

**Item 1 – GENERAL COUNCIL: Section A – Supplementary Report
(Tuesday Morning)**

MEMORIAL RECORD

The **Rev Samuel McMillan BA**, Minister Emeritus of Caledon and Minterburn Congregations in the Presbytery of Armagh, died on 18th May 2015 in the eighty-fifth year of his age and the fiftieth year of his ministry. He was born at Belfast on 13th October 1930 the second of three siblings, two boys and a girl, to Samuel McMillan, a Lamplighter, and his wife Agnes, née Hunter. Raised in connection with the Congregation of Newington, in North Belfast, he was educated at Hillman Primary School and later Shaftesbury House Tutorial College, Belfast. On leaving school he worked in Mackie's and then as a Shipping Clerk with the York Street Flax Spinning Company for several years. Responding to the call of God to the ordained ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland he attended Magee University College, Londonderry, in 1957, followed by Trinity College, Dublin, graduating BA in 1961. He pursued his theological studies at the Magee Theological College, Londonderry (1960-1961) then at Knox College, Toronto, Canada (1961-1962) which is affiliated to the University of Toronto, where he also served with the Canadian Home Mission for five months. He completed his course at the Assembly's College, Belfast (1962-1963). He served his assistantship with the Rev Samuel McKinley in Glengormley Congregation from 1963 to 1966. During this period he was licensed by the Presbytery of North Belfast on 23rd February 1964 and ordained by the same Presbytery on 16th September 1964. Having a heart for missionary work he was installed to missionary service in Malawi under the Board of Foreign Missions at a Service held in Newington on 4th September 1966. He served with the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian, teaching Bible knowledge, firstly in the Henry Henderson Institute, a secondary school in Blantyre named after a Scottish missionary, then in a secondary school in Zomba, followed by his appointment as Bursar and Assistant to the Director of the Chilema Lay Training Centre, Blantyre. Having contracted malaria he came back to Ireland resigning from missionary service in 1971. On 21st November 1971 he accepted a call from Saint Columba's Presbyterian Church, a Congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa in Lusaka, Zambia. He came home again in 1972 and on 7th November was placed under the care of the Presbytery of North Belfast as a Minister without charge until his call to the united charge of Caledon and Minterburn Congregations in County Tyrone, where he was installed on 2nd May 1973 by the Presbytery of Armagh. There he exercised a faithful pastoral and pulpit ministry though not enjoying good health. He retired on 8th April 1992 and settled again with his home Congregation of Newington on the Limestone Road, Belfast. We assure Mr McMillan's brother John, his sister, Grace, and the wider family circle, of the sympathy of the General Assembly and our appreciation of their brother's service to Christ and his Church.

The Church of Ireland General Synod (2015)

The Very Rev Dr Rob Craig reports:

1. The General Synod of the Church of Ireland was convened in Armagh from 7th-9th May 2015. The opening service of worship, a Communion Service, was conducted in St Patrick's Cathedral, after which the business of Synod was conducted in the Armagh City Hotel. Joining with me in representing the Presbyterian Church in Ireland was Mr Kenneth Belshaw, a ruling Elder from the Congregation of Hill Street, Lurgan. This year's Synod was a new triennium, meaning that many of the delegates were new to the Synod, its ways and processes.

2. Along with the visiting delegates from other Christian denominations we were warmly and graciously received. Of particular interest was the representation not only of a local representative from the Moravian Church but also one of the Bishops from the Moravian Church in the UK. Given the Covenant arrangements with the Methodist Church in Ireland the Church of Ireland has been opening a similar conversation with the Moravian Church.

3. In his Presidential address, the Most Rev Dr Richard Clarke, Archbishop of Armagh, spoke of the Church as a living organism which is "always and everywhere relational". He emphasised the "dignity of difference" speaking against the "homogenisation of society".

4. Archbishop Clarke highlighted to the members of Synod the "scale of the missional challenge" facing the Church of Ireland revealed in the statistical results of a survey of the attendance at Sunday worship which had been conducted in November 2013. The survey revealed that in attendance at worship were 58,000 worshippers; only 15% of the total membership of the denomination. He further reported that only 13% of the attendees fell into the 12-30 age bracket. The Archbishop posed the challenge to the Church to find the characteristics of the appropriate episcopal ministry in the light of such a survey.

5. The agenda of the Synod was very full and some of its business was of a routine nature. Of particular note, however, were three items of business. First, there was the proposal, in the form of a position paper, to reform the procedure regarding the election of Bishops. In addition the Synod received and debated an important report regarding its Diocesan boundaries and the need for a re-structuring to the boundaries. Any re-structuring would be significant for Congregations and Dioceses within the Republic of Ireland where the membership is smaller and the boundaries greater than in Northern Ireland. When the report regarding Education in both jurisdictions was received I was pleased to take the opportunity to acknowledge the role played by the Rev Dr Ian

Ellis in Northern Ireland. I also acknowledged and thanked the Church of Ireland for her on-going support and care for the future of the education of all children, especially Presbyterian children, within the Republic of Ireland.

6. Given that the Synod was meeting just two weeks before the Referendum in the Republic of Ireland regarding the proposed change in the Constitution to permit marriage between two persons of the same sex strong opinions and feelings were expressed on the matter in the debate on the third day. The Synod also received a written report from its Select Committee on Human Sexuality in the Context of Christian Belief. The Committee has not completed its work but has proposed that it will complete the production of a Guide for the assistance of the Church and also a Study Guide for use in Diocesan or Parish groups.

7. As with all such Church gatherings alongside the formal business meetings there was plenty of opportunity to renew friendships and make new friends around the meal table and over coffee.

RL CRAIG

Item 2 – Reports of Presbyteries (Tuesday Morning)

DUBLIN AND MUNSTER PRESBYTERY

That voting on Overtures sent down to Presbyteries under the Barrier Act was as follows: anent Code Pars 10-14: For: 32, Against: 0; anent Code Par 212: For: 32, Against: 0.

STUART FERGUSON

Item 3 – Corresponding Members and Delegates (Tuesday Morning)

Delete

Rt Rev Bela Kato and Rev Tibor Kiss (Transylvanian Reformed Church District, Romania).

TD GRIBBEN

**Item 6 – COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL WITNESS – Additional Resolution
(Tuesday afternoon)**

1a. That the General Assembly welcome the stated intention of government in Northern Ireland to publish shortly a comprehensive Draft Adult Safeguarding Policy, recognising that this will be a significant enhancement in the protection of many who are the most vulnerable in society.

TREVOR McCORMICK

**Item 10 – COUNCIL FOR CHURCH IN SOCIETY – Supplementary
Report
(Tuesday afternoon)**

With the exception of the Poverty and Social Deprivation Task Group, all Task Groups have held their inaugural meetings. The Community Relations and Reconciliation and Dealing with the Past Task Groups met on 5th May to consider their remits and forward work plans. These will be formally agreed at their next meetings.

The Council is increasingly concerned by the continuing difficulties, at the time of writing, in relation to the impasse around welfare reform in Northern Ireland and the resulting threat to the stability of the devolved institutions. Whilst the Council shares many of the concerns expressed about the impact of welfare reform, it believes that the consequences of the current political deadlock for the wider budget are also having a detrimental impact on the most vulnerable in our society. Difficult decisions must be taken to move beyond the current impasse and to create space for further discussion about how to achieve the most just and fair distribution of our limited resources.

A statement was issued by the Council Convener on 19th May in response to the County Court Judgement in the case of Lee (Gareth) v Ashers Baking Co Ltd and Colin McArthur and Karen McArthur. It is attached as Appendix E. The statement expressed concern about the outcome of the case and reiterated the Council's call for an informed, gracious and comprehensive discussion about the role of conscience in the public square.

The Council Convener, Public Affairs Officer and Press and Web Officer met with representatives of the Republic of Ireland Presbyteries to agree a public statement on the same sex marriage referendum. This statement was released on 22nd April and is attached as Appendix F. On 23rd May it was announced that the people of the Republic of Ireland had voted in favour of introducing same sex marriage by 62% to 38%. The Council Convener issued a statement in response to the result, which is attached as Appendix G.

On 4th May, the Council submitted its response to the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure's Consultation on proposals for an Irish Language Bill. This is attached as Appendix H.

APPENDIX E

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH'S 'PROFOUND CONCERN' OVER ASHERS' RULING

19/05/2015

Speaking in response to today's ruling in the case of Gareth Lee v. Ashers Bakery Limited at Belfast County Court, the Very Rev Dr Norman Hamilton, Convener of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's Council for Church in Society said, "Today's ruling should profoundly concern everyone who wants to live in a genuinely pluralist society.

"The owners of Ashers Bakery consistently maintained that the issue for them lay with the message they were asked to produce and not with the customer. Yet in a deeply disturbing development, businesses will now be compelled to produce materials or messages, even if they are incompatible with their owners' deeply and reasonably held beliefs.

"Such levels of state control are surely contrary to the freedoms and liberties that we should seek to uphold out of respect for the worth of every person and for the common good of society.

"In light of today's judgement, it is clear that the law needs to be changed. In a truly pluralist society, the law should protect everyone from discrimination, while properly valuing the role of conscience. No one should be treated as a second class citizen, as we are all created with equal worth in the eyes of God.

"This is why as a Church we have stated that we want to see the concept of 'reasonable accommodation' developed in law. This would achieve a better way for people of all faiths and none to manifest their beliefs in the public arena, which includes the business world.

"Whilst we recognise that this case has been a lengthy and painful experience for all of those directly involved, and troubling for wider society, we believe that there is an urgent need for an informed, gracious and comprehensive discussion about the role of conscience in the public square.

"No doubt we, along with many others, will be giving further consideration to this judgement and its implications in the days ahead."

APPENDIX F**REFERENDUM: CHURCH UPHOLDS HISTORIC VIEW OF MARRIAGE**

22/04/2015

With one month to go before 22nd May's historic constitutional Referendum on Marriage in the Republic of Ireland, the Presbyterian Church has published its position on the Referendum.

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland upholds the historic – and Christian – view of marriage as exclusively between one man and one woman. We affirm that it is needed for the common good of society.

In recognising the rights of all people within a democracy, we must include the rights of children, and the natural responsibilities of a father and a mother in their nurture. We believe the change proposed in the referendum denies these rights.

A redefinition of marriage would establish new norms within our society, the implications of which have not been fully explored.

We acknowledge that this is an intensely emotive subject and trust that all will engage in the debate with gentleness and respect as we approach the Referendum.

APPENDIX G**STATEMENT BY THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND ON THE MARRIAGE REFERENDUM RESULT**

23/05/2015

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has issued the following statement on the result of the Marriage Referendum in the Republic of Ireland today.

Commenting on the result the Very Rev Dr Norman Hamilton, Convener of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's Council for Church in Society said, "We are deeply disappointed and saddened that the Constitution will no longer reflect the historic – and Christian – view of marriage that it is exclusively between one man and one woman; the position the Presbyterian Church in Ireland upholds and maintains.

"The issue before voters was an intensely emotive one and to express the historic view of marriage during the referendum campaign often brought hostility and rejection. We hope that those who continue to uphold this view will not be

marginalised or demeaned. We would also encourage all Christians to love their neighbours – as the Bible calls us to do – particularly those with whom we might disagree and if demeaned, to turn the other cheek, for Jesus' sake.

“While the result is a significant change for Irish Society, as a Church we will continue to reach out to all people, whatever their situation, as all are equally welcome.

“Whilst reaffirming our understanding of marriage as exclusively between one man and one woman, we pray for wisdom for the Government and urge it to consult faith groups over the coming months as it formulates the necessary subsequent legislation.”

APPENDIX H

RESPONSE OF THE COUNCIL FOR CHURCH IN SOCIETY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND TO THE DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE'S CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS FOR AN IRISH LANGUAGE BILL

MAY 2015

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has over 230,000 members belonging to 545 Congregations across 19 Presbyteries throughout Ireland, north and south.

The Council for Church in Society is authorised by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to speak on behalf of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland on matters of public policy. We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure's (DCAL) Consultation on proposals for an Irish Language Bill. This response reflects our current thinking on some of the issues raised in the consultation document. We do not directly address each of the proposals but wish to make the following comments:

1. We recognise that many in our society regard the Irish language as a key part of their cultural heritage and identity.
2. As Presbyterians, we acknowledge the important role played by the Irish language in our history. Indeed, it is often said that Presbyterians helped to save the Irish language. Historically, many spoke it as their first language, or as a language they learned to socialise and trade with their neighbours. Moreover, Presbyterians were to the forefront of Irish language revivals and some became experts, developing language resources and using Irish

as a medium for conducting church services. The Irish language remains highly valued by many in our congregations today.

3. We want the Irish language to be properly respected and valued by those who do and do not speak it. A central and significant challenge in this regard is depoliticising its use. DCAL needs to set out clearly and in detail how this is to be achieved in our society, which remains highly polarised.
4. We welcome the increasing interest in learning Irish across our society, believing that better understanding of our shared heritage can contribute to building a stronger and more united community.
5. The Northern Ireland Executive has a role in protecting and promoting the Irish language. However, to achieve the above aims, language policy must be constructed realistically and effectively: policy makers need to give thorough consideration to the way languages are perceived and used, and the effects of their use on our divided society.
6. We believe that the group of proposals in the consultation document does not represent the most appropriate and effective way forward and even risks devaluing the Irish language in the eyes of many across Northern Ireland.
7. With regard to the public administration aspects, for example, we are concerned that negative attitudes towards the language will increase if there is considerable expenditure on bureaucracy, such as translating documents that are rarely or never accessed, or an open-ended commitment to the use of Irish in tribunals or courts, potentially necessitating simultaneous translation.
8. On place-names and signage, we acknowledge that languages have great potential to make a positive contribution in helping to promote and enjoy our shared heritage. However, we emphasise that this is a difficult, complex and controversial issue. Any action in this regard would need to be measured and considerate of the risk of exacerbating societal division.
9. Evaluating the potential and actual impact of language policy is complicated due to the difficulty in establishing straightforward causal connections between the pursuit of various policy options and outcomes for language development. However, we would question whether the apparent 'top down' approach of many of the proposals is the most appropriate in the current context.

10. The influence of public administration and bureaucracy is arguably less personal, direct and effective than opportunities to learn languages at home and through inclusive engagement at community level.
11. With the vast majority of the population having little or no ability in Irish,¹ we suggest that it would be more appropriate to focus on the provision of learning programmes and resources that support and encourage the use and enjoyment of the language in our community.
12. Linguistic diversity can form part of a healthy and vibrant civic society. The learning of languages can also create better understanding between people from different backgrounds and traditions, promoting community cohesion. We are therefore open to further consideration of how legislation could positively contribute to the protection and development of minority languages in our society, though we recognise that this challenge is not specifically within the remit of DCAL. We would be very willing to meet the Minister and engage with the Committee to discuss this issue further.

Additional Resolutions

3a. That the General Assembly express their profound concern regarding the County Court Judgement on 19th May in the case of Lee (Gareth) v Ashers Baking Co Ltd and Colin McArthur and Karen McArthur; recognise that the outcome is deemed by many to be an unacceptable intrusion into the exercise of conscience, and contrary to the freedoms and liberties that should be upheld out of respect for the worth of every person and for the common good of society; and affirm that while the law should protect everyone from unlawful discrimination, reasonable accommodation should be made for the exercise of conscience.

3b. That the General Assembly express their disappointment regarding the outcome of the referendum on same sex marriage in the Republic of Ireland and reaffirm that the witness of the Bible is that marriage is to be exclusively between one man and one woman.

NORMAN HAMILTON

¹ http://www.nisra.gov.uk/Census/key_report_2011.pdf and http://www.dcalni.gov.uk/irish_language_chs_2011-12_bulletin.pdf

Item 11 – Charities Legislation Task Group – Supplementary Report (Wednesday morning)

1. Following a meeting of Charities Legislation Task Group on 13 May further information has been sent to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland to prepare for the forthcoming registration process. Following consultation with the General Assembly Solicitor proposed Public Benefit Statements have been prepared for The Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Presbyteries and Congregations. The Commission has indicated broad agreement with these statements, which are appended in full. If approved by the General Assembly and finally signed off by the Commission this will assist Presbyteries and Congregations in particular with registration as they will be able to use these approved statements rather than having to prepare their own. A resolution is appended asking the Assembly to approve the statements and give power to the Charities Legislation Task Group to make any necessary minor amendments. Members of Assembly should note that these are not mission statements nor detailed theological affirmations, but are statements set out in the required format for the purpose of fulfilling the legal requirement of charity legislation.

2. In the General Assembly Reports page 14 it refers to one of the Charities being the “General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland”. The Task Group now recommend to the General Assembly that this be changed to the “Presbyterian Church in Ireland”.

3. The proposed Code Changes in relation to charity trustees (see reports pages 53-55), have also been forward to the Charity Commission for any comments. In the light of the discussions two slightly amended overtures for Pars 35 & 70 of the Code are included in the Supplementary Report Booklet.

4. The Charity Commission has asked the Church to forward copies of the constitutional documents in relation to Presbytery Education Boards so that they can consider whether they will be required to register. Following consultation with Presbytery Clerks it became clear that Presbytery Education Boards were established under the “Educational Endowments (Ireland) Act 1885” with various schemes being set up for each Presbytery. It appears on a review of the various schemes that they are all similar in content. Therefore rather than sending the Commission a copy of all scheme one has been selected and forwarded. As Education Boards primary role is to act a “holding trustees” for congregational property it is hoped that they will not be required to register and any issues arising can be dealt with through either Presbytery or congregational

registrations. The Task Group await a response from the Commission on this matter.

5. The Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 make provision for designated religious status which provides limited exemption from certain requirements of the Act. In particular Section 66 to 68 of the Act do not apply to designated religious charities. It has come to the Task Group's attention that the legislation relating to designated religious charities has not yet been commenced and that it may indeed be the end of 2015 before it is. This matter has been raised with the Minister for Social Development, Mr Mervyn Storey MLA, and in correspondence with the Charity Commission. As a result, the Commission has assured the Minister that no decision will be taken regarding the registration of Presbyterian churches until the Commission is in a position to also decide on designated religious charity status. The Church however will still be called forward to prepare for registration. The Minister for Social Development has written to the Clerk of Assembly on Monday 1st June 2015, and states:

“The intention is to bring the designated religious charity provisions at sections 165 and 166 of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 into operation as soon as possible. However, advice from the Departmental Solicitors’ Office is that those sections cannot be brought into operation until regulations relating to the charity accounting and auditing requirements under Part 8 of the Act are in place. The intention is to have those regulations come into operation from 1 January 2016. The Charity Commission has already indicated that Presbyterian Church in Ireland charities will be called forward in a way that will facilitate the timing for the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations.”

6. In paragraph 6 of the Task Group's main report to the Assembly (Reports pages 14&15), it is highlighted that Northern Ireland's Legislation does not exempt designated religious charities from its disqualification clauses. As reported this matter was also raised with the Minister for Social Development, and in his letter of Monday 1st June 2015, he states:

“My officials are presently considering an affirmative procedure Order which would provide for section 86 to not apply to designated religious charities, with a view to such an Order being in place for the commencement of the designated religious charity provisions of the Act.”

The Task Group would want to put on record its thanks to the Minister for his very helpful and speedy response to this important matter.

STATEMENTS ON PUBLIC BENEFITS TEST

1. STATEMENT FOR THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND

Public Benefits

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland meets the public benefit requirement by providing benefit to its members and the general public by making known the Christian Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ through the advancement of religion.

The direct benefits which flow from this purpose include:

1. Provision of a forum for Public worship.
2. Pastoral care (including for the sick, disabled and bereaved).
3. Spiritual and moral development.
4. Provision of Counselling.
5. The protection of children and vulnerable adults.
6. The promotion of Christian values.
7. The delivery of Christian service.
8. The presentation of the teachings of the Bible along with opportunities for appropriate response.
9. The production of appropriate literature and associated material in physical and digital formats.
10. Making available activities that seek to promote an understanding of Christian beliefs as set out in the Bible and in the Church's subordinate standards (the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Shorter and Larger Catechisms), through practical expression of Christian beliefs and standards in the local community.
11. Engagement with and support for individual Christians and other secular and Christian organisations and charities in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and abroad.
12. Engagement with and support for secular organisations and charities which are in accord with the ethos of the Church in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and abroad.
13. The Training of Ministers, Elders, Deaconesses, Youth Workers, Family Workers, and volunteers which is necessary in order to further our advancement of religion charitable purpose and which enables and enhances the delivery of most of the other benefits.
14. The provision of third-level education.
15. Service on Controlled Schools Boards of Governors.

16. Residential Services.

17. Organised events such as Summer Camps and conferences.

18. Ministry to the following specific groups:

- a. Children
- b. Young people
- c. Students
- d. Young adults
- e. Women
- f. Men
- g. Families
- h. The Armed Forces
- i. The elderly and infirm
- j. Those in hospital and receiving other forms of healthcare, including physical and mental health
- k. Those with hearing impairment and other disabilities
- l. Those with addictions
- m. Those with learning difficulties
- n. Prisoners
- o. Ex-offenders

Generally the above benefits are delivered locally by Presbyteries, Congregations and members, but some are organised and delivered centrally. Local delivery is facilitated by central resources in nearly all cases. The benefits are made known through the use of noticeboards, printed material, press advertisement, websites, social media and in other ways.

The benefits are demonstrated through regular evaluation of the services and informal and ad-hoc feedback from members, their families, and members of the public.

The purpose does not lead to harm. The only private benefit flowing from our purpose is related to Ministers, Missionaries, Deaconesses, Irish Mission workers and Lay Agents who receive benefits as a result of their holding office or employment. However, this is incidental and necessary in order to further our charitable purpose. There are no other private benefits. The beneficiaries of this purpose are members, their families, other individuals that the Presbyterian Church in Ireland is in direct and indirect contact with, the community in which pastoral services are provided and other communities throughout Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and worldwide which benefit from our engagement with and support for both Christian and other secular organisations, charities and individual members of the public.

What your organisation does**(A) CENTRALLY**

Comments on matters of public importance from a Biblical perspective.

Makes statements on church policy relevant to the public domain.

Maintains relationships with local, regional and national governmental institutions.

Makes representations to regional and national governments and responds to consultations from them on relevant issues, including all aspects of public policy including education, youth, children's, social and ethical issues.

Develops relationships with other Church bodies and Christian charities.

Develops relationships with secular organisations and charities.

Develops relationships with civic society.

Monitors those inter-church bodies of which the Presbyterian Church in Ireland is a member.

Provides nominations to education and other state bodies where the Church is a stakeholder.

Selects, trains and develops full and part-time ministers.

Offers pastoral care to its officers and their families.

Selects and trains deaconesses.

Maintains and Manages Union Theological College, a third-level institution and a recognised College of Queen's University, Belfast.

Provides a Conciliation Service for its members.

Resources Presbyteries and Congregations in worship; discipleship, nurture and teaching; pastoral care; evangelism and outreach in the community, including social outreach; co-operative working with others; involvement in global mission; leadership, including elder training; building supportive links with local schools; supporting Christians in the workplace; being proactive in the work of good relations.

Enables the development of youth and children's ministry; Presbyterian Women and ministry among women generally; young adults' ministry; support for the family (including PCI Family Holiday); marriage and counselling services.

Provides support for local Congregations in finance, health and safety and personnel issues; disability awareness; Taking Care (the protection of children and vulnerable adults).

Develop strategic priorities in all-age mission in Ireland.

Enables new church development and church planting.

Oversees the deployment and on-going support of Deaconesses.

Supports a chaplaincy service in the Forces, Healthcare and Prisons.

Supports mission and ministry in Universities and Colleges through chaplaincy services.

Oversees various designated funds of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

Undertakes Overseas Mission, including partnership with overseas Churches and sending personnel.

Promotes world development issues, including providing for an annual appeal. Facilitates thinking on issues of global concern such as the environment, race relations, international relations.

Delivers a social witness service to the wider community in partnership with appropriate organisations, in the areas of: older people services including residential care, nursing care, day care, respite care, supported housing and care in the community; disability services; including residential care, day care, respite care, supported housing and care in the community; criminal justice; substance abuse.

Undertakes policy development and administration of Taking Care (the protection of children and vulnerable adults).

Supports a ministry to those with hearing impairment.

(B) THROUGH PRESBYTERIES AND CONGREGATIONS

Support Presbyteries (that is local groupings of Congregations) to help them to fulfil their charitable purpose.

Hold services of worship and other religious activities. These, and all that follows, are open to anyone of appropriate age and/or gender to access, without regard to whether they are members of our denomination.

Through prayer, support our members, our own Church, other Christian Churches, the community and leaders in society and government.

Organise meetings and events that promote our charitable purpose.

Participate in the life of the local community.

Support other secular and Christian organisations and charities through volunteering, financial gifts and prayer.

2. STATEMENT FOR PRESBYTERIES OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND

Public Benefits

The Presbytery meets the public benefit requirement by providing benefit to its members and the general public by making known the Christian Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ through the advancement of religion.

The direct benefits which flow from this purpose include:

1. Supervision of our Congregations and their leadership in the fulfilment of their charitable purpose.
2. Provision of a forum for Public worship.
3. Pastoral care (including for the sick, disabled and bereaved).
4. Spiritual and moral development.
5. Ministry to children and young people.
6. The protection of children and vulnerable adults.
7. The promotion of Christian values.
8. The delivery of Christian service.
9. The presentation of the teachings of the Bible along with opportunities for appropriate response.

10. The production of appropriate literature and associated material in physical and digital formats.
11. Making available activities that seek to promote an understanding of Christian beliefs as set out in the Bible and in the Church's subordinate standards (the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Shorter and Larger Catechisms), through practical expression of Christian beliefs and standards in the local community.
12. Engagement with and support for individual Christians and other secular and Christian organisations and charities in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and abroad.
13. Engagement with and support for secular organisations and charities which are in accord with the ethos of the Church in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and abroad.
14. The Training of Elders and volunteers which is necessary in order to further our advancement of religion charitable purpose and which enables and enhances the delivery of most of the other benefits.
15. Organised occasions such as events for young people and conferences.

Generally the above benefits are delivered locally by Congregations and members, but some are organised and delivered centrally by Presbytery. Local delivery is facilitated by central Presbyterian Church in Ireland resources in nearly all cases and often Presbytery is involved as one or more of the following: a channel for information; the local organiser of an event or series of events delivered by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland; the local organiser and deliverer of an event or series of event for members of our Congregations. The benefits are made known through the use of noticeboards, printed material, press advertisement, websites, social media and in other ways.

The benefits are demonstrated through regular evaluation of the services and informal and ad-hoc feedback from members, members of Congregations and their families, and members of the public.

The purpose does not lead to harm. The only private benefit flowing from our purpose is related to those who receive benefits as a result of their holding office or employment. However, this is incidental and necessary in order to further our advancement of religion charitable purpose. There are no other private benefits. The beneficiaries of this purpose are members, members of Congregations and their families, other individuals that the Presbytery is in direct and indirect contact with, the community in which pastoral services are provided and other communities throughout Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and worldwide who benefit from engagement with and support for both Christian and other secular organisations, charities and individual members of the public.

What your organisation does

(A) CENTRALLY

Comments on matters of public importance from a Biblical perspective.
 Makes statements on Church policy relevant to the public domain.
 Maintains relationships with local governmental institutions.
 Makes representations to local government.
 Develops relationships with other Church bodies and Christian charities.
 Develops relationships with secular organisations and charities.
 Develops relationships with civic society.
 Offers pastoral care to its officers and their families.
 Resources Congregations and their members.
 Acts as a link between the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and our
 Congregations enabling both to fulfil aspects of their charitable purpose.

(B) THROUGH CONGREGATIONS

Support our Congregations to help them to fulfil their charitable purpose.
 Hold services of worship and other religious activities.
 Through prayer, support our members, our own Church, other Christian
 Churches, the community and leaders in society and government.
 Organise meetings and events that promote our charitable purpose.
 Participate in the life of the local community.
 Support other secular and Christian organisations and charities through
 volunteering, financial gifts and prayer.

3. STATEMENT FOR CONGREGATIONS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND

Public Benefits

The Congregation, as part of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, contributes to all the benefits provided by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland as stated in the report of its public details. As part of a Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland it contributes to all the benefits provided by that Presbytery as stated in the report of its public details. In addition it meets the public benefit requirement by providing benefit to its members and the general public by making known the Christian Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ through the advancement of religion.

The direct benefits which flow from this purpose include:

1. Provision of a forum for public worship.
2. Pastoral care (including for the sick, disabled and bereaved).
3. Spiritual and moral development.
4. Ministry to children and young people.
5. The protection of children and vulnerable adults.
6. The promotion of Christian values.
7. The delivery of Christian service.

8. The presentation of the teachings of the Bible along with opportunities for appropriate response.
9. The production of appropriate literature and associated material in physical and a digital formats.
10. Making available activities that seek to promote an understanding of Christian beliefs as set out in the Bible and in the Church's subordinate standards (the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Shorter and Larger Catechisms), through practical expression of Christian beliefs and standards in the local community.
11. The support of individual Christians and other Christian organisations and charities in Ireland (north and south) and abroad.
12. The support of secular organisations and charities which are in accord with the ethos of the Church.
13. The Training of volunteers which is necessary in order to further our advancement of religion charitable purpose and which enables and enhances the delivery of most of the other benefits.
14. The above benefits are delivered locally by our members, sometimes with central assistance. The benefits are made known through the production of appropriate literature and associated material in physical and digital formats.

The benefits are demonstrated through regular evaluation of the services and informal and ad-hoc feedback from members, their families, and members of the public.

The purpose does not lead to harm. The only private benefit flowing from our purpose is related to those who receive benefits as a result of their holding office or employment. However, this is incidental and necessary in order to further our advancement of religion charitable purpose. There are no other private benefits. The beneficiaries of this purpose are members, their families, other individuals that the Congregation is in contact with locally, the community in which we minister; and various individuals and communities throughout Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and worldwide who benefit from our engagement with and support for individual Christians and other secular and Christian organisations and charities, either directly or through our contribution to the purpose of our denomination.

What your organisation does

Hold services of worship and other religious activities. These, and all that follows, are open to anyone of appropriate age and/or gender to access, without regard to whether they are members of our congregation.

Through prayer, support our members, our own Church, other Christian Churches, the community and leaders in society and government.

Organise meetings and events that promote our charitable purpose.

Participate in the life of the local community.
Participate in and support what the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the supervising Presbytery does.
Support other secular and Christian organisations and charities through volunteering, financial gifts and prayer.

Additional Resolution:

5a. That the Public Benefits statements be approved and that the Charity Legislation Task Group be given authority to make any necessary changes.

JOHN HUNTER

**Item 11 – Church Relations Committee – Additional Resolution
(Wednesday morning)**

5b. That in exploring new relationships with other churches, the possibility of a stronger relationship with the Free Church of Scotland be investigated.

NJ McCULLOUGH
JA CURRY

**Item 12 – OVERTURES – Charities Legislation – amended wording
(Wednesday morning)**

Anent Par 35 of the Code

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

- (e) act as the charity trustees of the congregation and be responsible for the congregation's compliance with the requirements of charities legislation in Northern Ireland and/or the Republic of Ireland as appropriate;
- (f) ensure that the Congregational Committee fulfils its duties as delegated to it by the Kirk Session and complies with the decisions of Kirk Session;
- (g) after considering the grounds for disqualification for being a charity trustee under charities legislation in Northern Ireland and/or the Republic of Ireland as appropriate, refer to Presbytery the consideration of removal from office in the congregation of a ruling elder.

Anent Par 70 of the Code

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

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

TD GRIBBEN

Item 13 – GENERAL COUNCIL: Section C – Supplementary Report (Wednesday Morning)

Nomination of the General Assembly Solicitor Task Group

Mr Alastair J Rankin

1. **Mr Alastair J Rankin, BA (Mod)** was appointed General Assembly's Solicitor from 1 November, 1993, in succession to Mr Robert NC Watts, BA, LLB. He qualified as a solicitor in the Supreme Court of Justice in Northern Ireland in 1977 and became a partner and then director in Cleaver Fulton Rankin in 1980 and 1997 respectively.
2. He soon became a familiar figure at the Assembly rostrum and in the offices and meeting rooms in Assembly Buildings, where he was assiduous in attendance at many meetings of various Boards, Committees and other bodies, all of which benefited from his long experience and thoughtful advice.
3. He has specialised in trust work, conveyancing, wills, probate, taxation and pensions and his legal expertise has been invaluable, particularly in his role as Convener of the Commission on Trusts.
4. One of his key roles was to act as an adviser to the Judicial Commission and to the various officers of the General Assembly, to all of whom he willingly and unstintingly made available his considerable expertise.
5. In all of this his opinions were formulated with care and then applied not only in accordance with the law but also with due regard to common sense and logic, and underpinned by a strong Christian faith and character.

6. As well as giving committed service to his home Congregation of McCracken Memorial as a Committee member, Treasurer and Elder, for the past twenty-two years he has been a most faithful servant of The Presbyterian Church in Ireland, which now wishes him and his wife Gillian a long and happy retirement.

Appointment of new General Assembly Solicitor

7. Following the process of application, short-listing and interview the Task Group, operating with the authority of the General Council, unanimously resolved to nominate to the General Assembly Mr Stephen Gowdy LLB as General Assembly Solicitor. Mr Gowdy is a member of the Congregation of Knock in East Belfast and a partner in King & Gowdy Solicitors. His curriculum vitae is appended, along with a revised resolution, replacing General Council resolution 12 on page 52 of the Reports.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Name:

Stephen Thomas Gowdy

Address:

76A, King's Road
Belfast BT5 6JN

Education

Royal Belfast Academical Institution

Law Faculty, Queen's University, Belfast, graduating in 1972 with LLB degree (First Class Honours)

Incorporated Law Society of Northern Ireland – Training for Solicitor's Apprentices, graduating with Special Certificate

Employment

Assistant Solicitor in John McKee & Son, Solicitors 1975 to 1979

Assistant Solicitor in Northern Bank Limited 1977 to 1979

Partner in King & Gowdy (incorporating S&R Crymble) Solicitors 1979 to date

Personal Circumstances

Married to Edith Gowdy. We have three adult children, William, a practising barrister in Belfast, Rosemary, a trainee General Practitioner in Belfast, and David, a computer engineer with a telecommunications company in Belfast.

Outside Interests

Education:

I was closely involved in the setting up of AQE Limited, and the provision of a structure to provide a mode of transition from primary to post primary education when the Minister of Education abolished the 11+ examination without putting anything in its place.

I am a former Chairman of AQE Limited and remain a member of its Board of Directors.

I am a member of the Board of Governors of the Royal Belfast Academical Institution.

I am a member of the Executive Committee of the Governing Bodies Association.

Sport:

At school I swam and played water polo; now my sporting interests lie in indifferent performances on the golf course (I am a member of Malone Golf Club, Belfast, and Portstewart Golf Club).

Music:

I listen to Opera, and attend several opera performances each year.

I contribute to the choral music in Knock Presbyterian Church.

Scouts:

Until March 2015, I served as Chairman of the Group Scout Council of the 4th Belfast Scout Group, which is attached to Knock Presbyterian Church. This was a role I had filled for 20 years. I oversaw the transfer of the Girl Guiding sections affiliated to Knock to the Scouting Group when Girl Guiding in Knock ceased following the secularisation of the Guiding promise. On the successful completion of that process, I handed over the Chairmanship of the Group.

Revised Resolution

12. That Mr Stephen Gowdy LLB be appointed General Assembly Solicitor from 1st July 2015.

TD GRIBBEN

Item 13 – GENERAL COUNCIL: Section C – Supplementary Report (Wednesday Morning)

2017 Residential Assembly Conference Task Group

1. At the time of writing, the dates of the Special Residential Assembly have been confirmed – **Monday 21st – Thursday 24th August 2017**. The Diamond at the University of Ulster, Coleraine, along with seminar rooms, has been provisionally booked.

2. It is anticipated that the Assembly theme, title and keynote speakers will be confirmed over the summer months.

3. The Task Group looks forward to welcoming Mr David Thomson (Saintfield Road Congregation) as its administrator. He will join the group after the Summer.

JOHN KIRKPATRICK

**Item 13 – GENERAL COUNCIL: Section C – Supplementary Report
(Wednesday Morning)**

Revised Resolution 13

13. That the Introductory Section and Section C of the report of the General Council be received.

Resolution 20(a)

Delete Resolution 20(a)

TD GRIBBEN

**Item 14 – COUNCIL FOR TRAINING IN MINISTRY – Supplementary
Report
(Wednesday Morning)**

SCHEDULE OF STUDENTS: ADD

TYRONE

Bryan Kee

Union

MINISTERS AND LICENTIATES WITHOUT CHARGE

Presbytery

Name

Recommendation

Ards

Rev CG Anderson

To be retained as Minister
without Charge.

Rev Dr SI Dennis

To be retained as Minister
without Charge.

Rev CD Mawhinney

To be retained as Minister
without Charge.

Rev David McKee

To be retained as Minister

		without Charge (retired).
	Rev David Stanfield	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev Dr MJ Welsh	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
Armagh	Rev JWP McConnell	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
North Belfast	Rev LH Eagleson	To be retained as Minister 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.
	Mr David McCarthy	To be retained as Licentiate without Charge.
South Belfast	Rev KA Drury	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev JD Maxwell	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
Belfast East	Rev DR Baker	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev WJ Harshaw	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev PG McDowell	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev Dr DJ Montgomery	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Mr Stephen Cowan	To be retained as Licentiate without Charge.
	Mr Paul Orr	To be retained as Licentiate without Charge.
Carrickfergus	Rev RJ Gilkinson	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
Coleraine/Limavady	Rev JD Mark	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).
Derry/Donegal	Rev KG Patterson	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev JC Teeney	To be retained as Minister without Charge.

Down	Rev S Armstrong	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).
	Rev JM Casement	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev RN Stewart	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).
	Rev GR Stockdale	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Mr MC Cowan	To be retained as Licentiate without Charge.
Iveagh	Rev EG McAuley	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).
Omagh	Rev CI Dickson	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
Route	Rev William Brown	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).
	Rev Dr Victor Dobbin	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).
Tyrone	Mr JA Dunn	To be retained as Licentiate without Charge.

RECOGNISED MINISTRIES

The Rev Dr WJP Bailie, Mission Africa, reports:

1. Mission Africa (The Qua Iboe Fellowship) is one of Ireland's oldest mission agencies. We look forward with humble yet confident expectation to the years ahead, praying that God might continue to be pleased to use the mission for His sovereign purposes.

2. The mission concentrates on four areas of ministry: evangelism and church planting; the strengthening of existing church bodies through theological education; medical mission; and compassionate ministry, especially amongst disadvantaged and abused children. These ministries are carried out in partnership with various evangelical African denominations, and often with like-minded western mission agencies.

3. The mission continues its work against a background of financial challenge, an ever-diminishing interest in foreign mission amongst western churches and at a time when many within the church cannot adequately distinguish mission and aid and development work. Nevertheless, we continue to send out full time missionaries. We continue to operate a short-term programme of teams and medium term placements. We also continue to operate branches in

Scotland and England. Mission Africa is a member of Global Connections (Evangelical Missionary Alliance) and Mission Agencies Partnership. I am particularly pleased to report a close working relationship with BMO now CGM.

4. 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.

5. I am also grateful to be able to record that my status as a Minister in recognised service permits me to play an active role within my Presbytery (Ards) and in the Council for Training in Ministry. I am particularly glad to serve the Church through part-time teaching at Union Theological College and participation in the Accredited Preacher and Auxiliary Ministry Schemes.

The Rev Dr Ruth Patterson, Restoration Ministries, reports:

1. Over the past year in Restoration Ministries the work of spiritual direction and prayer continues. We also facilitate reflection days corresponding with the different seasons of the Christian Year. The movement of Faith and Friendship, which comes under the umbrella of Restoration Ministries, has expanded in the last couple of years with groups now meeting in Moira and the Glenavy/Crumlin area.

2. For the 18 years of its existence, I have been writing the scripture guidelines and it is encouraging to know of people's interest and commitment. The major part of my time is taken up in preparation and travel, both around Ireland and further afield. In so doing we seek, in all humility, to share with other people and places what we have experienced and learned over the years. These engagements are either in the form of conferences or retreats. It is an enormous privilege to be asked to walk alongside people in this way.

3. Our interest in and involvement with Centering Prayer has been a huge gift and challenges us on our journey of faith. The invitation to unity that can best be defined as diversity embraced by love is one of the heartbeats of what we seek to live.

4. Once again, my sincere appreciation to all of those who support us prayerfully and financially.

The Rev John Peacock, Acting Centre Director for the Centre for Youth Ministry Ireland, reports:

1. I can report another successful year for the Centre for Youth Ministry Ireland.
2. This year our fourth cohort of students graduated, giving a total of 67 graduates to date, and I am pleased to report that, as in previous years, almost all are working in the areas of ministry.
3. In September 2015 there will be a further 20 new students joining the programme, giving a total of 51 students currently studying across the three year groups. While we remain in partnership with Belfast Bible College, from this date all CYMI classes will be held at our Youth Link training and resource centre on the Springfield Road. We believe this will help create an enhanced sense of community amongst CYMI students and allows more flexibility in our teaching pattern.
4. CYMI now has graduates working in Australia, North America and England, though the majority have remained in Ireland, particularly Northern Ireland. While most graduates remain in youth ministry roles some use the skills developed in other contexts. The fact that at every level we seek to encourage and enable students to inter-relate theology and youth work theory and apply both to their practice contexts means that our graduates should be well prepared to minister in a wide variety of roles.
5. The course seeks to provide an intentional environment where students (whom we regard as missionaries in training) can develop their awareness of a maturing Christian character, youth work skills and the qualities and skills that enable them to minister with competence in a variety of contexts, particularly focused on young people in the age range 4-25.
6. In this past year we have welcomed students who have transferred from other youth ministry and youth work courses in Scotland and England as well as Ireland as the reputation of the quality of the qualification continues to grow. We continue to be grateful for the support of PCI Churches that recognise the value of the course and are prepared to provide a placement for the student to undergo training, while they in turn experience the benefit that a student can bring to their ministry amongst young people.
7. The training of students for ministry and mission is a very labour intensive process and over 100 people are actively involved in teaching, supervising and supporting the students on the course. We have an excellent team of quality module tutors, who are mostly practitioners, with expertise in their particular area of teaching. As a result we are able to integrate theology, youth work theory and practice into every aspect of the course.

8. Once again I wish to record my thanks to the large number of Presbyterians who have supported the development of this work in the last 12 months through prayer and encouragement as well as those who have worked as module tutors, professional practice tutors or line managers in Congregations who have provided practice contexts for our students.

NOBLE McNEELY

**Item 17 – UNION COMMISSION – Supplementary Report
(Wednesday Afternoon)**

1. Leave to Call a Minister (pp142f)

Add:

	Stipend	Expenses
Newcastle	£35,000 [2014]	£7,500
Ballycrochan	£30,000 [2014]	£7,500

2. Since the publication of the General Assembly Reports for 2015, representatives of the Union Commission met, at their request, with representatives of the Council for Training in Ministry because of the Council's concerns that the draft guidelines for the Auxiliary Ministry seemed to preclude a full-time Auxiliary Ministry post. This was never the intention of the Union Commission (although the report of the General Board in 2010 report did, at that time, refer to the Auxiliary Ministry scheme as part-time). The Union Commission desires that flexibility characterise the scheme and that, while accepting that the majority of such posts are not likely to be full-time, the possibility would still exist that such a post could be full-time. Therefore the following changes to the draft guidelines on Auxiliary Ministry (Reports, Appendix 3, pp 152-155) have been made.

Paragraph A2: Delete and substitute —

An Auxiliary Minister is a Minister of the Word, normally part-time, and should not be confused with others who may exercise a ministry which can be described as part-time in nature, e.g. Stated Supply or under Par 81(3) of the Code, or the 'Scheme for Part-Time Ministry of Word and Sacrament' as also approved by the General Assembly in 2010. Part-time will normally mean up to 20 hours per week.

Paragraph B4: Delete and substitute —

Both forms of Auxiliary Ministry may be on an expenses only or remunerated basis, but Congregational Auxiliary Ministries will normally be expenses only. Auxiliary Ministry posts are only open to those not already Ministers of Word and Sacrament.

Paragraph C7: Delete and substitute —

The Kirk Session must specify the following:

- the hours to be worked – normally the frequency of preaching, leading Bible studies etc. and any pastoral duties. Account will need to be given to time for preparation;
- whether the post will be established on an ‘expenses only’ or on a ‘remunerated’ basis and what it proposes by way of expenses and, if appropriate, remuneration. Changes in remuneration will normally take place at review, but application can be made to the Linkage Commission at any time;
- what particular arrangements will be put in place where there is more than one Congregation involved;
- the period of review by Presbytery, which will normally be three years. (The Linkage Commission will not normally be involved in these reviews.)
- any other necessary matters e.g. holidays, other supplies etc.

Paragraph D4: Delete and substitute —

The Presbytery or Council must specify the following:

- the hours to be worked – normally the frequency of preaching, leading Bible studies etc. and any pastoral duties. Account will need to be given to time for preparation;
- whether the post will be established on an ‘expenses only’ or on a ‘remunerated’ basis and what it proposes by way of expenses and, if appropriate, remuneration. Changes in remuneration will normally take place at review, but application can be made to the Linkage Commission at any time;
- the relative responsibilities, if any, of the Presbytery and/or Council in the arrangement;
- the period of review by Presbytery or Council as appropriate, which will normally be three years. The Linkage Commission will normally be involved in these reviews;
- any other necessary matters e.g. holidays, other supplies etc.

APPENDIX 4 page 157, delete 2d. and substitute 2(e)

WH HENRY

Item 17 – UNION COMMISSION – Amendment

(Wednesday Afternoon)**Amendment to Resolution 5 (page 164)**

5. That CMF be authorised to pay inadequate expenses grants to expenses incurred by Ministers, including part-time Ministers, up to a limit of NI £5,985 or ROI €10,000 within the terms of resolution 3, p 70, General Assembly Minutes 1988.

STANLEY STEWART
DTR EDWARDS

**Item 23 – COUNCIL FOR GLOBAL MISSION (Supplementary Report)
(Thursday Morning)**

The Council for Global Mission Report, paragraph 12, refers to a visit made by Helen Johnston to Nepal in May 2015, however due to the earthquakes that devastated Nepal in April and May of this year, this visit did not take place.

The World Development Committee section of the Report, paragraph 31, speaks of the United Mission to Nepal providing the lead project for the forthcoming World Development Appeal 2015. As a result of the earthquakes and the recently launched Moderator's Appeal for Nepal earthquake victims, the World Development Committee agreed at its meeting on 7th May that the Baptist Nazarene Mission (BMN) in Bangladesh should now provide the lead project, focusing on climate change adaptation work, for the World Development Appeal 2015.

Amended Resolution 2

2. That the General Assembly give thanks for continuing and generous support of PCI Congregations and members for both the 2014 World Development Appeal and the Moderator's Appeals for South Sudan and Nepal, and encourage prayerful support for the 2015 Appeal focusing on Bangladesh and Ethiopia"

SE HUGHES

Item 25 – Support Services Committee (Supplementary Report) (Thursday Afternoon)

(i) Actuarial Valuation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Pension Scheme (2009) as at 31 December 2014

The Support Serves Committee, through its Finance Panel, received from the Trustees of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Pension Scheme (2009) the preliminary actuarial valuation of the Scheme as at 31 December 2014. In summary this showed that

- (a) there has been a significant increase in the number of pensioners and therefore the Scheme is maturing.
- (b) the Scheme's asset allocation is currently split 80% growth assets (equities and property) and 20% matching assets (corporate bonds and gilts).
- (c) there is a shortfall or deficit of £11m on a technical provisions basis, which is down from £31m in 2011. On the neutral estimate basis, which removes allowance for prudence in respect of investment returns, the shortfall was £3.5m. On a buy-out basis, which represents the cost of securing the benefits with an insurer, the shortfall was £82m. The main reason for the reduction in the shortfall is investment outperformance and deficit reduction contributions paid by the Church. The fall in gilt yields since 2011 has had a negative impact on the result.
- (d) The employer contribution rate for future benefit accrual (i.e. excluding deficit contributions), death-in-service benefits, expenses and Pension Protection Fund levies is 20.8% (compared to 17.3% at the 2011 valuation). The increase arises from lower gilt yields.
- (e) No allowance had been made for discretionary pension increases within the initial results on the pre 1997 non-GMP (Guaranteed Minimum Pension) element of pensions in payment. The "one-off" cost to the valuation result of granting a 1% increase would be approximately £234,000. No increase has been applied to this pension element since 2002.

The Scheme Trustees sought the Scheme Employers view on two proposals

- (i) To grant a 5% discretionary pension increase in respect of pre 1997 service.
- (ii) To reduce the employers contribution rate from 27.5% to 24% with members continuing to contribute 7%.

At a meeting of the Support Services Committee on 30 April, and acting on authority delegated by the General Council, it was agreed to support the

Trustees intention to grant a 5% discretionary pension increase in respect of pre 1997 service and to reduce the employer's contribution rate from 27.5% to 24.0%. Both changes to be implemented from 1 January 2016.

(ii) Rate of assessment for The Pension Scheme Fund

The Pension Scheme fund collects an assessment from congregations towards the "employer's" pension contributions and for 2015 it is proposed that the rate of assessment is 27.5% of the stipend paid to the minister during the year. The Support Services Committee will consider the rates of assessment for 2016 for all assessment funds at a meeting in October 2015 with a recommendation being made to the General Assembly in June 2016. With regard to the Pension Scheme Fund assessment it is expected that the rate would be set at 24% of stipend for the 3 years 2016 to 2018 in line with the results of the actuarial valuation of the pension scheme.

GENERAL COUNCIL – APPENDIX 2C

SUMMARY OF PRESBYTERY RETURNS FOR YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2014

			[----- INCOME -----]			[----- EXPENDITURE -----]						
		OPENING	Assessment	Other	TOTAL	Presbytery	Other	Insurance	Other	TOTAL	SURPLUS	CLOSING
		BALANCE	Congregations		INCOME	Clerk	Staff			EXPENDITURE	(DEFICIT)	BALANCE
1	Ards	18,595	17,881	209	18,090	(11,260)	(6,141)	(238)	(3,057)	(20,696)	(2,606)	15,989
2	Armagh	4,217	10,970	273	11,243	(9,199)	(300)	(207)	(1,069)	(10,775)	468	4,685
3	Ballymena	9,596	17,812	6,029	23,841	(11,342)	(3,500)	(207)	(10,259)	(25,308)	(1,467)	8,129
4	Belfast North	4,413	15,518	2,330	17,848	(11,193)	(3,369)	(333)	(4,988)	(19,883)	(2,035)	2,378
5	Belfast South	16,229	13,751	12,188	25,939	(8,470)	(12,352)	(207)	(5,234)	(26,263)	(324)	15,905
6	Belfast East	142,977	22,009	2,040	24,049	(9,718)	(2,288)	(207)	(15,881)	(28,094)	(4,045)	138,932
7	Carrickfergus	9,335	10,926	186	11,112	(9,226)	(538)	(127)	(3,111)	(13,002)	(1,890)	7,445
8	Coleraine & Limavady	35,987	13,460	618	14,078	(7,610)	(885)	(207)	(2,339)	(11,041)	3,037	39,024
9	Derry & Donegal	37,654	18,636	19,441	38,077	(12,004)	(2,142)	(207)	(25,489)	(39,842)	(1,765)	35,889
10	Down	31,819	8,717	61	8,778	(6,481)	(1,500)	(207)	(3,729)	(11,917)	(3,139)	28,680
11	Dromore	2,328	13,163	1,400	14,563	(10,553)	(1,700)	(207)	(447)	(12,907)	1,656	3,984
12	€ Dublin & Munster	48,891	17,012	22,342	39,354	(8,006)	(22,600)	(749)	(8,944)	(40,299)	(945)	47,946
13	Iveagh	12,877	13,212	118	13,330	(9,190)	0	(127)	(1,750)	(11,067)	2,263	15,140
14	€ Monaghan	57,438	5,355	14,206	19,561	(2,300)	(2,487)	(435)	(19,770)	(24,992)	(5,431)	52,007
15	Newry	4,846	9,823	6	9,829	(7,548)	(300)	(127)	(1,077)	(9,052)	777	5,623
16	Omagh	14,169	11,395	482	11,877	(7,436)	(1,765)	(207)	(2,398)	(11,806)	71	14,240
17	Route	142,305	11,771	8,010	19,781	(9,046)	(350)	(207)	(4,249)	(13,852)	5,929	148,234
18	Templepatrick	16,635	19,062	2,662	21,724	(8,268)	(1,150)	(288)	(9,294)	(19,000)	2,724	19,359
19	Tyrone	3,120	11,654	319	11,973	(8,388)	(1,000)	(207)	(805)	(10,400)	1,573	4,693
	Sterling	<u>507,102</u>	<u>239,760</u>	<u>56,372</u>	<u>296,132</u>	<u>(156,932)</u>	<u>(39,280)</u>	<u>(3,517)</u>	<u>(95,176)</u>	<u>(294,905)</u>	<u>1,227</u>	<u>508,329</u>
	€ Euro	<u>106,329</u>	<u>22,367</u>	<u>36,548</u>	<u>58,915</u>	<u>(10,306)</u>	<u>(25,087)</u>	<u>(1,184)</u>	<u>(28,714)</u>	<u>(65,291)</u>	<u>(6,376)</u>	<u>99,953</u>

(iii) Amended Resolution:

14. That the proposals set out in the “Review of the Central Ministry Fund Bonus” be approved and implemented on 1st January 2016, with the General Council authorised to act on behalf of the Assembly in connection with any issue arising with regard to implementation.

JOHN HUNTER

**Item 25 – Nominations Committee – Supplementary Report
(Thursday Afternoon)**

The Committee met on 27th April 2015.

Nominations for the Judicial Commission were drawn up and are included in the revised nominations booklet for approval.

Deletions, alternations and additions to the membership of the Councils and Committees have proved necessary for various reasons. A very small number of positions have not been filled because some Presbyteries and Councils have not been able to identify suitable people willing to occupy them. The finalised membership, insofar as the positions have been able to be filled, of the Commissions, Councils and Committees is shown in the revised nominations booklet and is submitted for approval.

The Committee considered a process for replacing members as vacancies occur. It proposes that direct Presbytery nominees be replaced by the Committee through the year on receipt of new nominations from Presbyteries, as there will be no question of refusing a valid direct Presbytery nomination. A resolution is appended to give the Committee the authority to do this. It does not feel that it can take the same approach with positions that are filled by ‘Other Nominees’ (those nominated to the ‘pool’ by Presbyteries, PW and SPUD along with others sourced elsewhere) and will bring the names of those to fill vacancies in this category to the General Assembly following the occurrence of the vacancy. When a vacancy for a Convener occurs during the year the Council may appoint an Interim Convener from within its membership: the Nominations Committee will then advertise and interview for the post and make a nomination to the General Assembly following.

The Committee will seek to devise a process for replacing members of Councils and Committees who come to the end of their appointment terms, and for replenishing the pool of nominees from Presbytery, PW and SPUD.

Resolution

17(a) That the General Assembly give authority to the Nominations Committee to receive direct nominations from Presbyteries to fill vacancies on Assembly Councils and Committees and to ratify them, as they occur during the year.

AD DAVIDSON

Item 26(a) – Moderator’s Advisory Committee (Supplementary Report) (Thursday Afternoon)

1. Following the result of the recent marriage referendum in the Republic of Ireland, and urgent questions being being raised by some Ministers in that jurisdiction, the Moderator’s Advisory Committee held a special meeting on Wednesday 27th May 2015. The Convener invited some Ministers from the Republic of Ireland, along with some others whose input would be useful, to sit and deliberate with the Committee.

2. The Committee recognised that the Church and Society Council has had, and would continue to have, a significant ongoing involvement in presenting the views of the Presbyterian Church in the public square on this and related matters. It was however agreed that the specific issue of the Presbyterian Church’s involvement in the solemnization or registration of marriage went beyond the remit of that Council.

3. The Committee heard from representatives of the southern Presbyteries regarding the deep sense of unease and concern felt by many Ministers. The Committee identified two presenting issues, namely:

- (a) The need to make unambiguously clear the position of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland with regard to what PCI Ministers cannot do in this area;
- (b) The need to set up a focused task group to look at the issue of the Church’s ongoing involvement in the solemnisation or registration of marriage.

4. The Committee therefore unanimously agreed to present the first two resolutions (appended below) for consideration by the General Assembly.

5. The Committee were made aware that the Council for Church in Society would be reporting to the General Assembly regarding wider related issues. The Committee, in line with discussion at the Council the previous evening, recognised that there was a clear need to encourage a greater emphasis on the biblical understanding of marriage and family within our Congregations. In light of the fact that the Council for Congregational Life and Witness would not be meeting prior to the General Assembly, and following consultation with the Secretary of that Council, the third resolution (appended below) is presented for consideration by the General Assembly.

6. Finally, the Committee also recognised its own responsibility, as previously agreed by the former General Board, to give leadership in the whole area of relating to the LGBT community, in its different manifestations. The Committee undertook seek to take this area of work forward during the incoming session.

Additional Resolutions

18(a) Recognising that the Presbyterian Church in Ireland affirms the biblical position of marriage as being exclusively between one man and one woman, the General Assembly direct:

- (i) 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;
- (ii) 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.

18b. Recognising the concerns arising from the recent change in the constitution of the Republic of Ireland, and specifically how this may affect the role of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and its Ministers with regard to the solemnising of marriage, the General Assembly direct:

- (i) that the following Task Group be appointed to consider all of the issues surrounding the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's ongoing involvement in the solemnising of marriage in the Republic of Ireland, along with how this may relate to Northern Ireland, and that the Task Group bring

a full report, through the General Council, to the 2016 General Assembly:

Moderator, Clerk, Rev Dr Donald Watts (Convener), General Assembly Solicitor, Very Rev Drs Norman Hamilton, John Lockington, Trevor Morrow; Revs Amanda Best, David Hagan, Chris Kennedy, Stephen Rea; Mrs Avril Heenan.

(ii) that in the interim all eligible Ministers remain on the list of solemnisers.

18c. Recognising the need for the Church to teach clearly the biblical understanding of marriage and family, the General Assembly direct the Council for Congregational Life and Witness to give priority to resourcing Congregations for this task.

TD GRIBBEN

Item 27 – General Assembly Business Committee (Final Report) (Thursday Afternoon)

The Church of Scotland General Assembly (2015)

The Rt Rev Dr Michael Barry Reports:

1. I attended the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, in Edinburgh 15th-22nd May 2015, with my Chaplain, the Rev Dr TJ McCormick, and our wives, together with Mr Stanley Bond, my Clerk of Session. We received a warm welcome and enjoyed generous hospitality throughout our visit.
2. The week began with the splendid pageantry of a reception in the Palace of Holyroodhouse, which included the ceremonial presentation of keys of the City of Edinburgh to Her Majesty's Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly, His Grace, Lord Hope of Craighead. At the first session of the Assembly His Grace was formally introduced and addressed those present with warmth, and gentle humour.
3. The Rev Dr Angus Morrison was installed as Moderator in succession to the Rev John Chalmers who will be resuming duties as the Assembly's Principal Clerk. On Saturday evening the out-going Moderator gave an extensive report on his work during the year. Reflecting on many experiences throughout Scotland and beyond he took the opportunity to identify and suggest future agenda items for the Kirk.

4. The theme of the Assembly – ‘Living Stones’ was fully used and well developed throughout the week, even the ‘Blue Book’ carried the branding. It also provided the theme for Daily Devotions and Sunday worship in St Giles Cathedral. A range of resources has been provided for personal and congregational use with the aim of developing the theme during this year. All of this is indicative of prayerful consideration, imaginative and creative work, and enthusiastic promotion. We trust that it will be a source of blessing to all who use the material.

5. Sunday was a stimulating mix of the formal and informal. The service in St Giles Cathedral, during which the Moderator preached, had all the hallmarks of a state occasion. Being a fluent Gaelic speaker the Moderator went on to conduct a second service, in Gaelic, at The Greyfriars Kirk. The afternoon had a different style of pageantry when the Princes Street Gardens were filled with stalls displaying the work of the Church at all levels. Some Congregations showcased particular projects, Presbyteries displayed special events, Councils provided information on their areas of responsibility and other Missions and Agencies advertised their work. The afternoon concluded with an open-air service which was well attended by all ages. The event works under the title ‘Heart and Soul’ – it was clear that many had indeed put their heart and soul into it.

6. Dr Morrison chaired the business meetings of the Assembly with engaging geniality which encouraged widespread participation. The technical resources available to the Assembly meant Commissioners’ attendance was recorded during each session, the results of votes were immediately available, and those wanting to speak during a debate had to register their intention and wait to be called – on occasions this appeared to slow the debate although it also gave a moment to reflect on the previous speech.

7. The matter of civil partnership and same sex marriage hung over the Assembly from the beginning of the week having been on the agenda for most of the last decade. An Overture on the one hand affirmed *‘the historic and current doctrine and practice of the Church in relation to human sexuality and their application to the ministers and deacons of the church’* but at the same time recognised *‘the diversity of views within the Church’*. Thus *‘In the interests of the peace and unity of the Church’* Kirk Sessions would be allowed to depart [from historic practice] *‘in order to permit the ordination, induction or appointment of a minister or a deacon who is in a civil partnership’*. Presbyteries had discussed and voted on the Overture under the Barrier Act during the past year (31 Approving, 14 Disapproving – the members voting 1,381 approving and 1,161 disapproving).

8. Contrary opinions were clearly expressed throughout with clarity and passion and I was given the opportunity to contribute to the debate. There were some surprising, even disturbing, comments in relation to the authority of scripture. The idea of recognising a 'mixed economy' in the interests of preserving the unity of the church was strongly advanced. The vote was 309 For 182 Against with 74 Commissioners recorded their Dissent. The outworking of this decision will present challenges at local, Presbytery and National level now that each Kirk Session can, with congregational approval, determine whether or not to adhere to the historic doctrine and practice.

9. The issue was re-visited, from a different angle, later in the week in a joint report of the Theological Forum and Legal Questions Committee. Although initially presented as a 'tidying up' process to grant equality to Ministers and Deacons in same sex marriages as those in Civil Partnerships this became a long debate. Several Commissioners spoke of the pain the previous decision had caused and I again had the opportunity to contribute to the debate. There was the suggestion that the Church's view and definition of marriage was different from the State's definition and on that basis it would be acceptable to extend equality while retaining the particular theological and ecclesiological nuances. A counter-motion asking for time to reflect on the whole matter so that all members of the Kirk could be involved and the peace of the Church maintained was also discussed. At the vote the Assembly passed the original motion (213 For and 205 Against) and subsequently agreed to remit the matter to Presbyteries under the Barrier Act. As some of my predecessors have reported there are clear differences on this matter within the Kirk. While the commitment to 'unity of the church' has been called for, for some it is a costly and painful journey.

10. Other work of the Assembly is largely reflected in our work in Ireland. The World Mission Council '*seeks to support congregations and Presbyteries, Councils and Committees to be in the vanguard of involvement with the living stones of the world church.*' There was encouragement to be '*open to new areas of partnership in areas of the world where it does not have living links, but where there are strategic opportunities.*' There were several opportunities for Delegates and Visitors from other Countries to address the Assembly, those from Syria and Nepal were particularly well received.

11. The Scottish Referendum is now past and the undoubted positive contribution of the Church to engage in '*a respectful dialogue*' has been widely acknowledged. The outward looking face of the Church was reflected in motions calling for a constitutional convention for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to provide better governance and enhanced participation. There was also a call to sister churches to engage in such a process.

12. The Social Care Council resources the Church in areas of social care and Crossreach is the agency providing social care services. The work is extensive and varied in what is both a needy and financially challenging environment – there was a £1 million operating deficit in the past year. Steps are being taken to achieve a breakeven budget however this focus has frustrated attempts to give cost of living pay rises to staff and move towards paying all employees the Scottish Living Wage. The Council hopes that the four tiers of engagement, ‘Prayer’, ‘Getting Alongside’ ‘CrossReach Local’ and ‘CrossReach National’ will not only increase awareness of the work but also engagement and support.

13. The Ministries Council has initiated a ‘Decade for Ministry’ with a challenge to increase membership by 100,000 by 2025. The Council also noted that on present trends the Church will be short of over 200 Parish Ministers by the early 2020’s, thus a further target was set of training no fewer than 30 candidates for the ministry of word and sacrament each year and no fewer than 100 members through the Mission Shaped Ministry course. A recruitment programme was launched with enthusiasm at the Heart and Soul event. As the Council report states *‘A flourishing ministry and a flourishing church are like the chicken and egg – it is hard to say which comes first. ... since the two are so interwoven positive action on one should naturally produce positive results on the other.’* It will be both interesting and instructive to see how these initiatives develop in the coming years.

14. There were many ‘fringe meetings’ hosted by Councils and Committees to give Commissioners and others a fuller insight into the reports to be presented to the Assembly. These were helpful in getting a feel for the issues and identifying key personnel. The evening receptions enabled us to develop friendships with others from near and far, sharing experiences and insight of mission and ministry.

15. It is apparent that both our churches face similar challenges and have opportunities to work together in areas of common concern where we can learn from one another to our mutual advantage and the advancement of Christ's Kingdom.

Additional Resolutions

20b. 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 D Clarke, Dr S Hutchinson; Revs Dr DJ Watts, TD Gribben;
Sir Bruce Robinson, N Bennett, D Crowe, Leslie McKeague.

20c. That the following corresponding members be appointed:

To the Church of Scotland 2016

The Rt Rev Dr DIJ McNie, the Rev AL Kirk, _____

20d. That the delegates to the Presbyterian Church of Wales 2016, the General Synod of the Church of Ireland 2016 and the Methodist Conference 2016 be appointed by the General Council.

21a. That the Clerk be given authority to make corrections to the Daily Minutes as and when required.

21b. That the next General Assembly be held in Belfast on Monday, 6th June, 2016.

TD GRIBBEN