts with and support of its historic partner churches, a number of which are enduring persecution. At present these include PCI’s partner churches in India, Pakistan, the Middle East and parts of Africa.

94. Three agencies that the Task Group has consulted in the previous year, based on their collaboration together and membership of Global Connections, are:

- Open Doors
- Release International
- Christian Solidarity Worldwide

95. A fourth agency that was strategically placed in the Republic of Ireland was also consulted:

- Church in Chains

96. The Task Group understands from these agencies that their particular emphasis is as follows: **Church in Chains** operates only in the Republic of Ireland. Believing that the churches have their first responsibility to the household of faith they define their role as:

- Advocacy, focusing on those countries with their embassies in Dublin.
- Encouraging local prayer groups to pray for persecuted Christians.
- Writing letters to prisoners and supporting their families.
- Getting the Scriptures into countries.
- Occasional appeals for overseas projects.

www.churchinchains.ie

97. **Open Doors** invite a congregations to journey with the Persecuted Church through service, prayer, engaging with their emergency appeals, overseas visits, inviting representatives of the persecuted church to Ireland, and advocacy. It provides additional information and confidential briefings for partners who wish to connect at a deeper level. This includes church leader retreats, opportunities to travel, advance copies of literature and new resources, and direct pastor- to-pastor links. *www.opendoorsuk.org*

98. **Release International** is committed to the pastoral care and practical needs of persecuted Christians so that they can be helped to sustain themselves. There is an emphasis on letting folk know they are prayed for. What they do is summed up in the 5 S’s:

- Showing God’s Compassion – providing for the needs of the families of Christians who are being persecuted.
- Serving God’s Church – enabling believers to survive persecution and its effects.

- Sharing God's Love – helping persecuted Christians bring to Christ their oppressors.
- Spreading God's Word – supplying Bibles and literature to meet the need for growth and evangelism.
- Speaking as God's Advocates – being the voice of the oppressed and persecuted.

www.releaseinternational.org

99. **Christian Solidarity Worldwide** (CSW) takes its remit from Proverbs 31:8-9: "To speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves." Their focus is on:

- (a) Advocacy at national government and international levels.
- (b) Freedom of Religion or Belief (FORB) - the right to choice of religion or none. This is currently a major issue for both the European Union and the United Nations. Joel Edwards is working with CSW looking into FORB. CSW have 40 staff in 30 countries, with offices on Capitol Hill and in Brussels.
- (c) They will speak for all who are persecuted, whatever their religious background, even atheists. CSW believe that freedom of religion contributes to democratic government, to a good economy, justice, and free and fair elections.
- (d) Encouraging prayer. CSW's weekly prayer email goes out to over 10,000 Christians.

100. CSW also offers opportunities for advocacy internships through their UK office. *www.csw.org.uk*

101. **Strategy going forward:** The proposed strategy going forward is fairly broad and potentially involves other Councils within PCI, such as Congregational Life and Witness, Christian Training and Church and Society, in relation to each of the following:

- (a) **Ministers:** The Task Group would propose that the Council's Global Envisioning Panel encourage congregational leaders to visit persecuted Christians through the various agencies and denominational partners.
- (b) **Congregational Links:** The Task Group would encourage all PCI congregations to support PCI's existing links with the denomination's partner churches. Furthermore, congregations should seriously consider developing links with one of the above agencies and where necessary to appoint someone within the congregation to maintain the relationship.
- (c) **Seminars and Special Events:** The Task Group would encourage the wider church to highlight regularly the needs of persecuted churches through means such as seminars and special events. It is important that church leaders from the persecuted churches are invited to speak at these events and share their stories directly.
- (d) **Advocacy:** While in PCI the Council for Public Affairs takes the lead in advocacy in the political sphere, the capacity for advocacy is very strong in the agencies, both in Ireland and at Westminster. Therefore it is recognized that working together would strengthen the impact considerably.

- (d) **Prayer:** The Task Group suggests that any call to prayer should be led by the Council for Global Mission. PCI publications should carry regular contributions on the needs of the persecuted churches. It is envisaged that Prayerline should include appropriate input in each bulletin.

102. In summary, the Task Group urges all within PCI to support in all practical ways persecuted churches – and not simply because this is a Christian duty, but because it brings enormous encouragement to those who may feel forgotten and great spiritual benefit where freedom has led too often to complacency.

LIAM RUTHERFORD, Convener

PRINCIPLES OF PARTNERSHIP TASK GROUP

103. The Task Group set up to review the principles by which PCI engages in global mission partnerships completed its work during the course of the year and submitted a report to the Relationships with Other Denominations Task Group which, in turn, will report through the General Council to the General Assembly. Subsequent to the General Assembly all global mission partnerships will be reviewed in light of the principles agreed.

IVAN PATTERSON, Convener

VISION BUILDING TASK GROUP

104. Over the past year, the work of the Council was taken forward through the lens of the Fit For Purpose theme, “A Community of Global Concern”. In the coming year, the challenge of clarifying and testing priorities for the Council’s work will be taken up afresh by the Vision Building Task Group in the light of the General Council’s Priorities Committee Report to the General Assembly 2017.

LIZ HUGHES, Convener

GLOBAL MISSION

APPENDIX 1

The Biblical Basis for the Stewardship of Creation.

1. The Christian Church in general and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in particular derives its authority from the Bible, the Word of God. The Bible, from beginning to end, witnesses to God’s glorious purposes in creation and redemption.

THE BIBLE

2. The Old Testament, in all its diversity, bears witness to the sovereignty of God over all aspects of His good creation, and in particular in the history of Israel, His covenant people. In the New Testament, the sovereignty of God finds definitive expression in the Lordship of Jesus Christ, thus giving His new community, the Church, the missionary mandate to proclaim this good news to all people in the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is both the incarnation and the inaugurator of God's new creation in which redemption, reconciliation, restoration and eternal life is established in triumph over evil's manifold forms.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

3. **CREATION:** The most comprehensive context for God's loving purposes is the entire creation in all its wonder, beauty, intricacy and diversity. This is reflected in the first verse of the Bible, one of the most majestic statements ever made: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1v1.

4. **HUMANITY:** To be sure, humanity is the special recipient of God's blessing (Genesis 1:26; Psalm 8:5) but the first human being is given the name 'Adam' which means 'of the dust' (Genesis 2:7), indicating his kinship with God's good earth as well as God.

5. **STEWARDS:** While human beings are given the subordinate role of dominion of the earth (Genesis 1:26, 28) this is not to be construed as domination or exploitation but stewardship demonstrated in tending and cultivating what is essentially a divine gift. The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. (Genesis 2:15). The Hebrew word for care is 'shamar' and can be translated as keep, tend, guard, take care of, look after – essentially, the stewardship of creation.

6. **THE FALL:** The fall of humanity which ensues (Genesis 3) is contrary to God's will yet its evil consequences affect every dimension of creation, human and extra-human (Isaiah 24; Hosea 4:1-3)).

7. **LANDLORD AND TENANT:** The unfolding of the biblical narrative involves the mutual involvement of two great realities: divine sovereignty and human responsibility expressed in Psalm 115:16 "The highest heavens belong to the Lord; but the earth He has given to humanity." In effect, God remains the landlord of the earth while human beings are the tenants not the owners and therefore ought not to defy God's commands by doing as they please without regard to the consequences (Leviticus 25:23).

8. **RENEWAL OF ALL CREATION:** The promises, visions and actions of God to save and renew are therefore articulated in terms of creation as a whole and not just humanity in isolation.

9. Leviticus 25 is a command for Israel to renew its corporate life by letting the land rest every seventh year (the Sabbath Year) and then having a celebratory year of restoration every fiftieth year (the Year of Jubilee).

10. Psalms 8, 19, 65, 67, 104 and 148 express the glory of how God ordains and sustains the intricate interactions of humans and the rest of creation to their mutual benefit and blessing.

11. Job witnesses to the awesomeness of God's handiwork in the often overwhelming powers of nature's intriguing features and strange creatures, above and beyond human comprehension or utility.

12. Hosea 14 and Amos 9 articulate God's promise to restore human happiness in conjunction with earth's replenishment.

13. Isaiah writes with prophetic insight and poetic sensibility in the artistry with which he conveys God's stupendous visions of comprehensive blessing for humanity as part of a new creation in all its fruitful splendour (Isaiah 35, 55, 65).

THE NEW TESTAMENT

14. **INCARNATION:** The New Testament reveals how God's plan of renewal, restoration and salvation reached its climax in the incarnation. God's words and works of re-creation were now embodied in divine/human form on the earth. As John put it, The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. (John1v14)

15. **JESUS:** Before Jesus began His ministry, He spent 40 days and nights in the primal purity of the wilderness, in the company of wild animals but unaccompanied by humans.

16. In His summary of the Old Testament Law, He indicated that "loving God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength", and "loving our neighbour as ourselves" are both necessary for entry into the Kingdom of God (Luke10v25-28). Jesus taught that the responsibilities of God's people to both God and fellow human beings are continued from the Old Testament era to the New.

17. His parables and other teachings about the kingdom of God make use of analogies from nature at large as well as human actions in natural settings. He even refers to Himself as the true or real vine (John 15) and the bright morning star (Revelation 22) a chapter in which He is also called the Lamb.

18. **PAUL:** Paul speaks about 'the whole creation groaning' as it awaits its sure redemption in Christ Jesus: human salvation to be sure, but not without the rest of creation (Romans 8). The Apostle opens his letters to the Ephesian and Colossian churches with doxologies to Jesus Christ through whom and for whom creation has been made, kept together and brought to final completion.

19. **JOHN:** And John's great vision brings the Biblical witness to a fitting climax in his vision of a new heaven and a new earth in which God dwells with His servants in a setting where human beings, city streets and nature's garden all conjoin (Revelation 21-22).

20. The Biblical narrative is therefore concerned, first, last and indeed, throughout, with God's will to bless, renew and perfect creation as a whole.

STEWARDSHIP OF CREATION

21. Given the above Biblical meta-narrative it is therefore incumbent upon the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to respond appropriately and positively to ensure the well-being of God's good creation.

22. Human behaviour affects the state of the earth for good or bad so that greedy humanity leads to a suffering earth which in turn leads to a suffering humanity.

23. In following the example and command of Jesus to love your neighbour as yourself (Luke10v27) His followers are to be a voice for the voiceless; human yes, animal too, creation..... all of it. After all, The earth is the Lord's and everything in it. (Ps24v1)

24. God is actively redeeming creation and His followers are to erect signposts towards the ultimate destiny of a completely restored creation by protecting God's world, by recycling, re-using, reducing, by living sustainably, by being responsible and loving towards neighbours both near and far. Now is the time to prepare for Jesus' return to earth to complete the work of re-creation.

25. The Good News is that ultimately creation is reconciled to God in and through the saving power of the Cross.

26. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Colossians 1v19,20)

GLOBAL MISSION

APPENDIX 2

Council for Global Mission Missionaries: the names, spheres and category of service of the Council's Mission Personnel are listed below and are to be taken together with this report.

INTEGRATE PROGRAMME – service of two or more years

BRAZIL

Naomi Keefe	2004	Outreach programme, The Presbyterian Church of Brazil (IPB), Recife
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GREAT BRITAIN

Christopher and Nivedita Benjamin	1989	Ministry among Asians in Wembley, London
Edwin and Anne Kibathi	2009	Ministry among East Africans in East London

ITALY

Alan and Tracey Johnston	2014	Associate Pastor, Sola Grazia Church, Coram Deo Ministry Church Plant, Mantova
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KENYA

Stephen and Angelina Cowan	1985 1989	Outreach and Development Work, Church of East Africa (PCEA), Tuum
Naomi Leremore	1991	Development of Theological Education by Extension materials, (PCEA), Nairobi

Gary and Mary Reid 2000 Outreach and Development Work,
(PCEA), Olkinyiei

MALAWI

Volker and JinHyeog 2010 Executive Director, Theologica Education
Glissman by Extension in Malawi
(TEEM), Zomba

Lyn and Johnny Dowds 2011 Doctor, David Gordon Memorial
Hospital, Church of Central Africa
Presbyterian, Livingstonia Synod,
Livingstonia

David and Pamela 2013 Ministry Co-ordinator
McCullagh Scripture Union of Malawi, Lilongwe

MIDDLE EAST

Colin and 2016 Academic Co-ordinator and Lecturer in
Marjorie Dickson Practical Theology Academic
Department Assistant: Librarian – JETS

NEPAL

Stephen and 2014 Mental Health Peace Building Adviser –
Laura Coulter Mediation. United Mission to Nepal
(UMN), Kathmandu

Peter and 2012 Programme Advisor
Valerie Lockwood United Mission to Nepal (UMN),
Kathmandu

PORTUGAL

James and Heather 2008 Church Planting – Comunidade de Pedras
Cochrane Vivas, Christian Presbyterian Church
of Portugal (ICPP) in Senhora de Hora,
Porto (since 2013)

ROMANIA

Csaba and 2001 Co-ordinator – SERVANT Mission of
Ilona Veres 1993 Diakonia, Cluj Mera Children's Project,
Aksza Mission and Caleb House, Cluj

SPAIN

Steve Anderson	2014	Community Development and Outreach, Torre del Mar, Spanish Evangelical Church, Torre del Mar
Derek and Jane French	2000	Student outreach with Grupos Biblicos Unidos (GBU), Bilbao

ZAMBIA

Diane Cusick	1995	Early Childhood Development Officer, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), Zambia Synod (since 2016), Lusaka
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CANDIDATES**NEPAL**

Peter and Jayne Fleming	2017	Integral Mission Advisor, United Mission to Nepal Teacher, Kathmandu International Study Centre
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COUNCIL FOR GLOBAL MISSION**RESOLUTIONS**

1. That the General Assembly encourage the Council for Global Mission to continue to develop its church-planting strategy, especially in the Western European context, wherever possible working in partnership with like-minded churches and in ongoing collaboration with the Council for Mission in Ireland.

2. That the General Assembly, in the spirit of Hebrews 13:3, urge all ministers and congregations to stand with and learn from persecuted churches through, listening, biblical reflection, prayer, advocacy, visits, finance and special events.

3. That the General Assembly, recognising the divisive and devastating nature of conflict, including the resulting displacement of people, encourage the Council for Global Mission to facilitate prayerful support of PCI's partners dealing with the consequences and collaborate with other Councils to ensure PCI's meaningful engagement with the key issues locally and globally.

4. That the General Assembly receive the Biblical Basis for the Stewardship of Creation Report and commend it to the consideration of the wider church.

5. That the General Assembly give thanks for the remarkable and sustained generosity of the congregations and members of the PCI in supporting both the annual World Development Appeal, and the more short-term but acute needs reflected in each Special Appeal, and commend the World Development Appeal 2017 to all congregations.

6. That the General Assembly acknowledge the dedicated endeavours of PCI's global mission personnel and agree that the official term to be used when referring to such personnel is 'Global Mission Worker', authorising its use until the appropriate changes to the Code are implemented.

7. That the Report of the Council for Global Mission be received.

COUNCIL FOR MISSION IN IRELAND

Acting Convener: REV BRIAN COLVIN
Secretary: REV DAVID BRUCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Council for Mission in Ireland met twice since the 2016 General Assembly. The Council Convener, Rev Stephen Simpson intimated his intention to retire from the role, which became vacant on 1st January 2017. Rev Brian Colvin was nominated and appointed as Acting Convener until the appointment of a permanent successor to Mr Simpson.

2. **Home Mission, Irish Mission and Deaconess Committee.** (Paragraphs 11 to 17 and Appendices 1 and 2) The Committee oversees all aspects of the work of the Home Mission, and met four times during the year. Its main work has been the conduct of a Review of the Home Mission, as directed by the 2016 General Assembly. The Home Mission Review Report is included as Appendix 2, and a resolution appended. The Committee receives reports from the Irish Mission Workers and Deaconesses Panel, which manages the detail of permissions required for the deployment and support of field staff working under the call of the Council. A Directory of Ministers, Deaconesses and Irish Mission Workers serving under the call of the Council is included in Appendix 1.

3. **Healthcare, Prisons and Forces Chaplaincy Committee.** (Paragraphs 18 to 31) The Committee oversees all aspects of the work of chaplaincy in hospitals, prisons and the armed forces in both jurisdictions. It met four times during the year, and receives reports from a Forces Chaplaincy Panel. It appoints interview Task Groups for recruitment when required. The Report will highlight some issues of common concern with other churches in their interaction with Health and Social Care Trusts, especially regarding recruitment of chaplains and the increasing pattern of generic chaplaincy. The Committee continues informal conversations with other institutions seeking chaplaincy services, such as the Police, and welcomes increasing dialogue with public institutions in the Irish Republic. A Southern Chaplaincy Advisory Panel is being formed to comment on chaplaincy matters in the Republic, not only to this Committee but also the Universities and Colleges Chaplaincy Committee.

4. **Universities and Colleges Chaplaincy Committee.** (Paragraphs 32 to 45) The Committee oversees the provision of a chaplaincy service in Universities and Colleges in both jurisdictions. It met on four occasions during the year, and receives reports from the QUB Chaplaincy Partnership Panel, the UUB Chaplaincy Partnership Panel and the Derryvolgie and Elmwood Avenue Management Panel. It will receive reports from the Southern Chaplaincy Advisory Panel in the future. The four-year project to refurbish the Derryvolgie Halls property has successfully reached its second phase. Consideration was given to the sale of the Elmwood Avenue property, and the Council approved that this be referred for permission to the PCI Trustees. A wider matter of state

funding for universities and colleges chaplaincy across the Republic of Ireland has been referred to the meeting of Church Leaders.

5. **Strategy for Mission Coordination Committee.** (Paragraphs 46 to 61) The Committee is responsible for the development of priorities in mission, and for offering advisory comment to the Linkage Commission on matters referred to it, including applications for leave to call in Home Mission situations. The Committee met on four occasions during the year. It receives reports from the Church Planting Panel, the International Meeting Point Panel, the Nightlight Panel and the Mission Grants Panel. The location of the South Belfast Friendship House under the Council will mean that a further Panel reports to the Committee in the future. A Task Group looking at Rural Mission has commissioned a number of initiatives which are noted in the Report.

6. **Property Panel.** (Paragraphs 62 to 64) The Property Panel was convened four times during the year, and reports to the Council. It oversees all aspects of the management of properties within the remit of the Council, including acquisitions, repairs, disposals and regulation of tenancies.

7. **Finance Panel** (Paragraphs 65 to 70) The Finance Panel was convened four times during the year, and reports to the Council. It has oversight of Council finances, including the review of quarterly management accounts, the preparation of annual accounts for presentation to the Council and the General Assembly, consideration of the finances of major capital projects, and the preparation of budgets for annual submission to the United Appeal.

INTRODUCTION

Rev David Bruce writes:

8. The Council pays tribute to the work of Rev Stephen Simpson, its first convener, who resigned from the position at the end of 2016, having steered the Council from the beginning of its work. Stephen combined a keen strategic vision for mission in Ireland with a pastor's concern for those engaged in the work, expressed not only at many committee meetings but through his visits to Home Mission pulpits and manses across Ireland. His past experience as a minister within the Home Mission and the Irish Republic gave him a unique insight into the demands and opportunities faced by ministers under the call of the Council. The Council is especially appreciative of the leadership he has given in the early stages of its formation and work.

9. The Council pays tribute to the work of Rev Brian Colvin who resigns from his role as Convener of the Home Mission, Irish Mission and Deaconess Committee at the Assembly. Brian had previously served as Convener of the Home and Irish Mission Committee for the former Board of Mission in Ireland and following restructuring and some adjustments to remit, continued this work. Brian was always willing to travel on delegations to congregations and Kirk Sessions, and brought a keen eye to these meetings, helping to distil the issues and bringing clarity to decision-making. The Council adds its appreciation to Brian for assuming the additional duties of Acting Council Convener up to the General Assembly in 2017.

10. The Council places on record its appreciation for the work of all the staff in the Mission Department, which includes those responsible for Mission in Ireland and Global Mission; Kathryn Anderson (Admin Assistant pt),

Lorraine Beatty (Support Officer, Property), David Bruce (CMI Secretary), Marjorie Coulter (Admin Assistant pt), Nehru Dass (Finance Manager), Mandy Higgins (PA to CMI Secretary), Karen Hutchinson (Senior Admin Assistant), Helen Johnston (Mission Support Officer, Member Care), Emma Love (Admin Assistant pt), Peter McDowell (Mission Support Officer, Partnerships), Uel Marrs (CGM Secretary), Beverley Moffett (Senior Admin Assistant), Michelle Pollock (Office Supervisor and PA to CGM Secretary), and Marianne Trueman (Senior Admin Assistant pt). The Council records its thanks to Evelyn Craig who retired as Administrative Assistant during the year.

HOME MISSION, IRISH MISSION AND DEACONESS COMMITTEE

Home and Urban Mission

11. The Council calls and supports 36 Home or Urban Mission ministers, 26 Deaconesses, including 2 probationers and 3 students, and 5 Irish Mission workers. (See Appendix 1) Calls for ministry positions under the Council's remit are issued by the Committee on Council's behalf. In addition, it supports through Irish Mission Fund grants, the deployment of 9 Community Outreach Workers and 2 Nightlight evangelists.

12. The Council has approved applications from the Kirk Sessions of St Columba's, (Dromore Presbytery), and Great Victoria Street (South Belfast Presbytery) for Urban Mission Status.

13. The full report of the Home Mission Review Task Group is included as Appendix 2, and a resolution is appended.

Irish Mission Workers and Deaconesses

14. A successful three-day retreat for Irish Mission Workers, Deaconesses and Community Outreach Workers took place at the Carrickdale Hotel in October 2016.

15. A regular cycle of 3-yearly reviews of the work of Deaconesses and Irish Mission Workers continues.

16. Requests from the Kirk Sessions of Whiteabbey (Carrickfergus Presbytery) and Greenwell St (Ards Presbytery) for Deaconess positions to be created were approved. A Deaconess vacancy in Strand (East Belfast) was not filled, and was withdrawn.

17. The Council recorded its thanks for the work of Deaconesses Amanda Cooper and Kathleen Spence, and Irish Mission Worker, Harry Moreland all of whom have retired.

REV BRIAN COLVIN, Convener

HEALTHCARE, PRISONS AND FORCES CHAPLAINCY COMMITTEE

Healthcare Chaplaincy

18. The following is a directory of Healthcare Chaplains currently serving, including full time, part-time and honorary.

PCI Healthcare Chaplains.

This Directory does not include smaller institutions, specialist or private hospitals and hospices, most of which will have their own arrangements in place with local ministers.

In most Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland, Chaplains are employees of the Trust.

In most major Hospitals in the Irish Republic, PCI Chaplains are honorary appointments, typically fulfilled by the local minister.

Rev Lindsay Blair	Altnagelvin Hospital
Rev David Cupples	South West Acute Hospital, Enniskillen
Rev Tony Davidson	St Luke's; Mullinure and Longstone
Mrs Susan Dawson	Coordinating Chaplain, Dublin Hospitals
Rev Molly Deatherage	Mayo General Hospital
Rev Ken Doherty	Mater Hospital, Belfast
Mrs Joanne Dunlop (Deaconess Assistant to the Chaplain)	Antrim Area Hospital Craigavon
Rev Helen Freeburn	University Hospital, Galway
Rev John Gilkinson	Antrim Area Hospital Causeway Hospital (temporary)
Rev David Hagan	Cavan General Hospital
Rev Jim Hagan	Craigavon Area Hospital
Rev Norman Harrison (full time)	Royal Group of Hospitals
Rev Keith Hibbert	Altnagelvin Hospital
Rev Brian Hughes (full time)	Belfast City Hospital
Rev Jim Lamont	Letterkenny General Hospital

Rev Vicki Lynch (MCI)	University Hospital, Limerick
Mrs Heather McCracken (Deaconess Assistant to the Chaplain)	Royal Group of Hospitals Belfast City Hospital
Rev Keith McIntyre	Daisy Hill Hospital
Rev Stephen McNie	Monaghan General Hospital
Rev Stanley Millen	Dundalk District Hospital (interim)
Rev Alan Mitchell	Sligo University Hospital (interim)
Rev Jane Nelson	Tyrone County Hospital
Rev Dr Ivan Neish	Whiteabbey Hospital
Rev Leslie Patterson	Lagan Valley Hospital
Rev Mark Proctor	Tallaght Hospital (Adelaide and Meath)
Rev Mark Russell	Altnagelvin Hospital
Rev Marlene Taylor	Marie Curie Hospice
Rev Ivan Thompson	Bluestone Psychiatric Unit
Rev Alan Thompson	South Tyrone Hospital
Vacant	Cork University Hospital
Vacant	Dundalk
Vacant	Musgrave Park Hospital, Belfast
Vacant	Ulster Hospital, Dundonald

19. A day-conference for Healthcare Chaplains was planned for 11th May 2017. Rev Paul Nash (Senior Chaplain, Birmingham Children's Hospital) was the invited speaker, addressing the subjects, *Spiritual care in a changing environment* and *Generic or Denominational, chaplaincy?*

20. *Retirements and Appointments.* Rev Tom Luke retired as Chaplain in the Causeway Hospital on 31st December 2016. Rev John Gilkinson is covering the work pending the appointment of a permanent successor. The Rev Paul Erskine retired from chaplaincy in the Musgrave Park Hospital, Belfast, on 31st March 2017. The Trust has indicated its intention to seek a successor to Mr Erskine. The Council recorded its appreciation to Tom Luke and Paul Erskine at its March 2017 meeting. Rev Keith Hibbert, minister of Cumber and Upper Cumber, has been appointed (part-time) in Altnagelvin Hospital, Londonderry.

He will work alongside Rev Lindsay Blair and Rev Mark Russell.

Prisons Chaplaincy

21. The following is the directory of Prison Chaplains currently serving, including part-time and honorary.

PCI Prison Chaplains

Rev Rodney Cameron (full time)	Maghaberry (Coordinating Chaplain), and Magilligan
Rev Graham Stockdale	Hydebank Wood
Rev Colin Megaw	Woodland's Juvenile Justice Centre
Rev Alan Boal	Mountjoy, Dublin

22. A Funding Agreement between the Northern Ireland Prison Service and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland for 2016/1017 has been approved by the Council and implemented.

23. The Committee Convener visited Maghaberry Prison on Friday 10th February 2017.

The Very Rev Dr Donald Patton writes:

24. I met with our two chaplains, Rev Rodney Cameron, and Rev Graham Stockdale who also ministers in Hydebank College. I met some of the other denominational chaplains and during a tour of the Prison I was able to talk freely with prisoners and with Prison staff, gaining insight into the work and conditions. I had a 30 minute meeting with officials who oversee chaplaincy.

25. The work of our chaplains is highly valued as professional, compassionate, and practical, providing an integrated role within the structures, and yet perceived as distinct from the prison authority, and also confidential. An ALPHA course is being run through March and into April, subject to there being no changes at short notice to prison time-tabling. Officials emphasised that the constraints in budgeting and the best way forward for chaplaincy may be for the Protestant churches to consider the co-ordination of their budget allocations and personnel. This matter will be considered in detail by the Committee in the coming year.

FORCES' CHAPLAINCY PANEL

Rev. Professor Patton Taylor (Panel Convener) reports:

26. The following is a directory of Forces Chaplains currently serving, including part-time.

Commissioned Chaplains within the Armed Forces

Rev. Mark Donald	Army Reserve (part time)
Rev. Mark Henderson	Army
Rev. Colin Jones	Army
Rev. Ivan Linton	Army
Rev. Graeme McConville	Army
Rev. Norman McDowell	Army
Rev. Heather Rendell	Army
Rev. Dr Paul Swinn	Army
Rev. Dr Philip Wilson	Royal Air Force
Rev. Simon Hamilton	Royal Naval Reserve (part time)

Part-Time Chaplains to Youth Organisations sponsored by the Armed Forces

Rev. Kenneth Crowe	Army Cadet Force (commissioned)
Rev. Dr Paul Bailie	Army Cadet Force (commissioned)
Rev. Joseph Andrews	Air Training Corps
Rev. Richard Graham	Air Training Corps
Rev. Dr Ivan Neish	Air Training Corps
Rev. Jane Nelson	Air Training Corps
Rev. Prof. Patton Taylor	Air Training Corps

Part-time Officiating Chaplains to the Military

Rev Derek Weir	OCM
Rev. Prof. Patton Taylor	OCM

27. *ROI Forces Chaplaincy.* At meetings with the Head Chaplain of the Irish Defence Forces in Dublin, a number of matters of mutual interest were explored, including the possibility of the identification of a suitable Minister within the jurisdiction who could take up a role of Officiating Chaplain, as required, to Presbyterians within the Defence Forces. It was noted that the Irish Defence Forces in general are embarking upon a significant recruitment drive.

28. *Visit of a group to the Somme in memory of Chaplains serving in the First World War.* This event is now scheduled to take place in the first half of 2018.

29. *Prayer Breakfast.* A successful Prayer Breakfast was held in Bangor West in late October 2016. It is planned to hold another such event at a later date, in a different geographical location.

30. *Appointments and Deployments.* Several applications and expressions of interest are being explored, including a candidate for regular service with the Royal Navy, a candidate for regular service with the RAF, a candidate for reserve service with the RAF, and a candidate for the Army Reserve. The following applications have been successful to date in 2016/17:

- (a) Rev. Simon Hamilton (Cladymore and Tassagh), Royal Naval Reserve Commission.
- (b) Rev. Jane Nelson, (First Omagh), Air Training Corps.
- (c) Rev. Dr Paul Bailie, (Mission Africa), Army Cadet Force Commission.

31. Other appointments and deployments:

- (a) Rev. Kenneth Crowe, (Bushvale), has been promoted as the Senior Army Cadet Force Chaplain in Northern Ireland.
- (b) Rev. Ivan Linton (1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment), is currently on deployment with 1 Royal Irish in Afghanistan.

VERY REV DR DONALD PATTON, Convener

UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES CHAPLAINCY COMMITTEE

32. The following is a directory of serving Chaplains in Universities and Colleges, 2016/17.

PCI Universities' and Colleges' Chaplains

Rev Karen Mbayo	Queen's University, Belfast
Rev Cheryl Meban	UU Jordanstown and Belfast Campuses
Rev John Coulter	UU Coleraine Campus (part time)
Rev Graeme Orr	UU Magee Campus (part time)
Vacant	Trinity College, Dublin
Vacant	NUI University College, Dublin

Vacant	Dublin City University
Rev Andrew Watson	Letterkenny Institute of Technology (part time)
Vacant	NUI University College, Cork (part time)
Rev Helen Freeburn	NUI University College, Galway (part time)
Rev Vicki Lynch (MCI)	University College, Limerick (part time)
Rev Dr Keith McCrory	NUI Maynooth (part time)

Appointments and other changes

33. Rev Andrew Watson took up his appointment at Letterkenny Institute of Technology in September 2016.

34. Rev Graeme Orr took up his appointment at University of Ulster at Magee College in February 2017.

35. Rev John Faris retired as Chaplain in NUI University College Cork in March 2017.

The Focus

36. In essence the work of the Committee has focused on four significant developments which together have caused it to reflect on what strategic principles ought to guide PCI's future work among students, and the importance attached by the wider church to this major and potentially influential section of the community.

- (a) The implications of the Higher Education Authority's (HEA) directive to universities and colleges in the Republic of Ireland, to ensure that public procurement rules are applied to the appointment of chaplains.
- (b) The principles that should inform the role of chaplain, including how we work together with other Christian churches in a world that is increasing secular.
- (c) How we best support the chaplain in the Belfast Campus of Ulster University as that campus develops.
- (d) An agreement to sell Grace Café (12-14 Elmwood Avenue) with the intention of channelling that resource into developing our work in Derryvolgie Hall and in Ulster University's new Belfast Campus

The role of Chaplain

37. The role of a Presbyterian Chaplain, including the terms and conditions and reporting expectations, varies significantly from post to post. In many instances the role is seen as an additional set of duties appended to the work of a local parish minister who agrees to take them on, sometimes (but not always) with remuneration. The Committee adheres to the principle of ensuring (so far as possible) that the work of chaplaincy is integrated within an all-age worshipping community. The role needs to include more than the pastoral care of Presbyterian students and the provision of services of worship at key points on the church calendar, even if these are among the formal functions associated with the role.

Chaplaincy work must include reaching out with the Christian gospel to young people in a secular environment.

Developments in the Republic of Ireland

38. Concerns raised by the campaign group *Atheist Ireland* have prompted a departmental review of chaplaincy services in higher education in the Republic of Ireland. The HEA has drawn the institutions' attention to the need to:

- (a) ensure value-for-money for any expenditure on chaplaincy services and regularly monitor and evaluate the use, value and impact of these services from a student perspective;
- (b) ensure that chaplaincy and other support services are available to students of all faiths, in keeping with their responsibilities under the Irish Constitution, and that the use of lay chaplains is considered as a means to address that;
- (c) ensure that there is no discrimination between the appointment of lay and clerical chaplains;
- (d) address any 'legacy' arrangements in place which did not involve a formal process of appointment or procurement in line with public sector rules or guidelines as a matter of priority within the next twelve months;
- (e) ensure that there are robust agreements or contracts in place with chaplaincy services that clearly set out their services and responsibilities to the entire student base and accountability arrangements for delivering on this remit.

39. The cost of providing chaplaincy services across the higher education sector in the Republic is estimated at €1.7m per annum. The majority of chaplaincy services are supported by the core grant, although there are other funding and business models in place. Although this is a significant sum, it represents only 0.02% of the total HEA recurrent grant to the higher education sector. The vast majority of the €1.7m goes to the Roman Catholic chaplains. (source: Higher Education Authority (HEA) Report on Chaplaincy Services.)

40. This HEA guidance has not come as a surprise and its implications are being felt already. Following a new tendering process in Dundalk College of Technology, all of the chaplaincy duties have been assigned to the Catholic Archdiocese of Armagh. The arrangements also mean that it is unlikely that a stipend for the provision of joint chaplaincy services for Methodists and Presbyterians will continue in University College Dublin (UCD). The Church of Ireland has appointed a full time chaplain in UCD but the post is entirely funded from Church sources.

41. The Committee notes that a service level agreement now governs the provision of chaplaincy services in University College Cork.

42. Throughout Ireland, a chaplain approved by a university or college has the advantage of being an associate member of staff and usually has an office or shared space from which to work. However, the chaplain must be sensitive to the constraints associated with any public appointment. Thus the questions for the Committee going forward include:

- (a) the value of closer co-operation with other chaplains from the Protestant faith in the tendering process in ROI;

- (b) whether it is better to have, for example, one full-time Protestant chaplain or several part-time chaplains of various denominations;
- (c) the value of church-funded chaplains working off-site where they have fewer constraints;
- (d) the importance or not, of a chaplain being ordained; and
- (e) the resources needed for such work

Developments in Northern Ireland

43. *QUB Partnership.* At the heart of the work in Queen's University is the teaching and discipleship of the 88 students at Derryvolgie Hall (DV). Apart from the various group sessions during the week and the corporate worship and faith-sharing sessions on Sunday evenings, each student agrees to participate in one of several service opportunities.

44. This academic year, the chaplain and a small group of students from both DV and the Hub (the Church of Ireland's Chaplaincy Centre) visited Elms Halls of residence with a view to having intentional faith-focused conversations. They usually make contact with around 70 students on a given evening each week and, to date, have had some very encouraging conversations.

45. The local churches in the greater Queen's area now take it in turn to provide a weekly meal for international students in Fisherwick Church. The event is run in conjunction with Friends International, and a group of DV students helps with both the serving of the meal and engaging in faith-focused conversations. Around 60 international students attend, most of whom are on a twelve-week study programme. Another group of DV students helps with the student lunches, provided by Fisherwick Church. During first term, between three and four hundred lunches were served each Thursday; in term two, the numbers are traditionally smaller with between two and three hundred lunches served each week.

46. Chaplaincy work is largely relational; students are best in reaching other students but, nonetheless, it is important to have some more mature adults who can also get to know the students, share hospitality and some of their life experiences, and to act as role models - hence the emphasis on chaplaincy working in partnership with an all-age worshipping community. It is the chaplain's intention to raise the awareness of chaplaincy work among local churches and encourage greater involvement in student work.

47. *Ulster University (Belfast) partnership.* Rev Cheryl Meban has formal chaplaincy responsibilities in both the Jordanstown and the Belfast campuses of Ulster University. The partnership group has focused on developing links between the student work and the outreach work by Carnmoney congregation in Cathedral Quarter. About 6-10 students from UU and QUB attend the 'Carmmoney Central' mid-week gathering in the MAC theatre.

The issues currently being discussed are

- (a) the need for accommodation which will permit greater flexibility for the work of both chaplaincy and church with the arrival of the university into the Belfast Campus over the next two years;
- (b) the need for extra personnel who might concentrate on making wider contacts with students on the Belfast campus and in the emerging new halls of residence;

- (c) how a collaborative approach to chaplaincy on campus might helpfully develop.

48. *12-14 Elmwood Avenue (Café Grace)*. Over a number of years it has become clear that the need for dedicated offices, meeting rooms and a term-time Café in Elmwood Avenue may not be necessary. This issue was considered in depth by the Management Panel, the full Committee and the Council.

49. The Committee reaffirms its commitment to maintaining and forging new connections with local churches to nourish the work of chaplaincy in the Queen's University area, and maintains its commitment to the Derryvolgie residential accommodation model of chaplaincy provision at Queen's, although it does not restrict its vision to this alone. The management of a Café in the Elmwood Avenue building had become a burden, not only financially (as the Café has consistently operated at a substantial loss) but in terms of the responsibility and working hours required by the Chaplaincy staff and interns. Having considered all factors, the Council agreed to seek the permission of the PCI Trustees for the sale of the property, with a view to using the subsequent capital capacity for the development of student ministry facilities in the wider Belfast area.

DR MAUREEN BENNETT, Convener

STRATEGY FOR MISSION COORDINATION COMMITTEE

Alternating Ministry Scheme Review Outcomes

50. Work is progressing on exploring the possibilities of a composite funding model between the Methodist and Presbyterian Home Mission departments in relation to the three congregations within the Alternating Ministry Scheme. Such a model will need to be compliant with charities legislation as it applies in both jurisdictions, and involves both denominations. This work is being progressed with the Mission Partnership Forum.

Urban Mission

51. *Belfast Conference*. In accordance with the resolution passed by the General Assembly in 2016 (Minutes page 40, Resolution 2), steps have been taken to establish a permanent Conference for Belfast, made up of representatives of each of the three Belfast Presbyteries. As per the model agreed by the General Assembly, the CMI Strategy for Mission Committee invited the Very Rev Dr HA Dunlop to serve as the Conference Chair. The Mission Development Officer (MDO), Rev Dr MJ Welsh is facilitating the Conference process.

52. At the time of writing, the Conference Chair and MDO have had four meetings with Presbytery representatives, the main purposes of which have been to:

- (a) build relationships;
- (b) ensure that all involved in taking the work forward are aware of the background to the Conference's formation;
- (c) establish an agreed set of parameters for the membership and work of the Conference;

- (d) allow individual Presbyteries to begin to express something of their hopes and concerns for the work of mission in their part of Belfast.

It is anticipated that the first full meeting of the Conference will have taken place before the General Assembly meets in June.

53. *Urban Mission Status*. During the year, Urban Mission Status was granted to Great Victoria Street (South Belfast Presbytery) and St Columba's (Dromore Presbytery).

Associated Mission Projects

54. *Nightlight*. The work of Nightlight continues to involve a team of volunteers working under the leadership of Brian Simons and Linzie Cobain. Conversations are taking place with Street Pastors and the SOS Bus Board regarding ways of working in collaboration and forging better connections with Belfast City Council, especially for special events.

55. A review of the vision and purpose of Nightlight will be appropriate when a ministerial appointment (which involves a role with Nightlight staff) to Great Victoria Street has been made.

56. Catherine Dalzell has resigned as Nightlight administrator after 17 years of service. Pending a review of the position, CMI's Mission Department staff will provide administrative support.

57. *South Belfast Friendship House*. The General Council has agreed that the South Belfast Friendship House be located as a Mission Project of the Council for Mission in Ireland. A Management Panel has been appointed to oversee the work, and will report to the Committee. The Panel includes representation from PW and the Council for Social Witness.

58. *International Meeting Point*. The project, based at 133a Lisburn Road, Belfast, continues to grow encouragingly to the point where there are significant pressures on the existing facilities. These and other matters are being considered by the IMP Management Group which oversees the work, in partnership with South Belfast Presbytery. Keith Preston (Irish Mission Worker and Project Leader) is joined by Henry Coulter (Assistant Project Leader) and Sharon Heron (Deaconess).

Rural Mission

59. *Farming Life*. From the beginning of 2017, through the Strategy for Mission Coordination Committee and using a team of six writers, a regular column that seeks to bring a perspective of Christian faith, has been published in *Farming Life*. This initiative has been very welcome. It reaches a large readership and has produced encouraging feedback.

60. *Rural Chaplaincy*. The developing idea of a Rural Chaplain / Outreach worker has been encouragingly discussed and developed. Recently a consultation meeting was held between members of the Committee and representatives of the Presbyteries of Down, Iveagh, and Newry. The following main points emerged from the discussion:

- (a) The concept was positively received and there was agreement that SMCC should continue to work towards a pilot scheme;

- (b) Selecting the right person for the role is key. Their understanding of and affinity with the farming community, pastoral and discipling skills, and being a good listener will all be key to this work;
- (c) The role should grow and develop once a person is in post. There is a danger that the job could grow to become unmanageable. Management arrangements should be set in place to protect the chaplain;
- (d) The work must feed into and be owned by local congregations, seeing it as a logical extension of their mission in a specialised area;
- (e) Funding sources will be identified for a possible commencement in 2018;
- (f) Feedback from the Presbyteries has been sought and is being assessed. If the feedback is positive SMCC will continue to work towards a pilot scheme and a local representative will be co-opted onto the Committee.

Church Planting

61. A Church Planting Panel is being formed from those with skills, experience and a vision in this regard.

62. A Day Conference on church planting was held in February 2017, jointly with the Council for Global Mission. The main speaker was Dr Martin Robinson, principal of Formission College, Birmingham. Not only was it very helpful to be together with those from CGM, but the reflections from both Dr Robinson and the gathered group were stimulating and have provided agenda items for the above Panel's discussion and action as it starts its work.

Strategic discussions / Engagement with Presbyteries

63. Discussions are ongoing with representatives of Dublin and Munster Presbytery regarding Bray / Blackrock / Southern DART corridor and also Cork City. Vacancy Assessments for the Linkage Commission were completed in Dundalk, Drogheda and Sligo with Boyle.

64. The separate question of how best to engage with Presbyteries on developing a strategy for mission is being actively considered.

REV BEN WALKER, Convener

PROPERTY PANEL

Maynooth new church building

65. Progress is being made towards site purchase, planning approval, and the development of concept plans leading to a tendering process. A local project team has been appointed which will liaise with the Panel as the project develops.

Derryvolgie Halls of Residence, Belfast

66. Tender documents are being prepared for year-2 works which will be undertaken during July and August 2017. The works will consist of new main

entrance doors including a new security system to all blocks, refurbishment of Block C and work to the bungalow to convert it back to the Chaplain's residence. Estimates are being prepared but gross costs will be in the region of £400,000.

General

67. The Panel continues to address other matters relating to property held in connection with the work of the Council throughout the island. These include very major and comparatively minor matters. A selection of those considered in the past year includes:

- (a) consultation on the proposed sale of the property at 12-14 Elmwood Avenue, Belfast;
- (b) investigations of defects in the construction of the Manse at Carndonagh;
- (c) assistance with the sale of the Manse of Great Victoria Street and its replacement;
- (d) applications for grant assistance towards repairs in many locations assistance with the plans for a community hall facility in Carlow;
- (e) the refurbishment of the church hall in Cootehill.

CYRIL CAVAN, Convener

FINANCE PANEL

Disposal of assets

68. The Council holds some properties that are no longer required by the Church and the sale of some of these assets has been considered. However, this course of action is not believed to be appropriate in the immediate timeframe, particularly as positive rental streams are currently being received. Following notification to the General Assembly in 2016, The Shankill Road Mission property, which has been unused since 2012, has been sold.

69. The permission of the PCI Trustees has been sought for the sale of the property at 12-14 Elmwood Avenue, Belfast.

Capital projects

70. The Panel has prepared projections of income and expenditure for the Council's capital programme in line with new church building projects approved at Maynooth and projected for Donabate. A transfer of £400,000 has been made from the Home Mission account to capital to help facilitate this.

71. The project in Maynooth has moved forward and a significant financial commitment will likely be required in 2017 and 2018. Further detail on this and other property development projects is contained in the Property Panel report below.

72. The projections prepared reveal a major monetary shortfall for capital projects. As a consequence, the Council will be seeking additional funding of £150,000 from the United Appeal for, at least, each of the five years from 2018, even if the considered asset disposals proceed on more favourable terms than currently exist.

Future planning

73. Areas of greater financial concern relate to the funding of Chaplaincy Services in Universities, Prisons and Hospitals. Budget reductions in the NI Prison Service, and the likely restriction of public money for chaplaincy services in the Irish Republic may mean that additional United Appeal money will be sought, or services curtailed.

DENIS GUILER, Convener

COUNCIL FOR MISSION IN IRELAND

APPENDIX 1

Directory of Home and Urban Mission Charges, Ministers and Church Planters, Irish Mission Workers and Deaconesses serving under the call of the Council for Mission in Ireland.

HOME MISSION MINISTERS

Rev RSG Beacom	Lisbellaw, Lisnaskea, Maguiresbridge and Newtownbutler
Rev Andy Carroll	Donabate
Rev David Conkey	Enniscorthy and Wexford
Rev Molly Deatherage	Ballina, Killala, Ballymote
Rev Nathan Duddy	Arklow
Rev Al Dunlop	Howth and Malahide
Rev Daryl Edwards	Drum, Cootehill and Kilmount
Rev Helen Freeburn	Galway (Alternating Scheme)
Rev Stewart Glendinning	Moville, Greenbank, Carndonagh and Malin
Rev William Hayes	Tullamore and Mountmellick
Rev Knox Jones	(Waterside) and Fahan
Rev Chris Kennedy	Bray (Stated supply)
Rev Stephen Lockington	Corboy and Mullingar
Rev Vicki Lynch (MCI)	Christ Church, Limerick (Alternating Scheme)
Rev Dr Keith McCrory	Maynooth

Rev Gary McDowell	Greystones
Rev Ian McKee	(Aughnacloy) and Ballymagrane
Rev Jean Mackarel	Drumkeeran, Killeshandra, Cavan and Bellasis
Rev Roger McElnea	(Newtownstewart) and Gortin
Rev Colin McKibben	(Convoy, Carnone, Donoughmore) and Alt
Rev Katherine P Meyer	Sandymount (Alternating Scheme)
Rev Alan Moore	(Cavanaleck) and Aughtentaine
Rev William Montgomery	Fermoy and Cahir
Rev Mark Proctor	Naas (part time)
Rev Stephen Rea	Carlow and Athy
Rev David Reid	(Ardstraw) and Douglas
Rev Daniel Reyes Martin	Kilkenny
Rev Stephen Richmond	Donegal and Stranorlar
Rev Stanley Stewart	Clones, Stonebridge, Ballyhobridge and Newbliss (pt)
Rev Rodney Thompson	(Badoney, Corrick) and Glenelly
Rev Andrew Watson	Carrigart and Dunfanaghy (pt)
Vacant	1st Bailieborough, Corraneary, (Trinity Bailieborough)
Vacant	Cork and Aghada
Vacant	Dundalk
Vacant	(Frankford, Castleblayney), Corvalley and Ervey
Vacant	Drogheda
Vacant	Inch (Stated supply)
Vacant	Irvinestown, Pettigo and Tempo
Vacant	Kells (Under review)
Vacant	(1st Monaghan) and Smithborough
Vacant	(Kerrykeel, Milford) and Rathmullan
Vacant	Sligo with Boyle (Stated supply)

URBAN MISSION MINISTERS

Rev Mervyn Gibson	Westbourne
Rev Robert Love	Taughmonagh
Rev Ian McDonald	New Mossley
Rev Danny Rankin	Strand, Belfast
Rev Lachlan Webster	Craigavon
Vacant	Great Victoria Street
Vacant	St Columba's, Lisburn

CHURCH PLANTERS

Rev Dario Leal	Cliftonville Road. The Living Room
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IRISH MISSION WORKERS

David Boyd	Adelaide Road, Dublin
Tom Dowling	Kilkenny
Keith Preston	International Meeting Point, Belfast
William Workman	Athy
Philip Whelton	Arklow

DEACONESSES

Sonya Anderson	Shore Street, Donaghadee
Eileen Black	1st Magherafelt
Jenny Clegg	Ballycrochan, Bangor
Doreen Draffin	Whitehouse and Hospice Chaplaincy Team
Eleanor Drysdale	Wellington, Ballymena
Joanne Dunlop	Chaplaincy Teams, Antrim and Craigavon Hospitals
Sharon Heron	Windsor and International Meeting Point
Roberta Irvine	Greystone Road, Antrim

Christine Kyle	Ulster Hospital Chaplaincy Team
Phyllis Linton	West Church, Ballymena
Heather McCracken	Belfast HandSC Trust Chaplaincy Team
Sadie McCullough	Whiteabbey
Lynda McFaul	Deaconess without Charge
Amy Magee	Muckamore
Tracey Nicholl	St James, Ballymoney
Julie Peake	Deaconess without Charge
Michelle Purdy	Ballyclare
Hazel Reid	1st Broughshane
Margaret Robertson	Elmwood, Lisburn
Rosemary Spiers	1st Antrim
Evelyn Whyte	1st Lisburn

COUNCIL FOR MISSION IN IRELAND

APPENDIX 2

THE HOME MISSION REVIEW REPORT

INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE REVIEW

1. The 2016 General Assembly agreed: That a review of the Home Mission be undertaken on terms agreed by the Council for Mission in Ireland, and that a report with recommendations be brought to the General Assembly, ideally in 2017. (GA Minutes, 2016, p.41)

2. The purpose of the Home Mission, as described in the Code (Par 114), is to provide a “more flexible” organisation within the general structures of the Church for missional development. Currently this flexibility is primarily exercised in the appointment process for ministers, who are called by the Council rather than the congregation. Support is largely given in the form of financial grants, with some accompaniment for Home Mission ministers by Council staff.

3. The Review notes that in the current operation of the scheme has become static in that congregations can enter the Home Mission but there are few incentives or encouragements to leave it.

4. This Review proposes that the Home Mission should continue to provide flexibility for missional development in strategic settings, but that the support offered should shift towards offering a range of inputs including:

- (a) Training;
- (b) Mentoring;
- (c) Networking opportunities;
- (d) Financial grants.

5. The Review proposes that the Home Mission becomes a process for congregations rather than a destination. The aim of the process is that, where possible, the life, spiritual health, fruitfulness and long term stability of congregations will be enhanced and secured.

6. The Review proposes the option of three pathways for congregations beginning this journey:

- (a) Planting;
- (b) Revitalising;
- (c) Sustaining.

7. Entry into the process will be based on clear criteria, with an individually tailored plan for the process being drawn up with the congregation as it commences.

8. The Review anticipates that a congregation will leave the Home Mission scheme when the agreed plan has reached its conclusion.

9. The Review recommends that its work be sent down by the General Assembly for comment by 31st December 2017, to Presbyteries which have Home or Urban Mission congregations within their bounds, and to all other Presbyteries for information and comment if desired. It further recommends that a joint CMI/Linkage Commission Task Group be appointed to examine in detail the operational and regulatory implications of the Review, taking into account Presbytery comments, and report to the 2018 General Assembly.

BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

10. The current Home Mission scheme was put in place “*to provide for a more flexible organisation in special areas of the church’s life and interest*” (Code, Par 114(1)). This included the deployment of ordained and supplementary ministries, and provided for the provision of financial grants to assist congregations or causes. Reflecting the need for flexibility within the structures of the Church, the Code further states that the Home Mission shall provide “*for such other fields of service as the General Assembly, or its Council for Mission in Ireland, may from time to time determine*” (Code, Par 114(1)(c)).

11. In practice this means that the Home Mission provides support for congregations smaller in size and in remoter geographical locations in Ireland – many in the Republic (Code, Par 300(1)).

12. Over the years, and following the setting aside of the Church Extension strategy, church planting was incorporated into the work of the Home Mission. In addition, there was a recognition of the specialist nature of Urban Mission and a separate category was created as a sub-group of the Home Mission to reflect this. The same Home Mission rules apply for the calling of ministers and the provision of grants to these Urban Mission congregations.

13. Through the Home Mission scheme the Council currently offers financial support, especially property grants which are by far the largest financial

component. It offers advice and consultancy, but these are significantly limited by staff time. The Council issues calls for Home Mission ministers and is closely involved in their selection, in partnership with Kirk Sessions and Presbytery Vacancy Commissions.

14. In practice the Home Mission has evolved into a general scheme of support, which incorporates vulnerable congregations, while at the same time seeking to develop innovative mission in other places where work is planted and/or being revitalised.

15. The Home Mission has become static. Congregations join the scheme, but very few leave it. The only congregation to leave the Home Mission in the last decade has been Lucan.

16. For many Presbyterians the assumption justifying the existence of the Home Mission has been that weaker congregations in the Irish Republic needed support from stronger congregations in Northern Ireland. However, it has become clear that congregations all over Ireland are in need of support as they adapt to the new realities of secularisation and rapid social and demographic change. In fact, there are Home or Urban Mission congregations in 10 out of the 19 Presbyteries.

METHODOLOGY FOLLOWED IN THE REVIEW

17. The Review Task Group included representation from the Council for Mission in Ireland, ministers serving in Home Mission congregations, ministers who had previously served in Home Mission congregations, non-Home Mission ministers and the Linkage Commission. It met regularly from September 2016 to March 2017.

18. All serving Home Mission ministers were invited to participate in an online survey to ascertain their experience and impressions of the current Home Mission and to gather views about a possible future scheme. They were all invited to participate in a day conference with the Review Task Group.

19. The Review Task Group followed a three stage process for the review as follows:

Stage 1: Understanding the current Home Mission

The Review Task Group identified three pathways congregations within the current scheme appeared to be following:

- (a) planting;
- (b) revitalising;
- (c) sustaining.

20. Consideration was given to the experience of other UK denominations in addressing similar issues.

21. Key issues relevant to all three pathways were identified:

- (a) *Purpose*: Why should the central church help/support/engage with such congregations?
- (b) *Criteria*: Assuming a scheme for such congregations exists, what should the entrance and exit criteria be?
- (c) *Support*: What sort of support/engagement does the congregation need? What can reasonably be offered by the central church?
- (d) *Terminology*: What are the best names or descriptions for each pathway?

(e) *Outcomes*: What does a successful outcome of participation in the scheme look like?

(f) *Transitioning*: How and when should a congregation leave the scheme?

22. *Stage 2: In-depth consideration of each pathway*

The Review Task Group held two half-day workshops exploring the key issues identified in Stage 1 in relation to each pathway.

23. A day conference with Home Mission ministers was held to present the results of the Task Group's discussions. Interaction with the Home Mission ministers was vital to ensure that the results of the review process were realistic, practical and relevant to the needs on the ground.

24. *Stage 3: Developing proposals for the new scheme*

25. The results of the first two stages provided the outline of the scheme proposed in this Report. A drafting group was appointed to refine the results and to make specific proposals. The full Review Task Group met to make final revisions. The final Review document was approved by the Council for Mission in Ireland at its March 2017 meeting.

ISSUES AND PRINCIPLES IDENTIFIED FROM STAGES 1 AND 2 OF THE REVIEW

26. Is the Home Mission still needed? If so, what should it do? The Home Mission currently encompasses a wide variety of congregations, including:

- (a) church plants in areas of growth;
- (b) established congregations in areas of potential growth;
- (c) established congregations in areas where significant growth seems less likely.

27. The consensus within the Review Task Group was that the Home Mission is still needed to provide flexible arrangements within the general structures of the Church to stimulate and enable missional development. The Group agreed that if the Scheme did not exist, something resembling it should be created.

28. The consensus from both the Review Task Group and Home Mission ministers was that such a scheme should provide a range of support to congregations, including *networking*, *mentoring* and *training* opportunities as well as *financial* and *personnel* support.

29. The Review Task Group affirmed that the purpose of the Home Mission should be consistent with the missional principles and priorities reported to the General Assembly in recent years by several Boards and Councils. This involves the formation and support of Presbyterian churches that are a credible missional presence in their context, which means (among much else) that their life, spiritual health, fruitfulness and long term stability need to be enhanced and secured. The investment, in terms of finance and other support required to deliver this, must be sustainable, both locally and for the central church in the longer term.

30. *Sustainability*. The Review Task Group considered sustainability in terms of:

- (a) the long term viability of a particular congregation;
- (b) the long term capacity of the central church to subsidise congregations.

31. Currently the Home Mission provides some financial support to congregations which are often in isolated and minority contexts. This support is an outworking of the principle of the strong supporting the weak. However,

the situation has changed dramatically since the Home Mission's inception. The number of congregations looking to, and depending on, the central church for financial subsidy is increasing and becoming unsustainable. Further, it can no longer be assumed that such congregations are only, or even predominantly in the Republic of Ireland.

32. A recurring concern in the Review Task Group discussion was that the current Home Mission has become static - something which congregations become part of, but do not leave. This situation may encourage a culture of dependency. The Review proposes supportive involvement from the centre, but this support should be given for a limited period of time.

33. As a denomination we have come to assume certain norms of church life. These inherited assumptions often include a full-time minister, at least one church building and a manse. It is with this model in mind that we currently consider the question of viability when looking at existing congregations or church plants. In settings where the congregations are smaller, or in pioneering situations, this paradigm may not serve us well.

34. *Ecclesiology and missiology*. It was beyond the remit of the Review Task Group to develop a full ecclesiology and missiology to underpin the work of Home Mission, but Paul's missionary strategy in Acts has informed the Task Group's thinking.

35. It is widely accepted that Paul had a strategy of establishing congregations in strategic population centres. It is evident that he appeared to be content to declare his work in a region complete when a church was established in the centre. This approach implies that he envisaged that the church would be a hub from which the gospel would spread throughout the region. In spite of being small and vulnerable it was assumed that in Christ they had all the resources necessary for their survival, growth and mission in their region. When a need arose in one location, resources were gifted from another.

Stage 1 and 2 Conclusions

36. *The Home Mission as Process, not Destination*. This suggests that congregations may move into and out of the scheme more easily – the scheme would be more dynamic and less static. A congregation ought normally to move out of the Home Mission when the purpose for joining the scheme has been achieved. This might be the establishment of a new work, revitalising a congregation in an area of identified potential, or helping a congregation transition towards a more sustainable model to ensure long term witness in a strategic area.

37. This conclusion will require particular consideration of how a congregation transitions into and out of the scheme. Suitable criteria will have to be identified, and the relative roles of the congregation, Presbytery, CMI and Linkage Commission agreed.

38. One criterion identified by the Review Task Group and Home Mission ministers was the degree of missional vision within the local congregation. This vision is already assessed at the time of transition through vacancy when leave to call is sought and terms are agreed.

39. The planned-for outcome of the process is that a congregation becomes both vibrant and viable, such that its life, spiritual health, fruitfulness and long term stability will be enhanced and secured.

40. The Review Task Group envisages the following components of the process:

- (a) Entry to the scheme;
- (b) Agreement of Pathway;
- (c) Drafting and implementation of a Development Plan;
- (d) Review of the implementation of the Plan;
- (e) Planned exit from the scheme.

41. On entry into the process a **Pathway** will be agreed with the Presbytery, Congregation and the Council:

- (a) *Planting* refers to the establishment of new churches using appropriate models.
- (b) *Revitalising* involves investing in the building up of existing churches in strategic locations where numerical growth and development may be realistically expected.
- (c) *Sustaining* involves helping existing churches transition to a sustainable model that will ensure a long term future. It is recognised that not all congregations will have a sustainable future in their current form, and the process assumes the active pursuit, with Linkage Commission and Council involvement, of alternative futures for them.

42. The Review commends an approach for smaller churches which would assume a group of (say) 20, 30 or 40 people meeting regularly together is the church of Jesus Christ in that place. The Review Task Group assessed processes in support of smaller churches in other denominations, including the Church of Scotland, the Church of England (especially the London Diocese), the United Methodist Church (USA) and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of America. One of these denominations makes the following five value statements:

- (a) A church has worth and significance because it is a people of God, not because of its size;
- (b) In determining ministry success, being a missional church is more important than size;
- (c) Lack of growth in a church, regardless of size, may or may not be indicative of missional unfaithfulness but must be honestly addressed;
- (d) Solutions to issues in a small church may be different than those in a larger setting;
- (e) Leaders of small churches will especially benefit from connections with peers, mentors, and coaches.

43. The Review affirms that smaller Churches have the God-given resources required for their life and survival, even if this might not mean the ownership of a building, the services of a full-time minister and the running of a programme of activities and organisations typically associated with PCI Churches. The task, then, is to develop the appropriate forms and structures by which this small Church will organise its life. An appropriate model in some circumstances might be part-time or auxiliary ministry. In other circumstances it could mean that the church meets in rented premises. These need not be seen as second-best solutions or compromises, but simply as the appropriate expression in that place, and indeed, a sensible approach when pioneering new work.

44. It must be reiterated that the purpose of the process is positive, even if it may mean the consideration of radical change in some settings. The process is built on an ecclesiology and missiology which recognises that

existing congregations are the church in their locations. It sees their missional significance and is concerned about ensuring their long term survival and growth by developing a model that is sustainable for them and the central church.

45. The Review proposes that congregations currently within the Home Mission automatically become members of the new Home Mission and enter onto the pathway most appropriate for them, agreed as outlined above.

46. When the Pathway has been agreed, a **Development Plan** will be drafted which will chart a way forward based on the congregation's recent history, the current needs and context and the overall strategy for mission of the denomination. This Development Plan will be individually tailored to the context and will include broad objectives to be addressed within an appropriate and agreed time-frame. The Development Plan may use elements of the already tested materials in use by the Council, including the "8 P's" matrix already considered by the General Assembly (GA Reports, 2014 pp 130-132). The Development Plan will include:

- (a) *training and support* for leaders and members, including the development of skills in the management of change;
- (b) *assistance* in the process of exploring alternative approaches to congregational life to secure sustainability;
- (c) a commitment to *face-to-face support/mentoring*.

47. Regular reviews of progress will be required within an agreed timeframe.

48. It will be made explicit that the expectation is the congregation will leave the Scheme when the agreed plan has reached its conclusion.

The selection and call of ministers.

49. When entry to the Scheme occurs at a time of vacancy, the Review affirms the need for the Council for Mission in Ireland to have significant input to the selection and call of ministers in missional situations. This includes calls to specific work such as Church Planting or revitalising work in congregations where normal means of oversight are absent. In these cases the minister will be inducted to special work.

50. In some situations the CMI will participate in the ministerial selection process with the Kirk Session when directed to do so by the Linkage Commission, possibly as part of the Reviewable Tenure terms. If this is invoked at the time when leave to call is granted, it could include CMI involvement in the process of drawing up a list of candidates.

REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

51. To deliver the changes recommended in this Review adjustments will be needed in the areas outlined below. It is recommended that these matters be examined in detail by a CMI/Linkage Commission Task Group in light of Presbytery comments on the Review as follows, and report to the 2018 General Assembly:

- (a) *Grants*. That the current provision of grants for capital purchases, property repairs and maintenance, mission support grants for projects and personnel and a number of other smaller provisions be examined and if necessary, reconfigured.

- (b) *Council Staffing*. That since the Review envisages an accompaniment of congregations on their pathway with the Home Mission, helping to form their Development Plan and leading to their leaving the scheme, substantial executive staff time must be allocated to this. This change may involve the redrafting of some existing job descriptions or possibly the recruitment of additional executive staff.
- (c) *Property*. That the rules and guidelines surrounding property held by Home Mission congregations be examined and if necessary reconfigured.
- (d) *Ministerial calls*. That any revisions to rules and guidelines concerning the conduct of Home Mission vacancies and the issuing of calls be examined, and if necessary reconfigured.

COUNCIL FOR MISSION IN IRELAND

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the Home Mission Review Report, with its recommendations be received and sent down to Presbyteries with Home/Urban Mission congregations within their bounds, namely Armagh, Ballymena, East Belfast, South Belfast, North Belfast, Derry and Donegal, Dublin and Munster, Dromore, Monaghan and Omagh for specific comment, and to all other Presbyteries for information and comment if desired, by 31st December 2017, to Very Rev Dr Roy Patton (Review Panel Convener), c/o The Mission Department, Assembly Buildings.

2. That the General Assembly affirm the work of the Strategy for Mission Coordination Committee in the development of a pilot scheme for rural chaplaincy.

CONSOLIDATED RESOLUTION

- 3. (a) That the work of PCI Chaplains in Healthcare, Prisons, the Forces, Universities and Colleges be commended to the Church for prayer, both privately and at services of worship.
 - (b) That the General Assembly encourage the Universities and Colleges Chaplaincy Committee in its work to develop chaplaincy in the rapidly expanding campus of the Ulster University in Belfast, and in its efforts to develop a chaplaincy presence in the major third level campuses in Dublin.
 - (c) That the General Assembly affirm the work of the Home Mission, Irish Mission and Deaconess Committee in the support of Irish Mission Workers and Deaconesses, and their deployment in congregations and mission projects in Ireland.
4. That the Report of the Council for Mission in Ireland be received.

JUDICIAL COMMISSION

Convener: REV DR D J McKELVEY
Secretary: THE CLERK

INTRODUCTION

1. The Judicial Commission met six times during the year, including a brief meeting during last year's Assembly.

2. The Commission heard two appeals against findings of Presbytery Commissions (details will be found in the confidential report booklet), and received and dealt with three further appeals, including one from the decisions of an Assembly Council (details again in the confidential report booklet). In addition, at the request of Presbytery Commissions, the Commission set up special arrangements under Par 224 of the Code for some Ministers who had been loosed from their charge.

3. The Commission thanks those members retiring this year, by rotation, after some nine years' service to the Commission, for their thoughtful and wise advice in our deliberations, namely Mrs Irene Young, Mr Denis Poynton, the Rev Brian Kennaway, the Rev Dr Uel Matthews and the Very Rev Dr Samuel Hutchinson. Dr Hutchinson has served for many years in his role as Clerk of Assembly and Clerk Emeritus and the Commission is indebted to him for wisdom and guidance in all those years.

4. As was noted in the speeches to last year's Assembly, the Commission has addressed itself to several matters where the Code seemed either deficient, or required to be amended to meet new and changing circumstances. This material forms the bulk of the Commission's report this year; some owes its genesis to the Commission itself, others to requests for help from Presbyteries, Congregations and the General Council.

CONSIDERATION OF POSSIBLE CHANGES TO THE CODE

(A) The definition in the Code of membership of a congregation

5. At the 2016 General Assembly the Judicial Commission noted that, among other things, it would look at the Definition of Membership in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI). The Commission therefore reports as follows, along with appropriate overtures appended.

- (a) Many people quote the definition of membership as being 'a communicant who has attended Communion at least once in the last two years and has been recorded as contributing to its funds.' No such definition exists in the Code – it is an amalgam of the voting qualifications in Par 175 and the minimum requirement to be retained on the Communion Roll in Par 41 at a time of revision of the Roll.
- (b) The Code does set out what it sees as Membership of the Visible Church in Pars 5-9:
 - (i) All who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour are called to be members of the visible Church in the fellowship of

a congregation, with all the rights and responsibilities attached thereto.

- (ii) Church members are called to make diligent use of the means of grace, to share faithfully in the worship and work of the Church, to give of their substance as the Lord may prosper them, to render whole-hearted service to Christ and His Kingdom throughout the world and to continue in the peace and fellowship of the people of God.
 - (iii) The children of believers are, through God's covenant and promise, called to be part of the visible Church. Hence they are entitled to baptism and to nurture by the Church and pastoral care, to the end that they may personally embrace Christ and claim the benefits of the covenant.
 - (iv) All baptised persons, even though they are adults and have made no personal profession of their faith in Christ, are entitled to the pastoral care and instruction of the Church and are subject to its discipline.
 - (v) The whole Church, in its ministry and membership, is called to proclaim to all people by word and deed the Christian Gospel of salvation.
- (c) Par 41(1) tasks Kirk Sessions to keep a roll of Communicants and a List of Adherents:
- 41(1) Communicants' Roll. The Kirk Sessions shall keep a roll of members of the congregation in full communion, and shall revise it at least once in each year. A list of adherents shall also be kept and regularly revised.*
- (d) Par 195(6) makes provision for a call to be signed by Voters and 'other members' (unspecified).
- (e) The Kirk Session is required to keep a third list, as outlined in Par 39(3):
- (3) The Kirk Session shall keep a record of all baptised persons in the congregation not yet in full communion; and shall in due time seek to lead them to full confession of their faith by their partaking of the Lord's Supper.*
- (f) In Par 175 the Code sets out who are qualified 'voters' in all situations where a vote is to be held. This paragraph assumes that the Kirk Session has carried out its responsibility to revise the Communion Roll and therefore non-attendance at Communion for two or more years is not a specifically stated disqualification for listing as a Voter. However, an unspecified recorded contribution to the funds is required.
6. Having considered a report from its officers, and after detailed consideration, **the Commission agreed to recommend to the General Assembly the following:**
- (a) Specific recommendations to clarify the status of the various matters relating to membership should be brought to the General Assembly in 2017, (rather than being dealt with in any future republishing of the Code).
 - (b) The Code should contain a definition of membership. It should be achieved by:

Inserting a new Par 44A, immediately before Par 45 and amending the title before Par 45, as follows:

SECTION 1A – MEMBERSHIP OF THE CONGREGATION

44A

- (1) *“Communicant Members” are all baptised persons, who have been admitted to Communion on profession of their faith by the Kirk Session, together with all those who have been received by the Kirk Session by transfer from other congregations or churches.*
- (2) *“Adherents” are all those who attend, contribute or claim connection with the congregation, but who are not Communicant Members.*
- (3) *“Voting Members” are Communicant Members who meet the qualifications for voting set out in Rules. (see Pars 175-6)*

SECTION 1B – MEETINGS OF THE CONGREGATION

Adding to Par 45 a new sub paragraph

- (4) *Normally both Communicant Members and Adherents have the right to attend and speak at meetings of the congregation but only Communicant Members who are Voting Members may propose or second any resolution and vote thereon.*
- (c) As a consequence of these changes Par 41 should be altered as follows:
 - 41(1) *The Kirk Session shall keep a roll of Communicant Members, and shall revise it at least once every three years. The Session shall report that the revision has been completed to the Presbytery. A List of Adherents shall also be kept and regularly revised.*
- (d) In order to remove the necessity for a third separate list we suggest that Par 39(3) should be rewritten as follows.
 - 39(3) *The Kirk Session shall nurture and pastor all baptised persons in the congregation, not yet in full communion; and shall in due time seek to lead them to full confession of their faith by their partaking of the Lord’s Supper*
- (e) In Par 195 (6) the phrase ‘voters and other members’ should be deleted and replaced with ‘*Voting Members, other Communicant Members and Adherents*’

7. As noted above, the Commission is recommending that the Session should have to report every three years that it has revised the Communion Roll. The General Assembly will however note that the Commission is not recommending any change to the standard in Par 41(2) concerning attendance at Communion, namely ‘continually absent from the Lord’s Table for two years’. It should however be noted that this standard has to fit all congregations and circumstances. Some congregations for instance still only hold a Communion Service twice a year – others have up to 12 or more Communion services a year, though frequently tokens are only distributed and collected at some of these. The standard is 25% attendance in the former circumstance but much lower in the latter. The Session should therefore use discretion when reviewing the Roll, especially when opportunities to attend communion, or to have attendance recorded, are few.

8. With regard to the qualifications of Voting members in Par 175, the Commission notes that this matter will come before the 2017 General Assembly by way of a Memorial. The Commission therefore brings no specific recommendation, but awaits the decision of the Assembly on the prayer of that Memorial.

(B) Bringing clarity to some matters re. Commissions and Appeals

9. During the year the Commission noted that certain paragraphs of the Code, relating to Presbytery Commissions and appeals from the decisions of those Commissions, required clarification. The Commission therefore is proposing that a new Par 161(1)(g) be included in the Code in place of the existing one and that amendments be made to Par 165 and Par 166. For ease of understanding, these changes are as outlined below with ‘tracked changes’ (underlined bits to be inserted and stroked out bits to be removed) and appropriate overtures are appended.

- (a) Proposed new Par 161(1)(g):
 - (g) conclude, where possible after consultation with a ruling elder, member of congregational committee or other leader in a congregation, that their usefulness as a ruling elder, member of congregational committee or other leader in a congregation has been seriously impaired. In such a case a Church court may do all or any of the following:
 - (i) suspend such ruling elder, member of congregational committee or other leader in a congregation from office in the congregation, with where appropriate such suspension being for a period or until a process or event has been completed;
 - (ii) following further enquiry remove such ruling elder, member of congregational committee or other leader in a congregation from office in the congregation;
 - (iii) decide that disciplinary proceedings under Chapter XIX be initiated;
 - (iv) take such other action as it deems appropriate; or
- (b) Proposed Amendments to Par 165(1), 165(2) and 165(2)(a); new Par 165(2)(b); renumbered and amended 165(2)(c):
 - 165.
 - (1) When an appeal is notified, the superior court shall decide if there is the right of appeal, if the stated grounds of appeal are adequate and appropriate to be heard and if the appeal has been regularly notified. If these conditions are met, ~~regularly notified~~, the inferior court and all parties to the case are thereby cited to appear before the bar of the superior court; and execution of the judgment of the inferior court shall be stayed while the appeal is pending save as provided below.
 - (2) Except to the extent to which rules contained in Chapter XIX may otherwise provide with respect to appeals in disciplinary matters: ~~notification of an appeal=~~

- (a) notification of an appeal does not remove any temporary suspension from the ministerial office, or from Church ordinances, under which the inferior court may have placed a minister, a ruling elder or other Church member, while a charge against him is being investigated; and
- (b) notification of an appeal, where the decision appealed against includes the loosing of a minister from his charge or the suspension or removal from office of a ruling elder, member of congregational committee or other leader in a congregation, shall, unless the inferior court decide otherwise, have the effect that the Appellant is suspended from exercising all of the duties and privileges of their charge or office pending the outcome of the appeal; and
- (c) notification of an appeal does not arrest procedure or process when an appeal is made during the progress of a case or when the appeal, in the judgment of the court appealed from, is manifestly frivolous or vexatious.

- (c) Proposed amendment to Par 166(1):

In preparation for the hearing of an appeal every appellant is entitled to such extracts from the minutes of the inferior court, and to copies of such documents in its possession as the Clerk of the superior court considers necessary to enable the appellant to bring his appeal before the superior court, but such extracts or copies shall be given to him only on the authority of the inferior court or of its Moderator and Clerk.

(C) Regarding transfer of Congregational property to an associated body

10. During the year a number of congregations got in touch with the Clerk's office for advice regarding their intention to apply for various government grants that had become available for capital work. While often these grants were not directly available to Churches, they could be available to, for instance, a Youth Council which was linked to the congregation and had a formal lease of the Church property concerned.

- (a) The General Council, through its Moderator's Advisory Committee, has been dealing with this matter and the Council's report to the General Assembly gives the background and the steps that have been taken to seek to facilitate congregations in accessing these particular sources of funding.
- (b) As part of this process, the Judicial Commission was requested to bring to the Assembly any necessary changes to the Code. **The Commission is therefore proposing the amendment of one sub-paragraph of the Code and the addition of one new sub-paragraph.** These are as outlined below and appropriate overtures are appended.

53. *Every congregation shall ensure that –*

- (a) *congregational trustees are or have been appointed to receive and hold the property of the congregation upon trust for the congregation and subject to its directions so far as those directions comply with the terms of such trust and with this*

Code save that, but subject to the provisions of paragraph 57(5), congregational property may be transferred to trustees (who shall be not less than three voting members of the congregation) for a separate body set up by, under the jurisdiction of, and accountable to the Kirk Session of the congregation.

- 57(5) *Congregational property may not be transferred to trustees for a separate body pursuant to the saving in paragraph 53(a) except in accordance with Guidelines relating thereto from time to time set by the General Assembly and without the prior consent of both the Presbytery and the Moderator's Advisory Committee.*

Renumber following paragraphs

(D) Regarding the right of appeal in cases of employment grievances

11. During the year the Commission considered some matters which had come to its attention while considering matters that in the past had come to a Presbytery by way of appeal. As a result the Commission is therefore proposing that the Code be amended to prevent a disgruntled employee of a congregation having recourse to Church Judicial processes when Church Human Resource processes have been exhausted, but not produced a solution fully to their liking. **The Commission is therefore proposing the addition of two new sub-paragraphs to the Code.** These are as outlined below and appropriate overtures are appended.

38(e) Notwithstanding the provisions of sub-paragraph (d) the Kirk Session shall not receive a petition of any member or adherent of a congregation who is or has been employed by a congregation under a contract of employment in respect of any grievance relating to such contract of employment where such grievance has been dealt with either under any grievance or disciplinary policy of that congregation relating to its employees, or following any reference of such grievance to a Civil Court or an Industrial Tribunal.

75(e) Notwithstanding the provisions of sub-paragraphs (c) and (d) the Presbytery shall not receive an appeal from, nor a petition of, any member or adherent of a congregation who is or has been employed by that congregation under a contract of employment in respect of any grievance relating to such contract of employment where such grievance has been dealt with either under any grievance or disciplinary policy of that congregation relating to its employees, or following any reference of such grievance to a Civil Court or an Industrial Tribunal.

(E) Regarding the right of appeal relating to the Council for Training in Ministry

12. During the year the Commission considered the matter of the appropriateness of it hearing appeals against decisions of the General Assembly's Council for Training in Ministry with regard to either the admission onto a

number of 'pathways' or the termination of those related pathways. These pathways include the following categories: student for the ministry; licentiates; ministers transferring from other denominations; accredited preacher trainees; auxiliary ministry trainees.

- (a) The Commission noted that the Council for Training in Ministry had a robust 'review procedure' in all of these areas. This consisted of a full review of any decision by a review panel totally separate from the panel or group that made the initial decision. In the case of nomination of a candidate for the ministry, or for the accredited preacher or auxiliary ministry schemes, it is the Presbytery who nominate and therefore the Presbytery who has the right to request a formal review of a decision not to accept their nominated candidate. In the case of a student for the ministry, licentiate, accredited preacher student or auxiliary ministry student having their 'pathway terminated' the individual concerned has the right to request a formal review of the decision. In the case of a minister transferring from another denomination, he or she also has the right to request a formal review of a decision to terminate their pathway.
- (b) The Commission view the right to request these formal reviews as being equivalent in all but name to the right of appeal against the decision in question. A formal review panel of the Council for Training in Ministry, independent from the panel that brought the recommendation (not to accept the person or to terminate the pathway), is a much more competent body to 'hear' an 'appeal' in these matters. **Therefore the Judicial Commission recommends that Par 146(1)(c) of the Code be amended to remove the right of formal appeal in these situations.** This is as outlined below and an appropriate overture is appended.

146(1) The business of any court may be undertaken, in accordance with the Code either –

- (a) *directly by the court; or*
- (b) *remitted to a commission, having the power of the court for the matters remitted; or*
- (c) *remitted to a council, committee or officer appointed by the court for such purposes as the court shall determine; always provided that their actions shall be subject to review, by and may be appealed against, to the court appointing them, except in matters relating to the acceptance of students for the ministry, accredited preacher students and auxiliary ministry students, or the termination of these pathways or the pathway of a licentiate or of a minister transferring from another denomination - in all of these cases the review procedures of the Council for Training in Ministry, as approved by the General Assembly, shall apply, shall be deemed equivalent to an appeal and the outcome of which shall be deemed final.*
- (c) The Judicial Commission recommends that the Council for Training in Ministry evaluate its 'review process', in conjunction with the Clerk of Assembly and in light of the proposed changes to the Code. These changes to the Code will mean that the final decision in the matters outlined above will now be taken by the Council, on the recommendation of its review panel and on behalf of the General

Assembly. Particular attention should be given to the use of some Panel members (with suitable expertise in ministry formation) external to the Council itself.

- (d) It should be noted that if, at an earlier stage in the application process, a Presbytery declines to nominate a candidate to the Council for Training in Ministry (either for ministry training, accredited preacher or auxiliary ministry training) then the decision of that court of the Church can still be appealed by the individual to the General Assembly's Application Commission. The above change does not affect this right of appeal from a court of the Church.

CONSIDERATION OF REPUBLISHING THE CODE

13. The Code was last republished in 1980 almost forty years ago. Since then:

- It has been heavily amended and in some parts almost rewritten, but the piecemeal amendments sometimes sit uneasily with other parts of the Code.
- The church itself has changed radically in the last 37 years and the assumptions that lie behind the Code's provisions both in society or in the life of the denomination have also changed.
- Often the information required in a particular situation is to be found in multiple places.
- The Code is not written in inclusive language although the General Assembly rewrote the Rule of Faith (Chapter One paras 12-14) in inclusive language some years ago. The Commission itself has not attempted thus far to write either new sections or amendments to the code inclusively, as they would jar with the sections into which they are inserted. If we bring the rest of the Code into line with the Rule of Faith, it is not as was realised at that time a matter of replacing 'he' with either 'he/she' or 'they' but of recasting sentences so they read well and intelligibly.
- Recent Charity Commission legislation has caused major revision of some parts of the Code to comply with the Civil Law, but its implications for other areas need to be assessed.
- Some matters prescribed in detail in the Code should more properly be Assembly Guidelines and some matters presently Assembly Guidelines might well be better in the Code.
- There are inconsistencies in the naming of some bodies in the Church in differing places in the Code.

14. The objective in republishing would be to simplify and make the Code more user friendly without placing the Church in danger of exposure to difficulty.

15. What a republishing of the Code will NOT do is to change principles or current policy or practice except by the usual method of specific overtures to the Assembly. If in the course of the review, there was a matter that appeared to require change, it would be submitted separately to the Assembly for decision, not bundled in with the whole.

16. If a decision to republish were taken, the possible timeline would be:
- (a) Process initiated at the 2017 Assembly.

- (b) First Draft for the 2019 Assembly.
 - (c) Second Draft for the 2020 General Assembly and then sent down to Presbyteries.
 - (d) New Code adopted at the 2021 General Assembly, operative from 1st January 2022.
17. The Resources required would ideally be:
- (a) A Panel operating under the oversight of the Judicial Commission.
 - (b) The Panel operating through a number of Dedicated Task Groups.
 - (c) The General Assembly's Solicitor would have major involvement.
 - (d) A Parliamentary Draftsman would not be necessary.
18. A resolution is appended to test the mind of the house.

JUDICIAL TRAINING

19. The Judicial Training promised in last year's report is being rolled out to Presbyteries in May and June 2017 together with an accompanying booklet. It is hoped that this will increase the number of people in any Presbytery who might be equipped to serve in Par 161 and Par 224 Commissions. The Judicial Commission will consider what further training should occur following feedback from the present round of training.

DEREK J MCKELVEY, Convener

JUDICIAL COMMISSION

RESOLUTIONS

- 1. That the Judicial Commission be authorised to implement the republishing of the Code as outlined in its report.
- 2. That the Report of the Judicial Commission be received.

JUDICIAL COMMISSION

OVERTURES

(A) OVERTURES RELATING TO MEMBERSHIP OF A CONGREGATION

Anent Par 39(1) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 39(1) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

- (1) **Baptism** shall be administered to those who make a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to the infant children of one or both believing parents. It shall be administered in all cases by a minister and, as far as possible, it shall be administered publicly. The Kirk Session shall keep a register of all baptisms in the congregation.

Anent Par 39(3) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 39(3) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

- (3) The Kirk Session shall nurture and pastor all baptised persons in the congregation, not yet in full communion; and shall in due time seek to lead them to full confession of their faith by their partaking of the Lord's Supper

Anent Par 41(1) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 41(1) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

- (1) **The Kirk Session shall** keep a roll of Communicant Members, and shall revise it at least once every three years. The Session shall report that the revision has been completed to the Presbytery. A List of Adherents shall also be kept and regularly revised.

Anent Par 45 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that immediately prior to Par 45 of the Code, the title "SECTION I – MEETINGS OF THE CONGREGATION" be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

SECTION 1(A) - MEMBERSHIP OF THE CONGREGATION

- 44A (1) **"Communicant Members"** are all baptised persons who have been admitted to Communion on profession of their faith by the Kirk Session, together with all those who have been received by the Kirk Session by transfer from other congregations or churches.
- (2) **"Adherents"** are all those who attend, contribute or claim connection with the congregation, but who are not Communicant Members.

- (3) “Voting Members” are Communicant Members who meet the qualifications for voting set out in Rules (see Pars 175-6).

SECTION 1(B) - MEETINGS OF THE CONGREGATION

Anent Par 45 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that a new sub-paragraph (4) be added in Par 45 of the Code, as follows:

- (4) Normally both Communicant Members and Adherents have the right to attend and speak at meetings of the congregation but only Communicant Members who are Voting Members may propose or second any resolution and vote thereon.

Anent Par 195(6) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that in Par 195(6) of the Code, the words “voters and other members” be deleted and the words “Voting Members, other Communicant Members and Adherents” be substituted in their place.

(B) OVERTURES BRINGING CLARITY TO SOME MATTERS RE. COMMISSIONS AND APPEALS

Anent Par 161(1)(g) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 161(1)(g) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in their place:

- (g) conclude, where possible after consultation with a ruling elder, member of congregational committee or other leader in a congregation, that their usefulness as a ruling elder, member of congregational committee or other leader in a congregation has been seriously impaired. In such a case a Church court may do all or any of the following:
- (i) suspend such ruling elder, member of congregational committee or other leader in a congregation from office in the congregation, with such suspension, where appropriate, being for a period or until a process or event has been completed;
 - (ii) following further enquiry remove such ruling elder, member of congregational committee or other leader in a congregation from office in the congregation;
 - (iii) decide that disciplinary proceedings under Chapter XIX be initiated in accordance with Par 161(1)(d);
 - (iv) take such other action as it deems appropriate; or

Anent Pars 165(1) and (2) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Pars 165(1) and (2) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

- (1) **When an appeal is notified**, the superior court shall decide whether there is the right of appeal, whether the stated grounds of appeal are adequate and appropriate to be heard and whether the appeal has been regularly notified. If these conditions are met, the inferior court and

all parties to the case are thereby cited to appear before the bar of the superior court; and execution of the judgment of the inferior court shall be stayed while the appeal is pending save as provided below.

- (2) Except to the extent to which rules contained in Chapter XIX may otherwise provide with respect to appeals in disciplinary matters:
 - (a) notification of an appeal does not remove any temporary suspension from the ministerial office or other leadership role, or from Church ordinances, under which the inferior court may have placed a minister, a ruling elder or other Church member, while a charge against him is being investigated; and
 - (b) notification of an appeal, where the decision appealed against includes the loosing of a minister from his charge or the suspension or removal from office of a ruling elder, member of congregational committee or other leader in a congregation, shall, unless the inferior court decide otherwise, have the effect that the Appellant is suspended from exercising all of the duties and privileges of their charge or office pending the outcome of the appeal; and
 - (c) notification of an appeal does not arrest procedure or process when an appeal is made during the progress of a case or when the appeal, in the judgment of the court appealed from, is manifestly frivolous or vexatious.

Anent Par 166(1) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 166(1) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

- (1) **In preparation for the hearing of an appeal** every appellant is entitled to such extracts from the minutes of the inferior court, and to copies of such documents in its possession as the Clerk of the superior court considers necessary to enable the appellant to bring his appeal before the superior court, but such extracts or copies shall be given to him only on the authority of the inferior court or of its Moderator and Clerk.

(C) OVERTURES REGARDING TRANSFER OF CONGREGATIONAL PROPERTY TO AN ASSOCIATED BODY

Anent Par 53(a) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 53(a) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

- (a) congregational trustees are or have been appointed to receive and hold the property of the congregation upon trust for the congregation and subject to its directions so far as those directions comply with the terms of such trust and with this Code save that, but subject to the provisions of paragraph 57(5), congregational property may be transferred to trustees (who shall be not less than three voting members of the congregation) for a separate body set up by, under the jurisdiction of, and accountable to the Kirk Session of the congregation; and

Anent Par 57 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that a new additional Par 57(5) of the Code be inserted (with current paragraphs 57(5)-(7) renumbered) as follows:

- (5) Congregational property may not be transferred to trustees for a separate body pursuant to the saving in paragraph 53(a) except in accordance with Guidelines relating thereto from time to time set by the General Assembly and without the prior consent of both the Presbytery and the Moderator's Advisory Committee.

(D) OVERTURES REGARDING THE RIGHT OF APPEAL IN CASES OF EMPLOYMENT GRIEVANCES**Anent Par 38 of the Code**

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that a new sub-paragraph (e) be added in Par 38 of the Code, as follows:

- (e) Notwithstanding the provisions of sub-paragraph (d), not receive a petition of any member or adherent of a congregation who is or has been employed by a congregation under a contract of employment in respect of any grievance relating to such contract of employment where such grievance has been dealt with either under any grievance or disciplinary policy of that congregation relating to its employees, or following any reference of such grievance to a Civil Court or an Industrial Tribunal.

Anent Par 75 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that a new sub-paragraph (e) be added in Par 75 of the Code, as follows:

- (e) Notwithstanding the provisions of sub-paragraphs (c) and (d), not receive an appeal from, nor a petition of, any member or adherent of a congregation who is or has been employed by that congregation under a contract of employment in respect of any grievance relating to such contract of employment where such grievance has been dealt with either under any grievance or disciplinary policy of that congregation relating to its employees, or following any reference of such grievance to a Civil Court or an Industrial Tribunal.

(E) OVERTURE REGARDING THE RIGHT OF APPEAL RELATING TO THE COUNCIL FOR TRAINING IN MINISTRY**Anent Par 146(1)(c) of the Code**

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly that Par 146(1)(c) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

- (c) remitted to a council, committee or officer appointed by the court for such purposes as the court shall determine; always provided that their actions shall be subject to review by and may be appealed against to the court appointing them, except in matters relating to the acceptance

of students for the ministry, accredited preacher trainees and auxiliary ministry trainees, or the termination of these pathways or the pathway of a licentiate or of a minister transferring from another denomination - in all of these cases the review procedures of the Council for Training in Ministry, as approved by the General Assembly shall apply and shall be deemed equivalent to an appeal, the outcome of which shall be final.

SPECIAL JUDICIAL COMMISSION

Convener, Rev Dr DJ McKELVEY
Secretary: THE CLERK

It was not necessary for the Special Commission to meet.

RESOLUTION

1. That the Report of the Special Judicial Commission be received.

COMMISSION ON APPLICATIONS

THE CLERK, Convener

It was not necessary for the Commission on Applications to meet.

RESOLUTION

1. That the Report of the Commission on Applications be received.

MEMORIAL TRANSMITTED

To the Venerable the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to meet in Belfast on 5th June, 2017.

The Memorial of Prof Fred Boal, representative elder in the South Belfast Presbytery, respectfully showeth:

That at the February 2017 meeting of the South Belfast Presbytery the names of four Ministers, each of whom had been previously nominated by Presbyteries, were presented as potential candidates for the office of Moderator of the General Assembly, 2017-18.

That in line with General Assembly policy, the information given about each candidate was restricted to the factual details outlined in the Directory of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland i.e. full name, current charge, age, place and date of ordination, previous charges and any General Assembly Convenerships.

That this limited information provided about the candidates was viewed by many, especially ruling elders, as being inadequate to assist members of Presbytery in coming to an informed mind with regard to which candidate to support.

That additional information could assist members of Presbytery in the decision they have to make; for example 300-400 words, penned by each candidate, outlining their priorities and emphasis in ministry and mission.

Memorialists, therefore, pray your Venerable Assembly to refer this matter to the Moderators' Advisory Committee with a view to a full report with clear options being brought, through the General Council, for consideration and decision at the 2018 General Assembly.

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

FRED BOAL

Licensed by the Presbytery of South Belfast as its meeting in Fitzroy on 7th March, 2017, and transmitted with the strong recommendation that its prayer be granted.

REV. KAREN MBAYO, Moderator
CECIL GRAHAM, Clerk

MEMORIAL TRANSMITTED

To the Venerable the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to meet in Belfast on 5th June, 2017.

The Memorial of the Rev Dr Ivan D Neish, respectfully showeth:

That the issue of financial giving to the work of the Church is a matter of the heart of the giver and ought not to be something which is regulated in a legal way, as in the Code of the Presbyterian Church which ties giving to voting. Giving should be left to the individual, who should be allowed to give in the way they feel appropriate, recognising that those who give do so according to a range of different patterns.

That the current requirement in the Code could be counter-productive in encouraging tokenism, whereby a communicant member could give a small amount in an envelope in order to 'fulfil all righteousness', and thereby qualify as a voting member.

That there are those in most congregations who are communicant members but who feel constrained by the principle of giving in secret and therefore do not have envelopes or give in any way that can be recorded. Many, if not most, of these people nevertheless give financially, but are by the current system excluded from voting.

That these matters could be resolved if the Code simply stated that a Communicant member in good standing is eligible to vote.

Memorialists, therefore, pray your Venerable Assembly to instruct the Judicial Commission to draft overtures for presentation at the 2018 General Assembly removing the requirement to subscribe financially from the qualification to be a voting member of a congregation.

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

IVAN D NEISH

Licensed by the Presbytery of North Belfast as its meeting in Ballyhenry on 6th March, 2017, and transmitted simpliciter.

REV NIALL LOCKHART, Moderator
TREVOR LONG, Clerk

TRUSTEES OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND

Chairman: Rev WILFRED ORR
Secretary: Mr CLIVE KNOX

1. The following is an extract from the Minutes of the proceedings of the Trustees at their Annual General Meeting held in Assembly Buildings, Belfast, on 21 March 2017.

2. Moved by Rev Dr D Watts, seconded by Mrs A Heenan and agreed that Mr D Crowe, Mr N Bennett, Mrs M Guiler and Sir Bruce Robinson be re-appointed for a further term of 5 years.

3. Moved by Very Rev Dr D Clarke, seconded by Rev T Gribben, that Rev W Orr be appointed Chairman until the 2018 General Assembly.

4. The Statements of audited Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2016 of the following were laid before the Trustees, and were adopted by them:

- The General Investment Fund
- The Trustees of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland

(Incorporating The Commutation Fund, The Non-Participating Trusts Fund, The Magee Fund, The Tops Wilson Trust Fund, The Fire Insurance Trust Fund, The Fortune Mission Bequest, The Lindsay Memorial Fund and various other Trust Funds).

5. Moved by Sir Bruce Robinson, seconded by Mr N Bennett and unanimously agreed that the Report and the Statements of Account be adopted, and lodged with the Clerk of Assembly to be laid before the Assembly in June. The Report and the Statements of Account were signed and lodged in accordance with the foregoing resolution.

6. The Trustees also received and examined the Accounts for 2016 of the John Getty Trust, The War Memorial Hostel and Union Theological College and accepted these for inclusion in the volume of Accounts to be submitted to the General Assembly.

7. The Trustees nominated Mr D Crowe and Mrs M Guiler as members to attend the General Assembly according to the provision of the Code, Par 97(h) (iii).

Trust Funds

8. A summary Account of the various Trust Funds is included in the Book of Accounts 2016. The following Trust Funds are distributed by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Trustees.

As in 2016, the Trustees have agreed to recommend to the General Assembly that, where the terms of Trust permit, these should be distributed via the United Appeal rather than directly to various agencies.

Mrs A M Davidson Trust: The total income for 2016 available for distribution is £6,627.40. The following recommendation is made to the General Assembly:

United Appeal	£6,627.40
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Sir Wm V McCleery Estate: The total income for 2016 available for distribution is £34,601.84. The following recommendation is made to the General Assembly:

Central Ministry Fund	80%
Retired Ministers' Fund	10%
Widows of Ministers' Fund	10%

Estate of Miss Irene Scott: The total income for 2016 available for distribution is £7,169.24. The following recommendation is made to the General Assembly:

United Appeal	£7,169.24
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Estate of Miss Ida Mary McGeown: The total income for 2016 available for distribution is £4,600.96. The following recommendation is made to the General Assembly:

United Appeal	£4,600.96
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Estate of Mr Victor Morrow: The total income for 2016 available for distribution is £1,499.68. The following recommendation is made to the General Assembly:

United Appeal	£1,499.68
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THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH INVESTMENT FUND (commonly known as The General Investment Fund)

9. The General Investment Fund was originally established under the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 1964. It is a Common Investment Fund in which any charity connected with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland can invest.

10. Investments in the Fund or shareholdings tend to arise from trust funds, bequests or donations which often have particular terms or restrictions attached regarding the application of the capital and income.

11. Further details about the General Investment Fund, the investment performance and investment holdings, is available in a booklet available from the Financial Secretary's Department.

12. The Trustees have prepared the accounts of the General Investment Fund for the year ended 31 December 2016 in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice: Financial Statement of Authorised Funds (October 2010). These are included in the Book of Accounts presented to the General Assembly. These accounts provide detailed information regarding the Fund and in particular its performance, investment allocation, level of income and distributions during the year.

13. Declaration of Dividend	15.4.16	15.10.16
Number of shares qualifying	5,465,274	5,469,611
Income from investment for distribution and Tax recoverable less Administrative Charge and Investment Advisers' Fees	£658,513	£851,467
Dividend per share	11.00p	15.00p
14. During 2016, £31,025 was transferred to the Dividend Equalisation Reserve, in accordance with the Scheme Rules, and the balance on the Reserve at 31 December, 2016 is £564,484.		
15. The combined annual Dividend of 26.00p per share for 2016 is to be compared with 26.00p for 2015, 26.00p for 2014, 26.00p for 2013, 26.00p for 2012, 25.00p for 2011, 26.00p for 2010; 28.00p for 2009; 33.00p for 2008; 31.00p for 2007;.		
Valuation	15.04.16	15.10.16
	£	£
Valuation of Investments	49,301,670	54,547,227
Cash on Deposit	284,353	340,665
Dividend Equalisation Reserve	590,792	564,484
	<u>£50,176,815</u>	<u>£55,452,376</u>
No of Shares Issued	5,471,680	5,477,820
Share Value	£9.1703	£10.1231

In addition to the official valuations at 15 April and 15 October the Trustees also carry out a valuation of the shares as at 31 December. This is an "internal" valuation used by Councils and Agencies and the Trustees to value investments held by various funds in the General Investment Fund for year-end accounting purposes. At 31 December the valuation was £9.9851 per share (2015, £8.8940).

16. The Trustees meet with Investment Managers, Newton Investment Management Limited, three times a year to review investment performance. During 2016, there was a return of 16.32% compared to a benchmark return of 16.10%. Newton Investment Management Limited was appointed Investment Adviser to the Trustees Funds in June 2006 and from then to 31 December 2016, the General Investment Fund returned 7.15% per annum compared to the benchmark of 6.86%.

Valuation and Dividends Dates

17. At the General Assembly last year the Trustees were given permission to make some changes to the Rules of the General Investment Fund regarding the frequency of share valuations and the dates on which dividends are declared. In accordance with the Rules of the Scheme the approval of the Department for Communities was sought and this was granted on 16 February 2017. The shares in the Fund are now valued on a monthly rather than on a six-monthly basis and the first monthly valuation was at 28 February 2017 and valued a share at £10.2053.

18. As part of the change to monthly share valuations the rules regarding dividend dates were amended as reported to the General Assembly last year. The current rules state that "The Trustees shall as soon as practicable after each

dividend date determine the income of the Fund for the distribution period ending on that date.” In Rule 21(2) “...as soon as practicable after each valuation date, declare a dividend...”. The distribution dates during 2016 were 15 April and 15 October . Following the introduction of monthly share valuation dates the distribution dates during 2017 will be 31 March and 30 September.

Trustees Discretionary Fund

19. On occasions the Trustees are notified of bequests where the terms may state they are for the “benefit of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland” or the “Trustees of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland”. The present policy of the Trustees is to invest these in the Trustees Discretionary Fund in the General Investment Fund, unless a specific project requiring funding is identified, and then to distribute the income annually. In allocating capital or income, and while recognising no restrictions have been expressed by the donor, the Trustees will have regard to expressions of wish or known interests of the donor. During 2016, the Trustees provided a grant of £130,000 to Union Theological College to assist the ongoing repair work to the building. At 31 December 2016 the Fund held 57,818 shares in the General Investment Fund which valued the holding at £577,319.

Crescent Church Loan Fund

20. The Crescent Loan Fund was established following the sale of the Crescent Church premises in 1975 and provides low interest loans to congregations having short term financial problems.

During 2016 interest was charged on loans at half the total of bank base rate plus 2% (i.e.1.25%) on the average balance outstanding over the term of the loan.

The maximum loan normally provided by the Fund is £25,000 and this has to be repaid normally within 3 years, although loans over 5 years can be provided in certain circumstances. Further information about loans from the Fund is available from the Financial Secretary’s Department.

During 2016 the Trustees provided loans of £75,000 and the Loans outstanding at 31 December 2016 were £77,417 and at that time, the fund had £291,666 available to meet loan requests.

Getty Bequest

21. The allocation of grants out of the income of the Trust Estate of John Getty for the year ending 31 December, 2016 was as follows:

Overseas – Foreign	£2,330
Overseas – Jewish	£1,270
Home Mission	£3,070
Belfast City Mission	£2,330
TOTAL	£9,000

Bequests

22. The Trustees received a report of all bequests notified to the Church during 2016 and wish to record their deep gratitude for those who have decided to support the Church in this way.

Local Bible Fund

23. The Trustees have agreed to take on responsibility for the management of the Local Bible Fund from the Local Bible Fund Committee. The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland granted approval to the transfer on 17 January 2017.

The Sir Thomas McClure Bequest

24. The Trustees have agreed to take on responsibility for the management of the Sir Thomas McClure Bequest from the current trustees and an application is presently with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

Resignation of Trustee

25. At the 2017 Annual General Meeting the resignation of Mr L McKeague on 20 December 2016 was received. Mr McKeague had served as a Trustee since his appointment to the former Board of Trustees in 2001. The Trustees wish to record their deep appreciation for his committed service and for his valued contribution to their work.

TRUSTEES**RESOLUTIONS**

1. That in accordance with the Will of the late John Getty the following be constituted as the Committee for the “direction and management of the application” of the income from the Getty Bequest: Very Revs Dr David Clarke, Dr Samuel Hutchinson; Revs Dr DJ Watts, TD Gribben; Sir Bruce Robinson, Norman Bennett, Douglas Crowe, Mrs M Guiler.

2(a) That the Report of the Trustees be received.

2(b) That the recommendation regarding the Mrs AM Davidson Trust be adopted.

2(c) That the recommendation regarding the Sir Wm V McCleery Trust be adopted.

2(d) That the recommendation regarding the Miss Irene Scott Trust be adopted.

2(e) That the recommendation regarding the Miss Ida Mary McGeown Trust be adopted.

2(f) That the recommendation regarding the Victor Morrow Trust be adopted.

APPOINTMENT OF A TRUSTEE

That Mr S Johnston be, and is hereby nominated and appointed by the General Assembly as a Trustee of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in room of Mr R A Alcorn, resigned, and of the appointment of Mr S Johnston as a said Trustee attestation is made by the signature of the Moderator of the General Assembly and of the Clerk of the General Assembly in accordance with the provisions of the Irish Presbyterian Church Act, 1871.

APPOINTMENT OF A TRUSTEE

That Mr N Morrison be, and is hereby nominated and appointed by the General Assembly as a Trustee of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in room of Mr L McKeague, resigned, and of the appointment of Mr N Morrison as a said Trustee attestation is made by the signature of the Moderator of the General Assembly and of the Clerk of the General Assembly in accordance with the provisions of the Irish Presbyterian Church Act, 1871.

LINKAGE COMMISSION

Convener: Rev WJ HENRY
Secretary: TJ LIVINGSTONE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report summarises the work of the Linkage Commission from April 2016-Mar 2017. Matters dealt with include: the terms of leaves to call granted to 26 charges, reviews of the financial terms in various leaves to call, and reports on the work of the internal Panels of the Commission.

The Very Rev Dr Donald Patton

2. Having completed two years as Chairman of the Commission, the Very Rev Dr Donald Patton retires at this Assembly. Dr Patton brought a wealth of insight from a practical knowledge of the denomination and a wisdom gleaned from many years dealing with practical matters of church life and witness. He chaired meetings of the Linkage Commission and Business Panel with fairness and determination and will be missed.

Creating sustainable ministry arrangements

3. A brief encounter with the monthly workload of the Commission makes it very apparent that the religious landscape of Ireland has changed and that this change impacts the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The Commission continues its role in the stewardship of resources with which God has blessed his church. The Scriptures challenge the church to use these resources wisely and not to waste them (Mt 25:14-30; John 6:12; 1 Peter 4:10).

4. It is part of Presbyterian DNA that the strong support the weak and increasingly the Commission is conscious that it needs to target the spend of Central Ministry Fund resources. The factors that influence the final decision of the Commission centre around the mission of the church – encouraging small but vibrant communities of faith in a particular location where there is vast potential; or where due to sheer isolation no other option for linkage or partnership is an option.

5. There is a limit however, to how much can be provided in any situation, and new options for the future provision of ministry must be explored, such as part time ministry arrangements, or in a linkage, or even possibly a still larger linkage with the help of Auxiliary Ministers.

Presbytery Strategy

6. The Commission expresses heartfelt appreciation to many Presbyteries which have faced up to the changing circumstances and have attempted to lead congregations along new paths. Over the past year there have been at least 5 significant discussions with different Presbyteries – the work involved has been considerable and the Commission thanks its members who have given much time to this, as well as members of the individual Presbyteries involved.

7. The Commission is conscious that such processes are not without pain and indeed call many to make new sacrifices or witness in changed arrangements. Smaller congregations should take note of the changes in terms of linkages and ministry provision that many much larger congregations are presently considering. Presbyteries are encouraged to take the long term view about how they might redistribute ministry within their bounds or, with the assistance of the Commission, beyond their bounds to ensure sustainable ministry.

8. The Church must reflect deeply on how to proceed in all these situations and to that end the Linkage Commission asks for the prayers of the denomination as it seeks, not to set out change for change's sake, but to create a viable and sustainable vision of ministry for the contemporary context in which the church exists.

Effective Contemporary Ministry Task Group

9. One practical outworking of this new reflection upon strategy is evidenced in the work of Effective Contemporary Ministry Task Group.

10. The Task Group is comprised of representatives from the Council for Mission in Ireland, Council for Training in Ministry and Linkage Commission. A strong desire has been expressed that the Linkage Commission in arriving at its decisions, should bear in mind missional opportunities and resource these accordingly. The downside to such action of course is that everywhere cannot be a priority and hard decisions must be made.

Guidance for Interviews

11. Two options for interviews at vacancies had been presented by the Commission to the General Assembly of 2016 - one which permitted only interview by Kirk Session and the second which permitted interview also by Hearing Committees. It was the second option of the Guidelines for Interviews which were adopted, allowing for interviews by Hearing Committee. However, the Commission was asked to reconsider Par 3(f) of these guidelines.

12. Par 3(f) reads as follows: "The Chairman must ensure that the Hearing Committee does not discuss matters with candidates which are specific to Kirk Session. This means that it is inappropriate to ask questions concerning matters listed under 2e." In effect this required reconsideration of Pars 1(d), 2(e) and 3(f).

13. Pars 1(d), 2(e) and 3(f), as presented last year, read as follows:

1(d) The same basic questions for each candidate shall be agreed at a meeting convened by the Vacancy Convener or another ministerial member of the Vacancy Commission.

2(e) It may be appropriate to ask questions concerning matters that are specific to Kirk Session under Code Pars 35ff. These include: sacramental discipline; times of service or number of services on a Sunday; the merits or demerits of a particular type of organisation or group that the Kirk Session would be responsible for, BB, GB, Bowling Club, Choir, Praise Group, House Groups; attitude towards services in connection with the Loyal Orders or the Masonic Order, including what may be carried/worn into church; the delivery of pastoral care; inter-church worship and relationships.

3(f) *The Chairman must ensure that the Hearing Committee does not discuss matters with candidates which are specific to Kirk Session. This means that it is inappropriate to ask questions concerning matters listed above under 2e.*

14. The Commission recommends rephrasing points 3(f) and 2(e) respectively and proposes an addition to point 1(d) (highlighted in bold).

1(d) *The same basic questions for each candidate shall be agreed at a meeting convened by the Vacancy Convener or another ministerial member of the Vacancy Commission. **Attention should be given to the importance of weighting of questions and wise use made of the interview time to ensure that the established priorities of the Kirk Session and congregation are explored through the questioning.***

2(e) *All matters concerning the life of the congregation are under the authority of the Kirk Session under Code Pars 35ff; Recognising the general advice in 1(d) above, it may be appropriate for Kirk Sessions to ask questions about some specific matters where clarity may be important. These may include questions on: sacramental discipline; the delivery of pastoral care; times of services or number of services on a Sunday; the merits or demerits of a particular type of organisation or group that the Kirk Session would be responsible for, BB, GB, Bowling Club, Choir, Praise Group, House Groups; attitude towards services in connection with the Loyal Orders or the Masonic Order, including what may be carried/worn into church; inter-church worship and relationships.*

3(f) *All matters concerning the life of the congregation are under the authority of the Kirk Session; but it may be appropriate for the Hearing Committee to ask questions which are of general concern to the Congregation. However, the Hearing Committee should not ask questions which are specific to Kirk Session: matters of sacramental discipline or attitudes to special church services. For example while it may be appropriate for a Hearing Committee to enquire about community relationships it would not be appropriate to question about formal involvement in inter-church services which is a Kirk Session (and minister's) prerogative.*

Auxiliary Ministry Scheme

15. A number of Auxiliary Ministers have already been trained and are eligible to serve alongside, and under the supervision of, a full Minister of Word and Sacrament, including a Vacancy Convener. Auxiliary Ministers may serve in a large congregation, a linkage, or a group of congregations on either an expenses only or remunerated basis. Some pastoral duties may be associated with a post, but it is primarily a Ministry of the Word. Since the initiative to create such a post normally comes from a Kirk Session, Sessions are encouraged to give thought to whether such a post would be helpful in their context and to bring proposals to the Linkage Commission through the local Presbytery.

Leave to Call a Minister

16. This is only a summary- there may well be conditions attached to the Leave to Call, which are not recorded here. These might include Part-time, Reviewable Tenure, Restricted List, additional income for Minister etc. When a figure is set the year denotes when Leave to Call was granted. This figure will increase automatically under the annual Stipend Review. Expenses are “initial ministerial expenses” which were set in respect to all Leave to Call figures issued up and until March 2017.

Congregation	Stipend	Expenses
Irvinestown	50% £A.M.M. (2016)	£3,750
Tempo	20% £A.M.M. (2016)	£1,500
Pettigo	30% £A.M.M. (2016)	£2,250
Sinclair Seamen's	50% £A.M.M. (2016)	£3,750
Hollywood	£25,500 (2016)	£7,500
Bellaghy	£15,168 (2016)	£4,500
Knockloughrim	£10,112 (2016)	£3,000
Ahorey	2/3rd £A.M.M. (2016)	£5,000
Clare	1/3rd £A.M.M. (2016)	£2,500
1st Broughshane	£32,000 (2016)	£8,500
Tandragee	£27,000 (2016)	£7,500
Groomspart	£36,000 (2016)	£7,500
1st Ballybay	35% €A.M.M. (2016)	35% €12,500
2nd Ballybay	35% €A.M.M. (2016)	35% €12,500
Rockcorry	18% €A.M.M. (2016)	18% €12,500
Drumkeen	12% €A.M.M. (2016)	12% €12,500
Great Victoria Street	£12,500 (2016)	£3,000
Dunmurry	£27,050 (2016)	£7,500
Regent Street, Newtownards	£36,000 (2016)	£7,500
Movilla, Newtownards	£A.M.M. (2016)	£7,500
Drogheda	€30,000 (2016)	€12,500
Connor	£37,705 (2016)	£7,500
Kilmakee	£24,000 (2016)	£7,000
Portaferry	50% £A.M.M. (2017)	£3,750
Buckna	£33,500 (2017)	£7,500
Moy	2/3rds £A.M.M (2017)	£5,000
Benburb	1/3rd £A.M.M. (2017)	£2,500
Richview	60% £A.M.M. (2017)	£3,750
Trinity, Bangor	£35,000 (2017)	£7,500
Ray	2/3rds € A.M.M. (2017)	2/3rds €12,500
Newtowncunningham	1/3rd €A.M.M.(2017)	1/3rd €12,500
1st Antrim	£39,000 (2017)	£7,500
1st Stewartstown	40% £A.M.M.(2017)	40% £7,500
Brigh	45% £A.M.M. (2017)	45%£7,500
Albany	15% £A.M.M. (2017)	15% £7,500
Woodvale	£A.M.M. (2017)	£7,500
Sligo	40% €A.M.M. (2017)	€10,000

Extension of Reviewable Tenure Ministries

17. Tenure of Ministry in Castlewellan and Leitrim was extended for five years with effect from 22nd November 2016 or until the date of the retirement of the Minister whichever event occurs soonest.

18. Tenure of the Part-time Ministry in Crumlin was extended for a further 7 years from 1st March 2017.

19. Reviewable Tenure Ministry in Caledon and Minterburn was extended for seven years from 28th March 2017.

CONGREGATIONS LINKED

20. During the year two linkages were agreed.

Leckpatrick and Donagheady**Terms of Linkage**

- (a) That the congregations of Leckpatrick and Donagheady be linked as from 1st March 2017 or some other 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 stated services each Sunday as follows: Leckpatrick at 11.30am and Donagheady at 10.00am or at such other times as the two Kirk Sessions acting together shall determine.
- (f) That the Stipends (2017) be: Leckpatrick £18,300 and Donagheady £13,700; and initial ministerial expenses: Leckpatrick £4,800 and Donagheady £3,640.
- (g) That Holiday Supplies, and other shared expenses not included in (f) be borne in the proportions 4/7 Leckpatrick and 3/7 Donagheady.
- (h) That Rent, Rates, Taxes and Maintenance of the Manse (or residence for the minister) be borne in the proportions 4/7 Leckpatrick and 3/7 Donagheady.
- (i) That the minister shall reside in Leckpatrick Manse.
- (j) That the directions of the Linkage Commission be observed in respect of the Manse and Manse property at Donagheady.

The congregations are strongly encouraged to ensure that extra personnel are employed to assist in and further the ministry and mission as envisioned by the Kirk Sessions. The Linkage Commission would direct that income from the redundant manse at Donagheady property be apportioned 25% maintenance and 75% to be used for the payment of additional personnel.

Strabane and Sion**Terms of Linkage**

- (a) That the congregations of Strabane and Sion be linked as from 1st January 2017 or some other 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 stated services each Sunday as follows: Strabane at 11.30am and Sion at 10.00 am or at such other times as the two Kirk Sessions acting together shall determine.
- (f) That the Stipends (2017) be: Strabane £20,000 and Sion £12,000; and initial ministerial expenses: Strabane £4,688 and Sion £2,812.
- (g) That Holiday Supplies, and other shared expenses not included in (f) be borne in the proportions 5/8th Strabane and 3/8th Sion.
- (h) That Rent, Rates, Taxes and Maintenance of the Manse (or residence for the minister) be borne in the proportions 5/8th Strabane and 3/8th Sion.
- (i) That the minister shall reside in Strabane Manse.
- (j) That the directions of the Linkage Commission be observed in respect of the Manse and Manse property at Sion.

CONGREGATIONS AMALGAMATED

Lowe Memorial and Berry Street

21. The 2016 General Assembly resolved as follows: That the congregation of Berry Street be amalgamated with the congregation of Lowe Memorial, the date of amalgamation to be no later than 31st December 2016, on terms set by the Linkage Commission (Minutes, page 50, resolution 3).

Terms of Amalgamation

- (a) That the congregation of Berry St be amalgamated with the congregation of Lowe Memorial at a date agreed by Presbytery under the name Lowe Memorial.
- (b) That the two Kirk Sessions become one Kirk Session and the two Congregational Committees become one Congregational Committee until new Committee elections are held.
- (c) The assets (to be dispersed) are defined as Berry St Church building, Halls and surrounding ground, any investments and bank accounts in the name of Berry St Congregation.

With respect to these assets:

- 25% (by monetary value) of the remainder is to be transferred to the Council for Mission in Ireland as a direct contribution for assisting in capital projects connected with church planting;
- 65% (by monetary value) of the remainder is to be transferred to a special account in the name of the South Belfast Presbytery Mission Support Fund (or its successors) for the purpose of Missional funding determined by the Presbytery in partnership with CMI;

- 10% (by monetary value) of the remainder is to be held by the Presbytery for continuing expenses (e.g.insurance/maintenance/legal and advertising fees). Any surplus from the 10% following the disposal of the assets to be transferred to the amalgamated congregation.
- (d) that all future assets including legacies and bequests subsequent to the amalgamation become the property of the amalgamated congregation.
- (e) that the amalgamated congregation will remain responsible for any Berry St liabilities following dispersal of the assets.
- (f) as the assets will not be in place for dispersal prior to the amalgamation, on the date of the amalgamation those assets will be transferred to the ownership of the Presbytery, who will be responsible for any liabilities up to the point of the dispersal of assets in(c) is complete. The Amalgamation Commission appointed by Presbytery will be responsible for the sale of the assets and the distribution as in clause (c).
- (g) that the Stipend of the new congregation is unaffected.

Potential Amalgamation

22. At the time of writing this report, there have been extensive conversations held with another Presbytery about a potential amalgamation. If there is the necessary agreement on this matter by the May meeting of the Commission the details of the proposed amalgamation will appear in the Daily Minutes of the 2017 General Assembly.

REVIEWS, EXPENSES AND FEES PANEL

Mr James Livingstone reports:

REVIEWS

23. In accordance with Par 236(2) of the Code and arising out of other circumstances the Reviews, Expenses and Fees Panel reviewed the stipend of the following Congregations:

Congregation	Stipend
ARDS PRESBYTERY	
Ballygilbert	No Change
Hamilton Road, Bangor	No Change
Lisnabreen	No Change
Movilla	Increase by £750 per year for next 2 years.
Trinity, Bangor	No Change
ARMAGH PRESBYTERY	
1st Armagh	Increase by £1,000

BALLYMENA PRESBYTERY

Ballee	No Change
Buckna	No Change

NORTH BELFAST PRESBYTERY

Abbot's Cross	No Change
Ballygomartin	No Change
Ballyhenry	Increase by £1,000
New Mossley	No Change
Whitehouse	No Change

SOUTH BELFAST PRESBYTERY

Saintfield Road	Increase by £1,500
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EAST BELFAST PRESBYTERY

McQuiston Memorial	No Change
Stormont	No Change
Tullycarnet	No Change
Westbourne	Increase by £1,000

CARRICKFERGUS PRESBYTERY

Balllycarry	No Change
1st Carrickfergus	No Change
Downshire	No Change
2nd Islandmagee	No Change

COLERAINE AND LIMAVADY PRESBYTERY

Ballysally	Implement Increase of £1,000 (as agreed in 2015)
Balteaghand	No Change
Bovevagh	No Change
Hazelbank	No Change
1st Limavady and	No Change
Magilligan	No Change
Macosquin	No Change

DERRY AND DONEGAL PRESBYTERY

Ballylennon and	No Change
St. Johnston	No Change
Kilfennan	Increase by £1,000
Raphoeand	No Change
Ballindrait	No Change

DOWN PRESBYTERY

Ardglass and	No Change
Downpatrick	Increase by £500 per year for next 2 years.
Edengrove	No Change

DROMORE PRESBYTERY

Hillhall	No Change
Moirá	Increase by £1,000

DUBLIN AND MUNSTER PRESBYTERY

Adelaide Road	No Change
Donabate	Increase by €1,000 and retain Annual Review

IVEAGH PRESBYTERY

Tandragee	No Change
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MONAGHAN PRESBYTERY

1st Ballybay and	No Change
2nd Ballybay and	No Change
Rockcorry and	No Change
Drumkeen	No Change
Drum and	No Change
Cootehill and	No Change
Kilmount	No Change

NEWRY PRESBYTERY

Clarkesbridge and 1st Newtownhamilton and	No Change
Garmany's Grove and	No Change
McKelvey's Grove	No Change

OMAGH PRESBYTERY

Enniskillen	No Change
Mountjoy and	Increase by £1,000
Drumlegagh	No Change

ROUTE PRESBYTERY

Armoy and	No Change
Ramoan	No Change
1st Kilraughts	No Change

TEMPLEPATRICK PRESBYTERY

Greystone Road	No Change
High Street, Antrim	Increase by £1,000
Kilbride	No Change

TYRONE PRESBYTERY

1st Cookstown	No Change
Maghera	Increase by £1,500
Molesworth	No Change
Newmills and	No Change
Carland	Increase by £1,000
Orritor and	No Change
Claggan	No Change

Review of Ministerial Expenses Scheme

24. Proposal regarding a 2 Part Expenses Scheme for PCI: the issue of the Scheme by which P.C.I. makes payments to its Ministers in respect of expenses has been considered by the (former) Union Commission and the Linkage Commission for a number of years. To set the matter in context: “expenses” are reasonable legitimate costs directly incurred by an individual arising out of their ‘employment’.

25. The current system is that at the time when the Linkage Commission grants Leave to Call, in addition to setting a Stipend Figure, the Commission sets a Minimum Expenses figure. This figure is based on two elements: travel, and other expenses.

26. For 2016 based on an average of 14,400 business miles per year, the recommended figures for travel are:

Northern Ireland: £5,985 Republic of Ireland €10,000.

Ministers recording a higher business mileage should be paid more, while a lower amount may be appropriate to those who do not record as many business miles.

As it has done for a number of years, the Commission used 125% of the travel recommendation in setting its recommended figures for total expenses, which are as follows in 2016:

Northern Ireland: £7,500; Republic of Ireland €12,500.

27. It is acknowledged that in setting the total figure using this methodology the Commission sought to reflect what was felt to be a reasonable average figure but it remains an art rather than a science. In proposing a replacement to the present Scheme the Commission is guided by the desire to achieve a system that more appropriately reflects the reality of expenses incurred by Ministers and which is fully transparent, accurate and accountable.

28. In the Union Commission Report to 2015 General Assembly, on the issue of the Review of Ministerial Expenses, it was stated that: *The fundamental aim of the review is to ensure that the system for the payment of Expenses ensures that Ministers are fully reimbursed for ALL the expenses they incur in the course of their work, whilst at the same time achieving a system that is fully transparent, accurate and accountable.* (Reports, p.145, Par 39.) The Report went on to state that at the February Meeting of the then Union Commission the following report was received:

1. A “pure reimbursement System” for ministerial travel expenses in which Congregational Treasurers would reimburse Ministers’ monthly, on the basis of accurate records of daily work related travel, but which would not detail individual visits. Reimbursement would be at the rate recognised by HMRC, or the equivalent on Republic of Ireland , and this would therefore remove travel expenses completely from the Ministers’ taxable returns.
2. An Expenses Allowance to cover the other work – related expenses which are significantly more difficult to measure and record, with the Linkage Commission continuing to set this figure, as under the current system. It would continue to be the Ministers’ responsibility to account for this element of ministerial expenses in their tax returns. (Reports, p.145, Par 41.)

The 2015 General Assembly approved the following Resolution:

That the proposals re Ministerial Expenses based on a 2-part system made up of (a) reimbursement at HMRC rates for all travel related expenses and (b) an expenses allowance set by Linkage Commission for all other expenses ,be approved, and that the Linkage Commission be instructed to present full proposals for the introduction of this system to 2016 General Assembly. (Minutes, p.192, Resolution 4.)

29. Accordingly at the 2016 General Assembly Option 3 (see Appendix 1) was adopted (Reports, p.181, Minutes p.50, resolution 4). It was intended to implement this in April, 2017. However, before implementation the Commission conducted a consultation process seeking the views of ministers, treasurers and Presbyteries. Following the receipt of comments during the consultation period the Linkage Commission exercised its Assembly powers and suspended the implementation of this Option. The Commission has now drawn up Option 4 (again detailed within Appendix 1) and set out below. In light of the opinions expressed during the consultation period, the Linkage Commission recommends the General Assembly should now adopt Option 4 for implementation in April 2018.

Supply Fee

30. The level of Supply Fee is determined by the Code. Par 238, and for 2017 this is £102 (€155) and £68 (€105) where only a single service is supplied in one Congregation. Travelling expenses should be paid in accordance with the rate set for attendance at Assembly Councils, currently 15p (22c) per mile.

CHURCH ARCHITECTURE AND MANSES PANEL

Mr Brian Knox reports:

31. In the past year the Panel has met eight times and considered forty-nine applications concerning the construction of new churches, halls, manses, extensions to church halls and manses, removal of pews for wheelchair access and the provision of new audio-visual systems. Forty-eight of these applications were recommended to Linkage Commission for approval. While many were able to be dealt with based on information provided, on other occasions the Panel were able to assist by making helpful suggestions which were appreciated by the Congregations involved.

32. During the year the Panel were able to give guidance to Congregations in respect of proposals by Department of the Environment/Department for Communities to remove Ecclesiastical Exemption in respect to Listed Church Buildings.

Order of Permissions re Congregational Property

33. Prior to the new Structures arrangement, the Church Architecture Committee had to be consulted concerning changes to congregational property. This committee sat under various Boards from time to time, but was always an Assembly Committee, reporting to a Board. The order in which permissions were required was

- (a) Congregation, Presbytery, Committee

More recently this was changed to

(b) Congregation, Committee, Presbytery.

34. Under the new structures, the Assembly Body which has to be consulted is the Linkage Commission. In practice the Church Architecture and Manses Panel examines proposals and makes recommendations to the Commission. The order of permissions continues to be a modified form of (b) as

(c) Congregation, Commission, Presbytery.

There is a variation in actual practice. Some requests come directly to the Church Architecture and Manses Panel, whereas some come through Presbytery. In the latter case some Presbyteries simply transmit, whereas others give the proposals detailed consideration.

35. Identified issues that cause difficulties with this order include:

(a) Variation in practice.

(b) Presbyteries are uncertain of their role – transmitting body only, power to veto in principle, power to recommend/require variation to proposals?

(c) Confusion over whether Presbytery has the power to make a different decision from the Commission which is a higher court of the church. If the Linkage Commission has given permission for a project to proceed, can the Presbytery at final sign-off refuse permission?

(d) Changes to proposals requested by the Church Architecture and Manses Committee may not be communicated to Presbytery with the result that the project that goes ahead may be significantly different from that originally presented to Presbytery.

36. The Commission considered whether to retain the present order, or to adopt the following order for permissions: Congregation, Presbytery, Commission. The following pros and cons of this new order were identified:

Pros

- Order appears more ‘natural’, progressing from a lower to a higher court.
- Opportunity for Presbytery to veto a project on missional, financial or other grounds before it comes to the Panel.
- Opportunity for Presbyteries which have the capacity to do so to critique the details of a project.
- The Panel/Commission, can exercise an ‘expert’ role in relation to design.
- Most Presbytery Clerks are in favour of this order.

Cons

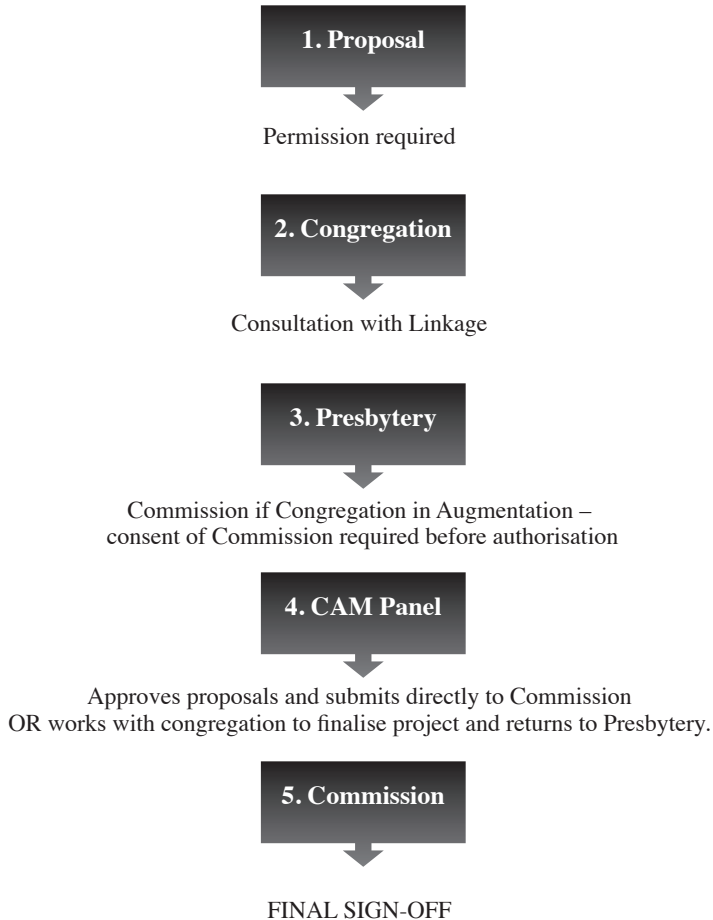
- Change.
- Presbytery does not have final sign-off.
- The order of permissions for augmented congregations is different from that for others.
- More paperwork.

37. Informal consultation with Clerks of Presbytery indicated a majority in favour of the new order. The Commission recommends this new order, that is: Congregation, Presbytery, Commission. Appropriate overtures are appended and the General Assembly is asked to note these initial guidelines, which may be modified in the light of experience. In addition a pro-forma application form will issued to congregations.

GUIDELINES ON PERMISSIONS RE CONGREGATIONAL PROPERTY

1. If there is a proposal for a congregation to carry out work in connection with property which falls within the scope of Code Par 57(5), permission at a congregational meeting must first be obtained.
2. The advice of the Church Architecture and Manses Panel may be sought early on, even before congregational approval is obtained.
3. Full planning permission should not be sought until final sign-off by the Linkage Commission.
4. The proposal is submitted to Presbytery which decides whether to approve the proposal on missional, financial and other related grounds, unless the congregation receives augmentation, in which case it consults the Linkage Commission and obtains its consent before authorising the project.
5. If the project is approved, Presbytery transmits it to the Church Architecture and Manses Panel. It may, but is not required to, include comment on the details.
6. The Panel examines the proposal, taking into account any Presbytery comments. If necessary, it works with the congregation to finalise the project.
7. The Congregation resubmit the finalised project to Presbytery.
8. Presbytery approves and signs off on the finalised project and sends the revised plans to the Panel Convener for final submission to the Linkage Commission.
9. The Commission gives final sign-off.

IN DIAGRAMMATIC FORM



38. The remit of the Panel is: the consideration of the site and plans of all new buildings proposed to be erected on congregational property and of all proposed demolition, structural alterations of or structural additions to existing buildings; the consideration of proposals and designs for memorials, windows, artificial lighting and for seating and furnishings including the installation of audio-visual systems; and making recommendation to Linkage Commission in respect of a wide variety of manse issues. All enquiries and submissions for the Church Architecture and Manses Panel should be sent to Miss Lorraine Beatty, Property Support Officer, Assembly Buildings, 2-10 Fisherwick Place, Belfast, BT1 6DW.

ADDITIONAL PASTORAL PERSONNEL AND AUXILIARY MINISTRY PANEL

The Rev Colin Gamble reports:

39. In the past year the Linkage Commission approved the creation of 27 new APP posts and the extension of 20 existing posts. There were no requests for Congregational Auxiliary Ministry posts.

40. Kirk Sessions are advised to contact the Convener of the Panel as early as possible whenever considering the possibility of creating an APP post. Guidelines are available from the Convener which set out the necessary steps. Before a post may be advertised, approval must be sought and received from Peninsula Business Services, Presbytery and the Linkage Commission.

41. Extensions to existing APP posts also require approval from Peninsula Business Services, Presbytery and the Linkage Commission. Sometimes a request to extend an existing post is submitted late. Therefore, when appointing someone to a fixed-term post, Kirk Sessions are advised to note carefully when the contract ends and to decide early on whether or not to extend it.

42. New APP Salary Scales for 2017 were agreed by the Linkage Commission at its meeting in November 2016. These are available from the Convener of the APPAM Panel and are shown below. Kirk Sessions should normally follow the Salary Scales when creating a new post. Advice is given in the Guidelines for when it might be appropriate to award a salary increment to an employee in an existing post.

43. Guidelines for creating Congregational Auxiliary Ministry posts are available from the Convener of the Panel. Proposals to create such posts should normally come to the Linkage Commission through the Presbytery.

44. The Panel, in conjunction with the Head of Personnel, has also been working on two items of business assigned to the Linkage Commission by last year's General Assembly. The first is to produce guidelines to help Kirk Sessions deal with general employment issues. The second is to roll out a system to ensure all remunerated organists (or other similar persons) receive a contract and non-remunerated organists (or other similar persons) receive a volunteer agreement. It is intended to complete this work shortly.

45. Ministers are reminded to seek approval from Presbytery and the Linkage Commission before undertaking paid public appointments ('Extra-Parochial Work'). This kind of work has been defined as 'Remunerated work outside of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland undertaken by a parish minister that amounts to more than six hours in any week.' A return form, available from the Convener of the Panel, should normally be returned before the appointment begins and then annually by 15th September.

APP RECOMMENDED SALARY SCALES 2017

	Sterling salary pt	Euro salary pt	Level of responsibility of post	Qualification attained by employee or level of experience
Band A	£17,960 £18,603 £19,253 £19,899 £20,721 £21,363	€27,691 €28,683 €29,684 €30,681 €31,949 €32,937	Mostly direct work with children, young people or adults under close regular supervision; low management responsibility for people or projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtained or working towards OCN level 2 and 3 qualifications, PCI Youth/Children's Ministry Course or similar qualification in the relevant field; • Where this level of qualification is not held, demonstrated experience in this field of activity may be deemed equivalent.
Band B	£22,401 £23,417 £24,467 £25,550 £26,290	€34,539 €36,105 €37,722 €39,392 €40,533	General responsibility for specific areas of programme and ministry oversight; graduating to less closely supervised responsibility for programmes, strategy, volunteers or leaders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate recognition of attainment or working towards undergraduate or postgraduate theological study or professional qualifications (including Youth and Community, teaching qualification or other related professional qualifications such as counselling or social work). • Where this level of qualification is not held, demonstrated experience in this field of activity may be deemed equivalent.

Please note:

- This salary scale was initially based on the JNC Youth and Community work scale (2009) for the UK and has since been updated annually. For 2017, the NI salary scale has been increased in line with the increase in the NI ministerial minimum (1.5% for 2017). The ROI salary scale has been increased in line with the increase in the ROI ministerial minimum (1% for 2017).
- The above rates are deemed to apply to a minimum of 37.5 hours per week. For employees working less than 37.5 hours per week a pro-rata rate is applicable.
- The APPAM Panel Convener of the Linkage Commission should be contacted for the most up to date figures and for advice on their interpretation.

LINKAGE COMMISSION

APPENDIX 1

Proposal regarding a 2 Part Expenses Scheme for P.C.I.

OPTION 3

This was the Option adopted by the 2016 General Assembly and sent out to all active Ministers and Congregational Treasurers for Consultation regarding its implementation.

Part 1 – Travelling and Associated Expenses.

1. The Commission will draw up a Mileage Log. This Log will set out the following details:
 - (a) Minister's Name
 - (b) Congregations in a situation of Linkages. It is proposed that the Linkage Commission when setting Leave to Call figures will agree the % of Expenses to be met by each Congregation in the Linkage.
 - (c) Vehicle Description
 - (d) Rate per mile. Currently to comply with Tax Legislation this will be £0.45p per mile for first 10,000 miles and £0.25p per mile for over 10,000 miles (Northern Ireland) and €0.66cents per mile for first 10,000 miles and € 0.36 cents per mile over 10,000 miles (Republic of Ireland).
 - 1.1 The log will also show the following:
 - (i) Miles Year to Date Carried Forward
 - (ii) Current Month
 - (iii) Miles Year to Date
 - 1.2 On a daily basis the Minister will record:
 - (a) Date of Journeys
 - (b) Starting Location (this will normally be Manse)
 - (c) Destination. This will be general destination e.g. Lisburn Please note no personal identifying information is to be recorded e.g. names off persons visited etc.
 - (d) Description- this will be general e.g. Visits, Hospital Visits, School Assemblies, Meetings. Again no personal identifying details to be recorded.
 - (e) Mileage.
 - (f) Other.

The information contained on this Log will be held by the Minister and can therefore be made available to HMRC should any review of an individual's tax assessment be requested. The monthly mileage will then be transferred to the Monthly Expenses Form for ALL Expenses. This claims form should be submitted to the Congregational Treasurer by the 5th of each month.

Ministers who attend Councils or Commissions of the General Assembly should NOT include these journeys on this form as they are included on a separate form and paid centrally from Incidental Fund.

There are a few Ministers who avail of the “company car” scheme. They should note that reimbursement is at a separate rate:

Engine Size	Petrol	Diesel
1400cc or less	12p	13p
1401cc to 2000cc	15p	13p
Over 2000cc	21p	17p

Part 2 – Other Expenses

It is recognised that in drawing up proposals for the second part of the Scheme relating to All other Expenses there are both difficulties and sensitivities. However what cannot be lost sight of are:

1. The issue is one of Expenses i.e. the reimbursement to Ministers of actual expenses they have incurred in allowing them to carry out their role as a Minister of Word and Sacrament. Unfortunately a situation has been allowed to develop where the payment of “Expenses” was seen by some as an alternate to paying appropriate Ministerial Stipends. This has meant that Expenses were used to supplement Stipend rather than a payment for costs accrued. The alteration to the level of Minimum Stipend may have gone some way to addressing this but it may be that by the introduction of the new system Ministers may feel that their “total income package “ is being reduced and they are being left out of pocket.
2. The Code of P.C.I. requires that unless special permission is granted a Minister must live in a Manse in the Charge(s) to which he/she is called. Manses come in all shapes and sizes ranging from the old, large, draughty impossible to heat to the new modern well insulated fuel efficient building. It has to be borne in mind that the Congregation is only responsible for costs relating to 2public rooms”. To design a system which seeks to reimburse costs at a standard level for all is difficult. The current system simply “loaded” 125% onto travel and arrived at a global expenses figure. While it was the best that could be done, it is hard to argue that it is a perfect appropriate one size fits all.
3. Some have argued that whatever replaces it must not leave a Minister” out of pocket” but this is to suggest that what we are currently doing is appropriate. If that is the case why are we changing. To repeat the well -worn phrase” if it’s not broke don’t fix it”. It may be that is the conclusion though we leave ourselves open to external forces who may take a different position.

OPTION 4

To replace the current system of payment of Expenses to Ministers by Congregations with the following:

1. Taxable Car Allowance and Mileage Rate

- (a) Ministers will receive an annual Taxable Car Allowance initially set at £3,600 (ROI €5,400) and paid on a monthly basis via the Central Payroll i.e. £300 (ROI €450) per month. This allowance is a contribution towards the standing costs incurred by Ministers to provide a vehicle for the purposes of performing their duties. (*Part-time ministers should refer to Section 3*)
- (b) In addition a payment of 15p (ROI 22 cents) per mile for each business mile travelled will be paid locally by the Congregation(s). Ministers will have to complete a Monthly Record of Mileage and submit a claim for their mileage to their Congregational Committee for payment. The Linkage Commission will review the mileage rates payable on an annual basis.

2. Taxable Allowance for Ministerial Duties

- (a) Ministers will also receive an annual Allowance for Ministerial Duties initially set at £2,400 (R.O.I €4,080) and paid on a monthly basis via the Central Payroll i.e. £200 (ROI €340) per month. (*Part-time ministers should refer to Section 3*)

3. Payments to Part-time Ministers of Allowances

- (a) Ministers who have received a Call under the Part-time Ministry Scheme will be entitled to receive a payment of the Taxable Car Allowance and Taxable Allowance for Ministerial Duties in line with the percentage of Full-time Ministry set when the Linkage Commission granted Leave to Call (e.g. 50% or 60% etc.).
- (b) Part-time Ministers will be entitled to payment for all Business Miles as set out at 1(b).

4. General

- (a) The Taxable Car Allowance and Allowance for Ministerial Duties (the Allowances) are non-pensionable.
- (b) For ministers in congregations in Northern Ireland both Allowances will be subject to PAYE and NIC deductions.
- (c) For Ministers in congregations in the Republic of Ireland, in line with the present arrangements for the payments of stipend, the Allowances will be paid without Tax and PRSI deductions and ministers will be responsible for declaring the Allowances as income on their annual tax return.
- (d) The Allowances will be set at the time when the Linkage Commission grants Leave to Call but will be uplifted annually in accordance with the % increase to the Basic Ministerial Minimum Stipend as set by the Support Services Committee of the General Council. The Linkage Commission may consider some variation at subsequent Leave to Call depending on circumstances.

- (e) The Mileage Rate will be reviewed annually by the Linkage Commission.
- (f) The Allowances will be collected from Congregations through the quarterly Direct Debit System. In the case of congregations in Northern Ireland Employer's NIC on the Allowances will also be collected.
- (g) Ministers should be able to make a tax claim for expenses incurred against their Allowances and Mileage Rate via their annual tax returns. The amount of the claim will depend on the actual mileage and other costs incurred and the extent to which they are tax allowable. A minister's tax claim could therefore be less or more than the amount of the Allowances and Mileage Rate.
- (h) Ministers should as at present continue to claim mileage to Presbytery and other non-congregational business from their congregation(s).
- (i) Ministers who are required to travel on General Assembly business should continue to claim this mileage from the General Secretary's Department.
- (j) In a Linkage the proportion of Allowances payable by each Congregation should be in line with the percentage of Stipend payable by each as set by the Linkage Commission when Leave to Call is granted. The Claim of Mileage should be covered in the same proportions. In the case of ministers in North / South linkages the Allowances will be paid in the same currency as the stipend the minister receives.
- (k) The New Scheme to be introduced with effect from 6th April 2018.

**ASSESSMENTS ON FULLY CONSTITUTED
CHURCH EXTENSION CHARGES – 2016**

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

<i>Church</i>	<i>Fully Constituted</i>	<i>Families (†)</i>	<i>Assess 2016 £</i>	<i>Assess Income £</i>	<i>Income* £</i>
New Mossley	2005	112 (77)	115	39,916	121,918
Ballysally	2007	150 (87)	130	51,731	156,682

† Families contributing at least £5.00 per annum

* As from 2012 Income includes all Organisational Income

ASSESSMENTS ON CHURCH EXTENSION CHARGES – 2016

<i>Church</i>	<i>Building</i>	<i>Assessable. Income</i>	<i>Stip.</i>	<i>C.M.F.</i>	<i>Ch. Ext.</i>	<i>H.M.</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>£</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>£</i>
Taughmonagh	–	10,823	3,247	1,623	1,082	649	6,601

LICENTIATES – 2017

Licentiates are paid 75% of the Ministerial Minimum = £18,092 plus House Allowance pa (single - £702; married - £1,002) if applicable. House Allowance is shared equally between the Congregation and CMF

FIRST YEAR – From 1 January, 2017

<i>Congregation</i>	<i>Assistant</i>	<i>Date of Licensing</i>	<i>Minister's Stipend</i> £	<i>Congregation's Contribution</i> £	<i>C.M.F.</i> £
Wellington	* J Boyd	19.06.16	42,063 (30%)	13,120	6,246
First Ballymena	* M Boyd	29.05.16	39,275 (30%)	12,284	7,082
Maze	* E Frazer	19.06.16	32,463 (30%)	10,240	9,126
Abbot's Cross	* S Hawthorne	29.05.16	32,529 (30%)	10,260	9,106
The Mall	* C Jackson	05.06.16	37,504 (27.5%)	10,815	8,551
McQuiston Memorial	* A Marsh	05.06.16	35,154 (30%)	11,047	8,319
Immanuel	† J Martin	27.05.16	33,094 (30%)	10,279	8,787
Cooke Centenary	* J Newell	19.06.16	31,033 (30%)	9,811	9,555
Fisherwick	* J O'Donnell	18.06.16	39,275 (30%)	12,284	7,082
Whitehouse	* R Orr	05.06.16	32,158 (25%)	8,541	10,825
Hamilton Road	* R Patton	29.05.16	46,177 (30%)	14,354	5,012
Alexandra	* J Porter	27.05.16	30,003 (25%)	8,002	11,364
Harryville	* M Rutledge	05.06.16	37,235 (30%)	11,672	7,694
Ballyclare	* J Smith	26.06.16	37,421 (30%)	11,727	7,639

* Married House Allowance

† Single House Allowance

No House Allowance - House provided by Congregation

s/a Special Arrangement

LICENTIATES – 2017

Licentiates are paid 80% of the Ministerial Minimum = £19,298 plus House Allowance pa (single - £702; married - £1,002) if applicable. House Allowance is shared equally between the Congregation and CMF

SECOND YEAR – From 1 January, 2017

<i>Congregation</i>	<i>Assistant</i>	<i>Date of Licensing</i>	<i>Minister's Stipend</i> £	<i>Congregation's Contribution</i> £	<i>C.M.F.</i> £
Gardenmore	* A Burke	21.07.15	39,275 (32%)	13,069	7,521
Joymount	* I Cahoon	31.05.15	39,836 (32%)	13,249	7,341
Kilfennan	† D Clarke	07.06.15	35,666 (32%)	11,764	8,526
Kirkpatrick Memorial	* R Cronin	21.06.15	45,733 (32%)	15,136	5,454
Knock	* A Dickey	31.05.15	48,658 (32%)	16,072	4,518
1st Carrickfergus	† A Gill	07.06.15	43,343 (32%)	14,221	6,069
Bangor, West	* D Gray	14.06.15	43,911 (32%)	14,553	6,037
Bangor, Hamilton Road	* M Gray	05.06.15	46,177 (32%)	15,278	5,312
Carryduff	* B Kee	12.06.15	36,184 (32%)	12,080	8,510
1st Larne	† D Kelly	07.06.15	39,774 (32%)	13,079	7,211
Hill Street, Lurgan	* S Kennedy	26.06.15	40,563 (32%)	13,481	7,109
2nd Randalstown	* R Kernohan	07.06.15	30,340 (S/A)	5,600	14,990
1st Holywood	* S Lowry	31.05.15	39,790 (32%)	13,234	7,356
Ballyholme	* C Lynn	19.06.15	35,319 (32%)	11,803	8,787
Derramore	† R McClure	14.06.15	13,442 (32%)	4,420	2,439
Drumachose	† R McClure	14.06.15	26,324 (32%)	8,656	4,775
Templepatrick	* A McCracken	07.06.15	40,589 (32%)	13,489	7,101
2nd Comber	* A McQuade	21.06.15	44,529 (32%)	14,750	5,840
Dungannon	* G Mullan	14.06.15	38,886 (32%)	12,945	7,645
Stormont	* B Van der Linde	28.06.15	44,399 (32%)	14,709	5,881

LICENTIATES – 2017

Licentiates are paid 85% of the Ministerial Minimum = £20,504 plus House Allowance pa (single - £702; married - £1,002) if applicable. House Allowance is shared equally between the Congregation and CMF

THIRD YEAR – From 1 January, 2017

<i>Congregation</i>	<i>Assistant</i>	<i>Date of Licensing</i>	<i>Minister's Stipend</i> £	<i>Congregation's Contribution</i> £	<i>C.M.F.</i> £
Cooke Centenary	* C Heron	17.06.12	31,033 (32%)	10,432	11,382
Kilbride	† M Fryer (to 31.1.17)	16.06.13	37,215 (32%)	1,021	746
First Antrim	† P McClelland (to 31.1.17)	09.06.13	40,328 (27%)	937	830
High Kirk	* S Orr (to 31.1.17)	16.06.13	43,047 (32%)	1,190	602
Greenwell Street	† G Clinton	22.06.14	38,276 (32%)	12,599	8,915
Ballylinney	* R Hamilton	06.06.14	31,548 (27%)	9,019	12,795
Glendermott	† M McMaw	08.06.14	37,248 (32%)	12,270	9,244
Ballygilbert	* J McWatters (to 02.02.17)	08.06.14	36,165 (32%)	1,072	865
Harmony Hill	† S Moore	22.06.14	39,790 (32%)	13,084	8,430
Whiteabbey	† J Warburton (to 26.01.17)	08.06.14	39,417 (32%)	923	610

* Married House Allowance
 † Single House Allowance
 s/a Special Arrangement
 # No House Allowance

ORDAINED ASSISTANTS

From 1 January, 2017

<i>Congregation</i>	<i>Assistant</i>	<i>Date of Ord</i>	<i>Minister's Stipend £</i>	<i>% Min</i>	<i>Salary £</i>	<i>House Allow £</i>	<i>Total £</i>	<i>Cong Contrib £</i>	<i>C.M.F. £</i>
Bloomfield	* D Burke	08.05.16	39,538	100	25,659	1,002	26,661	2,000	24,661

* Married House Allowance

† Single House Allowance

s/a Special Arrangement

No House Allowance - House provided by Congregation

ASSOCIATE MINISTERS – 2017

<i>Name</i>	<i>Congregation</i>	<i>Salary</i>		<i>Recovery</i> £	<i>House Allowance</i>		<i>Employer Pension</i> NIC Costs £
		<i>Paid</i> £	<i>Recovery</i> £		<i>Paid</i> £	<i>Costs</i> £	
A Mullan	Mourne	27,839.42	27,839.42		n/a	9,411.00	
G McCracken	Ballywillan	26,430.00	26,430.00		2,000.00	8,878.00	
D McGaughey	Cuningham Memorial	29,514.00	29,514.00		n/a	10,044.00	
D Stanfield	First Bangor	30,799.00	30,799.00		n/a	10,530.00	
G Ball	Orangefield	25,916.00	25,916.00		1,000.00	8,684.00	
A Galbraith	West Church Bangor	26,173.00	26,173.00		1,000.00	8,782.00	
D Currie	Knock	25,787.00	25,787.00		2,000.00	8,635.00	

LINKAGE COMMISSION**RESOLUTIONS**

1. That the Guidelines for Interviews at Vacancies, as amended in the Linkage Commission Report, Par 14, be adopted.
2. That Ministers and Kirk Session are encouraged to consider whether the Auxiliary Ministry Scheme would be helpful in their context.
3. That Option 4, as outlined in Appendix 1 of the Linkage Commission Report, be adopted as the basis for a two part Ministerial Expenses Scheme and that the it be approved for implementation in April, 2018.
4. That a change of order of permissions re Congregational Property to Congregation, Presbytery, Commission, as in the Linkage Commission Report, Pars 33-37, be approved and the Guidelines noted.
5. That CMF be authorised to pay inadequate expenses grants towards expenses incurred by Ministers, up to a limit of NI £5,985 or RI €10,000, within the terms of resolution 3, p.70 General Assembly Minutes, 1988.
6. That the Report of the Linkage Commission be received.

FOR INFORMATION

The following body is not under the control of the General Assembly. The Report is included for information only.

PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IRELAND

The Very Rev Dr John Lockington writes:

The Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland reports that 2016 has been another busy year when we have built upon some of the achievements outlined in last year's report.

It has however been a challenging year dominated by some important issues not all of which are as yet capable of resolution.

1. We have had to alter quite fundamentally how we present our accounts and fulfil various other regulations in order to bring us into line with the requirements of the Charity Commissioners. All of this was notified to us well in advance, and helpful guidance was readily available. We for our part have tried to follow the regulations with meticulous care, and we believe that we have achieved the requirements of a responsible charity. During the year we took out indemnity insurance to cover our obligations as a Charity Trustees

2. Throughout much of the year, we have lived with uncertainty over the question of our future accommodation. Last year we pled our case for additional money to enable us to take over the whole of 26 College Green, and we were delighted when this was granted.

However, as a result of a decision of the General Assembly in June, the society has been invited to occupy a prestigious site in Assembly Buildings. At a Special Meeting of Council on 13 May, 2016 we welcomed the invitation, but outlined a number of concerns. At the time of writing, we await written assurances on these and other issues we have raised.

3. Whatever the final outcome may be, we will still need financial assistance to begin the conversion of either premises to meet our needs

4. As well as an excellent programme of lectures, we have continued to incorporate some less formal events. These included a notable symposium on the First World War to mark the centenary of the Battle of the Somme; co-operation with the Presbyterian Children's Society and its 150th anniversary; a summer visit to Magee Campus and a Field Trip to Newtownabbey and South Antrim.

5. During the year, in addition to the Bulletin we had the official launch in March 2016 by the Moderator of Dr WP Addley's book, Jack Weir, in addition to producing three other publications, Putting Children First (Jointly with the Children's Society), The Rentoul Dynasty by Dr John Lockington, and Dr Joe Thompson's book, Jonathan Simpson.

Our publication Committee has recently produced a study paper about future policy and how to market our productions.

6. Over the last 5 years the Society has benefited enormously from funding from MAGUS (the Ministerial Advisory Group on the Ulster Scots Academy) but unfortunately this funding stream has now ended. We are, however, exploring other sources of funding.

7. The Commercial Use of Assembly Buildings Task Group is working on the development in the reception area of Assembly Buildings of an exhibition

about PCI, its work and witness as well as a history of the denomination. The Society has been working closely with the Task Group on the historical element of the exhibition, particularly on the selection of suitable material for display.

8. The Society is very grateful to individuals, congregations and others who entrust historical material to the care of the Society. This year has seen the completion of the transfer to the Society's premises in 26 College Green of all the Synod and Presbytery minutes that were stored in the Assembly Buildings strong room. Not only are they being housed in dry conditions but they have all been cleaned, boxed in archival boxes and catalogued. A growing number of congregational records are also being entrusted to our care.

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

10. In April, the Council of the Society attended a very successful Away Day in 1st Holywood Presbyterian Church, facilitated by Mr Edgar Jardine, to discuss the future direction of the Society. As a result a draft Action Plan has been produced which will be monitored regularly though the outcomes will to some extent depend on funding, on the future location of the Society's library and archive and on the continuing support of congregations to publicise the Society.

11. As with any organisation corporate governance is important if the Society is to be responsible and effective so it behoves us to re-examine our Constitution from time to time. With this in mind the Society's Council has been reviewing the existing Constitution to ensure that it remains relevant and up-to-date. A revised version will be proposed for adoption at the 2017 AGM in March.

12. During 2016 there were 22,139 visits to the Society's website, an increase of over 11% from the previous year. New features are continually being added to the website e.g. on our History page a number of new articles on people, places and subjects of Presbyterian interest have been produced. The History of Presbyterian Congregations is not only being constantly updated but is being added to with the addition of available congregational histories. In addition we have begun to list what records have survived for each congregation. In order to publicise events, publications and lectures we make full use of Facebook.

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

14. Once again we would appeal for new members, and ask all our members to attend lectures and events, buy our publications, and try to introduce others to our Society. A number of Presbyteries have appointed Historical Agents, while others are in the process of doing so. We hope this will improve the local promotion of events and publications. We continue to be grateful to the few congregations who directly support our work. Our aim is to continue to serve the Church in every way we can.

FOR INFORMATION

The following funds are not under the control of the General Assembly and the Reports are included for information only.

OLD AGE FUND, WOMEN'S FUND AND INDIGENT LADIES' FUND

The Rev W P H Erskine reports:

1. The Directors report that, during the last financial year which ended 31st December 2016, 95 beneficiaries (42 in the Old Age Fund, 32 in the Women's Fund and 21 in the Indigent Ladies' Fund) received grants.

2. The changes in beneficiaries during the year is as follows:

Beneficiaries Receiving Quarterly Grant	Old Age Fund	Presbyterian Women's Fund	Indigent Ladies Fund	TOTAL
At 1 January 2015	38	28	17	83
New Grants Provided	3	3	2	8
Deaths	(2)	–	–	(2)
Grants no longer required	(1)	(3)	–	(4)
As at 31 December 2015	38	28	19	85
Beneficiaries receiving one-off donations	1	1	2	4
Deaths and Grants no longer required (as above)	3	3	–	6
No of Beneficiaries receiving assistance during the year	42	32	21	95

3. The total distribution of the Funds in Grants, Donations and Gifts was £153,100 (£67,025 from the Old Age Fund, £50,640 from the Women's Fund and £35,435 from the Indigent Ladies' Fund).

4. An annual grant of £1,440, paid quarterly, was sent to beneficiaries during the year (2015: £1,440).

5. A 'Special Gift' of £360 (2015: £360) 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.

10. The Directors wish to record their deep appreciation for the committed service and valuable contribution of Mr Robert Kerr who died on 25 December 2016. Mr Kerr had served as a Director of the Funds from 24 March 1981 and was President of the Funds from 16 March 2005 to 23 March 2011.

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