

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORTS

TO THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND

TO BE HELD AT BELFAST

JUNE 2017



**Item 1 – GENERAL ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE – Initial Report (Supplementary)
(Tuesday morning)**

Additional Resolution

2a. That at the 2017 General Assembly, permission be granted, where appropriate, to consolidate resolutions relating to Overtures; and that if a written request from ten or more members of Assembly is lodged with the Clerk before the time scheduled for debate on the consolidated resolution(s) relating to Overtures, then the item(s) specified in the written request will be removed from the consolidated resolution(s) and considered as separate resolution(s).

TREVOR D GRIBBEN

**Item 2 - REPORTS OF PRESBYTERIES – Supplementary Report
(Tuesday Morning)**

**ADDENDUM TO THE REPORT OF THE PRESBYTERY OF TYRONE
(page 203)**

The Presbytery of Tyrone further report that under their care is, as a Licentiate, Mr GR Mullan.

TREVOR D GRIBBEN

**Item 3 – GENERAL COUNCIL: Section 1 – Supplementary Report
(Tuesday Morning)**

MEMORIAL RECORD

The Rev Helen Steele Boyd, BD, Minister Emeritus, Millisle and Ballycopeland, died on 11th April 2017, in the seventy-fifth year of her age and the thirty-third year of her ministry. She was born at Belfast on 20th January 1943, the youngest of a family of five, to Thomas James Watson, a civil servant, and his wife, Margaret, née Young. The family were members of Old Park Presbyterian Church, Cliftonville Road, where, in later years, she became Captain of the Girls' Brigade Company. Mrs Boyd was educated at the Belfast Model School for Girls, and the Belfast Royal Academy, 1954 -1960. On leaving school, she worked as a Secretary for the Antrim Education Board. Obeying the call of God to serve as a Deaconess she trained at St Colm's College, Edinburgh, from 1966 to 1968. Her first posting was to Bloomfield congregation, East Belfast, where she worked with the minister, the Rev Dr John Orr, assisting in the general life of the

congregation including responsibility for visitation of the elderly. In 1971 she moved to take responsibility for the day to day running of a second Friendship House in Templemore Avenue, East Belfast. She developed a busy programme of activities including lunch clubs for the elderly, clubs for unchurched young people, and nursery and pre-school facilities. This was a challenging work, since many had social problems caused by poverty, broken and unstable homes, and involvement with gangs associated with the violence and disorder of the 'Troubles'. During this time, she developed a strong conviction to study for the ordained ministry, and, on being received by the Church, she entered the Union Theological College, Belfast, in the autumn of 1979, graduating in 1984 with a BD from the Queen's University, Belfast. She was licensed by the Presbytery of East Belfast in St John's Church, on 27th June 1984, and served her assistantship with the Rev John Chambers in the congregation of Second Comber, where she was ordained on 6th January 1985. The following year, 1986, she was called to the congregation of Millisle and Ballycopeland and installed by the Presbytery of Ards on 10th April. To her ministry she brought dedication compassion and grace from which many benefitted, and she was highly regarded by all with whom she worked. She found personal joy and companionship in her marriage to David Boyd on 29th June 1990. Together they served God and His people with gladness. Mrs Boyd retired from full-time ministry on 10th April 2011. To her husband, David, her sisters Peggy, Irene, and Vera, and the wider family circle we extend our sympathy and prayers that the hope we have in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ will be their strength and comfort in their loss.

The Rev Eric George McAuley BA, BD, BSc, minister without charge, died on 21st April 2017, in the eighty-sixth year of his age. He was born at Belfast on 10th August 1931, the eldest of two children, (brother to Cynthia) to George R McAuley, a Confectioner, Tobacconist and Newsagent, and his wife, Eileen Cynthia, née Ross. The family worshipped in Crescent congregation, University Road, and Mr McAuley was educated at Fullerton House, the preparatory department of Methodist College Grammar School, and then the College, between 1937 and 1949. He was a keen sportsman, playing for the rugby team, and a member of the rowing four and eight, and a water polo player. He entered the Queen's University, Belfast, graduating BA in 1952, and, feeling called to the ordained ministry, he proceeded to Edinburgh where he studied theology at New College, graduating BD in 1955, and completed his ministry studies at the Assembly's College, Belfast. He was licensed by the Presbytery of Belfast on 2nd June 1955, and served his assistantship with the Very Rev Dr James Carlyle Breakey, minister of Fortwilliam Park congregation on the Antrim Road, Belfast. After three years, he was called to the newly created joint charge of Newtowncunningham with Crossroads, where he was ordained jointly by the Presbyteries of Raphoe and Derry, on 18th April 1957. Four years later he was called to the congregation of Bannside, Banbridge, where he was installed by the Presbytery of Iveagh on 2nd March 1961. He was distinguished by his

compassionate pastoral ministry, warm friendship, and his loyal service to the work of the presbytery. Interested in architecture, he designed the Emerson Memorial front entrance doors to Bannside church, named after a prominent local business family, depicting, in the copper overlay, the ministry of Christ and His presence in our everyday lives. He undertook further study and graduated BSc from the Queen's University in 1972. He became a chartered architect in 1973 and gained his Master's degree in 1974. In 1973 he had a career change on taking up an appointment as a lecturer in the Architecture Department of Queen's, and he resigned from Bannside on 30th September 1973, becoming a minister without charge. He continued to serve the Church as Convener of the General Assembly's Church Architecture Committee from 1979 to 1986. Mr McAuley married Mildred Patricia Scott on 1st August 1956 who shared with, and supported him, in congregational life and ministry. They had four children, Stephen, Sharon, David and Brian. To them, and to Mr McAuley's sister, Cynthia, we extend our sympathy and prayers in their loss, as we give thanks to God for Mr McAuley's ministry and service.

The Rev David William Lapsley, BA, MA, DD, Minister Emeritus, Fisherwick, Belfast, died on 14th May 2017 in the ninety-first year of his age and the sixty-fifth year of his ministry. He was born at Londonderry on 25th March 1927, the eldest of four children, to David William Buchanan Lapsley, a merchant, and his wife, Rebecca (Ruby) Helen Lapsley, née Craig. The congregation of Carlisle Road, where his father was an elder, Sunday School Superintendent and Treasurer of the congregation, nurtured him in the faith, and he was educated at First Derry Primary School and Foyle College. Responding to the call of God to the ordained ministry, he proceeded to Magee University College, Londonderry, in 1945, followed by Trinity College, Dublin, graduating BA in 1948, and MA in 1967. He completed his studies at the Assembly's College, Belfast, 1948-1950, and was licensed by the Presbytery of Derry on 7th June 1950. From 1948 to 1950 he served as assistant to the Rev Donald Gillies in Agnes Street, Belfast, and, secondly, from 1950 to 1952, to the Rev John Orr, in Bloomfield, Belfast. He was called by the congregation of First Killyleagh and ordained and installed there on 29th January 1953 by the Presbytery of Comber. After a ministry of nine years he was commissioned by the Foreign Missions Board on 24th February 1962 as a missionary to Jamaica. The country had gained its independence from Great Britain in 1962 and chose to become a member of the Commonwealth. It was into this post-colonial context Dr Lapsley and his wife and two children sailed in late March 1963. There he served as minister, firstly, in the three point charge of Bailleston, Mt Olivet and Spaldings, in the centre of the island, and, secondly, from 1967, at Webster Memorial United Church, Kingston, the denomination having united with the Congregational Church to form the United Church of Jamaica and Grand Cayman on 1st December 1965. Unstable family life and relationships, poor housing and poverty in Kingston, posed social and spiritual challenges to Christian witness. Dr Lapsley involved himself with many voluntary organisations addressing these issues and was Chairman of the

Church's Advisory Bureau for social work in West Kingston. He also introduced culturally appropriate liturgy and Jamaican music and hymns to worship Services. Returning home in 1971, he was appointed and installed as Education Officer to Christian Aid, Ireland, on 2nd November. Then, in 1973, he was called to the congregation of Fisherwick, Belfast, where he was installed on 23rd May, by the Presbytery of Belfast South. Here he was to remain for twenty years until his retirement on 30th April 1993. The 'Troubles' were at their height, and, along with others, he developed cross-community and inter-denominational contacts to promote understanding and good relations, an approach which he had adopted when working with Christian Aid. Under his leadership, Fisherwick formed a close connection with St Brigid's Catholic Church, in Derryvolgie Avenue. Dr Lapsley was a gifted preacher and communicator, and often contributed to Thought for the Day on BBC Radio Ulster, scripted and presented documentaries and conducted broadcast worship Services for radio and television. He served on the NI Religious Advisory Committees of the BBC in Belfast and London where he also sat on the BBC General Advisory Council. He wrote various articles for secular, church and theological journals. He was Moderator of the Synod of Belfast in 1988. Dr Lapsley's work for the Church, and in the wider community, was recognised with the award of a DD by the Presbyterian Theological Faculty Ireland, in 1989. He was a keen sportsman in earlier days, enjoying rugby and hockey, and especially cricket which he played for Trinity, and North Down. He married Mary Victoria Mercer on 20th November 1956, who predeceased him in 1994. They had two children, Michael and Sandra. As we return thanks to God for the work and witness of Dr Lapsley, we assure his second wife, Victoria (Vickie) Hamilton, whom he married on 19th October 2000, his children, Michael and Sandra, his brother, Joss, and the wider family circle, of our prayers in their loss.

AMENDMENT – The Rev Robert William Wylie (Bill) Clarke was installed in Dundalk with Carlingford in the Presbytery of Newry (not the Presbytery of Monaghan as printed in the Reports Book page 22).

TREVOR D GRIBBEN

Item 5 – CORRESPONDING MEMBERS & DELEGATES
Supplementary Report (Tuesday morning – 10.45am)

Add

Rev Meirion Morris – Presbyterian Church of Wales

Dr Damian Jackson – ICC

Rev Francis Njoroge - Presbyterian Church of East Africa

instead of Rev Alfred Mugendi Kanga

TREVOR D GRIBBEN

Item 6 – COUNCIL FOR CONGREGATIONAL LIFE & WITNESS Supplementary Report (Tuesday afternoon)

SPUD

1. This year the SPUD Working Group have focused on the 3 distinct areas of: young people and church, mental health and social media. Conversations in the Working Group led to a successful gathering of over 100 young people at our Youth Assembly in January 2017 at which these areas were enthusiastically explored. The Report gives a flavour of some of that conversation and proposes several outcomes flowing from it.

2. **Young people and the church:** Discussion and feedback at the Youth Assembly displayed a positive attitude among young people towards the church. There was an encouraging desire expressed for inter-generational church - one which includes relationship and mentoring between generations. Delegates also showed a willingness to be involved and included within the life and leadership of their congregations. In response to this we will be hosting a Fringe event at the General Assembly on Wednesday 7th June in the Minor Hall at 5:30pm to explore these issues and share good practice.

3. **Mental Health:** The discussion of this issue at the Youth Assembly showed great openness and desire to engage with what can still be a difficult area for the church and its members. Young people expressed a need for open, honest and sensitive conversations within our churches regarding mental health. We hope to share some of these inputs in a series of future blogs, as well as engaging, as appropriate, with Councils and Committees of the General Assembly whose remits include work in this field.

4. **Social Media:** There was a strong sense among delegates at the Youth Assembly that social media is a crucial area in which churches could be better engaged. SPUD identifies that young people have a crucial role to play in helping to stimulate and guide this conversation. SPUD believes that the potential for social media engagement by congregations represents a huge opportunity to reach into today's world with the gospel.

5. There can be little doubt that technology has transformed the world as we know it, nevertheless, the area of social media remains a new and unknown culture for many in our churches. SPUD recognises the dangers often identified with the growth of social media and pay tribute to the valuable work done by the Council for Social Witness and Taking Care in protecting our young people in these areas. SPUD also understand the unhealthy patterns that can be created as individuals engage in social media, constantly checking their social media feeds.

6. While acknowledging those potentially harmful effects and dangers, SPUD wants to focus the conversation positively on the opportunity and huge missional reach social media provides. Facebook was only created in 2004 yet 88% of 18-29 year olds have profiles on it. 90% of Instagram users and 74% of Snapchat users are under 35. Suffice to say that social media is now an integral part of the lives of a generation of young people, many of them accessing it for several hours

every day. Healthy or not, this is reality for our world and the context in which we minister as congregations. Ignoring the world of social media and creating a vacuum in this space by our lack of presence cannot be an option.

7. While it should never be used as a replacement for face-to-face engagement, congregations should be engaged in social media to reach people in our communities. The potential reach of social media in a short space of time is nothing short of astounding. Thousands of people can be accessed in just one day. Users view things on Facebook and tell their friends about what they have seen, often by 'tagging' them. What is shared has the potential to go well beyond the initial post.

8. A good example is the PCI Young Adults' Facebook page. It is active with four to five fresh posts placed online every week highlighting key events, pointing to helpful articles or sharing examples of what churches are doing in mission. These posts reach a lot of people each week. One recent post was accessed and viewed by over 7,000 people in the space of forty-eight hours.

9. Jesus called his followers to live godly lives in the world amongst the prevailing culture, rather than to separate ourselves from it. So, what a great way to engage in today's world with the gospel by using social media, maximising its reach for the glory of God.

10. A congregation's use of social media need not be limited to outreach. It can also be greatly used to provide a catalyst of engagement between different generations. It offers a contemporary way to communicate announcements and upcoming events, with personal invites helping to draw in others from the congregation. One simple idea already in place in a local PCI congregation that came out of the Youth Assembly was the development of a WhatsApp prayer group. It enabled young people to share their needs, to support each other and bear one another's burdens through prayer. Youth leaders and the minister being present in the group helped create an environment of awareness, support and nurture.

11. We believe that the potential for social media engagement by congregations is huge and it would be an enormous oversight not to utilise tools God has given us to reach the world for Him. However, SPUD recognises that this is a scary and unknown culture for many in the church and so wish to offer some help to congregations who want to develop their thinking and practice in this area.

ADDITIONAL RESOLUTION

2(a) That the General Assembly encourage the formation of a Task Group under the Council for Congregational Life and Witness, comprising membership from the SPUD Working Group and other relevant bodies, to:

- i. develop and organise a training event in 2018 addressing the area of appropriate and effective use of social media in congregational life and witness;

- ii. develop appropriate follow up material to enable local congregations to enhance their social media presence;
- iii. explore how best to encourage and enable each congregation to appoint a Social Media Co-ordinator.

DAVID H THOMPSON

Item 8 - COUNCIL FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS – Supplementary Report (Wednesday Morning)

NORTHERN IRELAND POLITICAL SITUATION

1. As the Council's report was being finalised, a snap UK General Election was called for Thursday 8th June and, subsequently, the talks process aimed at restoring Northern Ireland's devolved institutions was suspended. It is clear that the ongoing political crisis is damaging the very fabric of society: there is no agreed budget; welfare reform lacks ongoing oversight; small but vital community services are under threat; much-talked-about reform of the health service has scarcely / not progressed; and, yet again, victims and survivors are left without much of the support they need.
2. One of the primary functions of government is to provide for the welfare of all the people. Without a well-functioning, locally accountable administration in place, it is the vulnerable who suffer the most. There is, therefore, a clear moral imperative for the current political crisis to be resolved urgently. As the Moderator said in his statement on 16th January, for our institutions to function well, "there must be a commitment to openness, generosity of spirit and cooperation for the common good". We want to see the establishment of good government as soon as possible, based on good working relationships that are progressively formed through the demonstration of these core values.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND PANEL

The Very Rev Dr Trevor Morrow (Convener) writes:

3. Since the report of the Republic of Ireland Panel was finalised, the Citizens' Assembly has voted to recommend that Article 40.3.3 (the Eighth Amendment) be replaced with a constitutional provision that explicitly authorises the Oireachtas to legislate to address termination of pregnancy, any rights of the unborn, and any rights of the woman. Such change requires a referendum. The Citizens' Assembly has further recommended that abortion should be made available through legislation in the following additional circumstances:

Circumstance	Term Limit
Serious risk to the physical health of the woman	No restriction as to gestational age
Serious risk to the mental health of the woman	Up to 22 weeks gestation
Serious risk to the health of the woman	Up to 22 weeks gestation
Risk to the physical health of the woman	Up to 22 weeks gestation
Risk to the mental health of the woman	Up to 22 weeks gestation
Risk to the health of the woman	Up to 22 weeks gestation
Pregnancy as a result of rape	Up to 22 weeks gestation
The unborn child has a foetal abnormality that is likely to result in death before or shortly after birth	No restriction as to gestational age
The unborn child has a significant foetal abnormality that is not likely to result in death before or shortly after birth	Up to 22 weeks gestation
Socio-economic reasons	Up to 12 weeks gestation
No restriction as to reasons	Up to 12 weeks gestation

4. The Citizens' Assembly subsequently voted to recommend that a distinction should not be drawn between the physical and mental health of the woman.
5. The Chair of the Citizens' Assembly, Ms Justice Laffoy, will deliver a report to the Oireachtas before the end of June 2017. A Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Eighth Amendment is currently being formed to consider the report and its recommendations when they are received. The Committee is expected to report its conclusions and recommendations to both Houses of the Oireachtas within three months of its first public meeting. Some elected representatives have suggested that a referendum on the Eighth Amendment could be held in early 2018.
6. It is clear that the recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly, if implemented, will have very serious consequences in terms of the protection afforded to the unborn. As a referendum may be held before June 2018, it is proposed that a Task Group be set up by the General Assembly to report and make recommendations on the Eighth Amendment to both the Council for Public Affairs and the General Council, with the General Council authorised to act on behalf of the Assembly. The pace of developments suggests that the PCI may be required to make a submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee before the Task Group can report to the next meeting of the General Council. Therefore, an appended resolution authorises the Task Group to inform the Joint Committee of the direction of the Task Group's thinking.

Additional Resolutions:

5. That the General Assembly express serious disquiet about the damage being done to the fabric of Northern Irish society by the current political crisis, and encourage all involved in upcoming political talks to urgently seek a resolution that establishes good government based on good working relationships, so that confidence can be restored, instability minimised and major challenges (including those involving the Brexit negotiations) faced together.
6. That the General Assembly, recognising the important role and responsibilities of government in respect of so many issues affecting people throughout Ireland, north and south, encourage Presbyterians to participate in the democratic process and vote in each election as and when it is called.
7. That the General Assembly:
 - (a) express their deep concern regarding the recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly to significantly widen access to abortion in the Republic of Ireland;
 - (b) call upon the Irish Government to ensure that the best possible care and support is made available to women experiencing crisis pregnancies;
 - (c) urge Presbyterians, in judging how to vote in the event of any referendum on the Eighth Amendment, to carefully consider the pro-life position of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland upholding the sacredness of human life.
8. That the General Assembly appoint a Task Group under the Council for Public Affairs, consisting of the Moderator and Clerk of the General Assembly, Convener of the Council for Public Affairs, Convener of the Republic of Ireland Panel, Public Affairs Officer, Professor Stephen Williams, Dr Victoria Carroll, with power to co-opt up to 4 others, with the following remit:
 - (a) to draw up a report and recommendations concerning the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution of Ireland - Bunreacht na hÉireann, to be presented to both the Council for Public Affairs and the General Council, with the General Council authorised, if necessary, to act on behalf of the Assembly in connection with any issue arising;
 - (b) to make submissions to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Eighth Amendment on behalf of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, following the approval of the General Council or, if time constraints do not permit such approval, as authorised by the Moderator and Clerk of the General Assembly.

Renumbered Resolution:

9. That the Report of the Council for Public Affairs be received

T NORMAN HAMILTON

**Item 9 – COUNCIL FOR TRAINING IN MINISTRY
Supplementary Report (Wednesday Morning)**

1. Union Theological College Management Committee

Amendment:

in par 38 of the report (page 278) the last sentence should read ‘As Dr Cowan was a licentiate of our Church, the Council issued a Call and he was ordained and inducted as Lecturer in Historical Theology on 9th December, 2016.’

2. Reception of Ministers and Licentiates Committee

The following additions are made to the recommendations concerning Licentiates and Ministers without charge in Appendix 2 (pages 286-288).

Derry & Donegal

Rev DA Edgar to be retained as Minister without charge

Down

Rev JM Casement to be retained as Minister without charge.

Tyrone

Mr JA Dunn not to be retained as Licentiate without charge.

By way of update and amendment, the note concerning those no longer recorded as Licentiates or Ministers without charge in Appendix 2 on page 288 of the reports is replaced with the following:

DECEASED

Coleraine & Limavady

Rev JD Mark

Down

Rev RN Stewart

Iveagh

Rev EG McAuley

Route

Rev WJ Brown

ORDAINED

Down (transferred to **Armagh** after last General Assembly as Licentiate without charge)

Dr MC 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

NIGEL J McCULLOUGH

Item 11 – GENERAL COUNCIL: Section 2

Supplementary Report (Wednesday afternoon – 3.30pm)

ADDITIONAL REPORT

Professor of Systematic Theology

1. Paragraph 44 of the report of the Council for Training in Ministry (page 279) refers to the retirement of the Rev Prof Stephen Williams and initial steps taken to source a replacement. The General Council, at its meeting on 13th October, appointed a number of its members ‘to advise the Council for Training in Ministry on making appropriate future provision for both the teaching of Systematic Theology in Union Theological College and the wider denominational role.’
2. This advice was that any replacement be at full professorial level. The Council for Training in Ministry met on 15th December and, in the light of this advice drew of a Job Description and Personnel specification. It appointed an Interview Panel made up as follows:
Principal (Very Rev Prof Stafford Carson), Conveners of the Committee and Council (Very Rev Dr Alastair Dunlop and Rev Nigel McCullough), Council Secretary (Rev Jim Stothers), Prof. Norma Dawson, a representative of the General Council (Very Rev Dr Rob Craig); and on a sit and deliberate basis, Ms Laura Kelly (or other member of Personnel department), Dr Joan Rahilly (QUB Institute of Theology), Prof Ivor Davidson (Hon. Professor of Systematic Theology in St Andrews University).
It was also agreed that the Principal, Committee Convener and Council Secretary be given authority to co-opt replacements for any not able to serve.

3. The Interview Panel met on 27th February to shortlist and agree interview questions. Four applications had been received. Two of these did not meet the essential criteria. The Panel agreed that a wider field to choose from would be important, and that the Personnel Specification placed too much emphasis on a record of academic publications and not enough on both the particular requirements appropriate for the post in the context of contemporary delivery of teaching in Union Theological College, and experience of ordained ministry. It was intended that this would both increase the number of applicants and make it more likely that those who did apply would more fully meet the requirements of the College and the Church. The previous applicants were invited to reapply. The Principal, Council Secretary and Head of Personnel were tasked with drawing up a new Personnel Specification on this basis. The Job Description and revised Personnel Specification are in Appendices 1 and 2.

4. The changes made to the Personnel Specification are:

a. Qualifications and Knowledge

- *An ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, or eligible to become an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, understanding that subscription to the Westminster Standards will be required.*

was reworded for the sake of clarity to:

- * *An ordained Minister of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI), or a Licentiate eligible to become such a Minister, **or a Minister of another denomination (or eligible to be ordained as such), and deemed eligible to transfer to PCI.*

* *The essential nature of this post requires that the successful candidate be a Minister of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland as provided for under excepted occupations in the Fair Employment Treatment (NI) Order 1998.*

** *PCI reserves the right to determine whether a candidate is eligible to transfer from another denomination*

and the reference to the Westminster Standards was reworded and moved to Special Circumstances and supplemented with a criterion relating to the doctrinal position and ethos of PCI and willingness to obey the Courts of the Church.

- *The ability to provide research led teaching in the area of Systematic Theology*

was added to the Essential Criteria and

- *A record of research and publications in the area of Systematic Theology*

was changed from an Essential Criterion to a Desirable Criterion.

b. Relevant Experience

- *2 years' experience as a Minister of a congregation*
- *Experience in the management and delivery of on-line courses or learning experiences*
- *Experience of effective monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning*

were made additional Desirable Criteria.

c. Special Circumstances

- *In full sympathy with the doctrinal position and ethos of the PCI and willing "loyally to implement" all decisions of the Courts of the Church*
- *Willing to subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith in terms of the General Assembly's formula;*
"I believe the Westminster Confession of Faith, as described in the Code (Chapter 1, Pars 12-14), to be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God, and as such I subscribe it as the confession of my faith."

were made additional Essential Criteria.

5. The new Personnel Specification was agreed by the Council for Training in Ministry at its meeting on 27th March.
6. The General Council, at its meeting on 13th April, passed the following resolution:
That the General Council gives the Interview Panel, appointed by the Council for Training in Ministry in respect of a new Professor of Systematic Theology at Union Theological College, authority to nominate directly to the General Assembly on behalf of the Council.
7. The Interview Panel met on 27th April to shortlist and agree interview questions. Due to the unavailability of some of the previous members the panel membership on this occasion was:
Principal, Conveners of the Committee and Council, Council Secretary, Mrs Rosemary Hamilton; Very Rev Dr Michael Barry (General Council); and on a sit and deliberate basis, Ms Laura Kelly, Dr Joan Rahilly, Dr Stephen Holmes (Senior Lecturer in Theology in St Andrews University). Eight applications had been received. Four of these did not meet the essential criteria.
8. The Interview Panel met on 8th May and interviewed four applicants. It was agreed to nominate the Rev Dr Michael McClenahan for appointment by the General Assembly as Professor of Systematic Theology in Union Theological College from 1st September, 2017.
9. Brief factual descriptions of Dr McClenahan's Academic Training and Qualifications and Ministry Training and Experience are given at Appendix 3.

Appendix 1: Job Description

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title: Professor of Systematic Theology

Council/Agency: *Council for Training in Ministry, Union Theological College*

Salary Scale: *E6 (£40,125 to £48,884 for 2017)*

Responsible to: *The Principal of Union Theological College*

Main function of job: To design and develop the curriculum in the area of Systematic Theology as part of the Department of Systematic Theology & Church History, and to provide research-led teaching in keeping with the theological position of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

Main Duties and Responsibilities

Under the overall leadership of the Principal of Union Theological College:

- to develop and deliver appropriate learning experiences for ministerial training and degree courses as required;
- to contribute to the spiritual and ministry formation and related assessment of Students for the Ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland;
- to supervise departmental and inter-departmental postgraduate students as required;
- to contribute to the life of the College as a community of learning, worship and faith closely related to the Church whose students it seeks to train;
- to share in the pastoral care of students and/or residents of the College;
- to take part in the management and general administration of the College;
- to engage in on-going academic research and publication (sabbatical leave may be granted to facilitate this at the discretion of the Management Committee);
- to participate as a member of Committees and Panels of the Council for Training in Ministry, and in other Committees and Councils of PCI as required;
- to provide theologically-informed leadership and resources for the work of the Councils and Committees of the General Assembly, as required;

- to participate in the Institute of Theology of the Queen's University of Belfast, as required;
- to represent the College, as required;
- to adhere to the Equal Opportunity Policy and to promote equality of opportunity where possible;
- to work in accordance with other relevant workplace policies and procedures e.g. Health and Safety Policy, Data Protection Policy.

Such other duties as are appropriate to the post as may be required by the Principal or the Union Theological College Management Committee.

Appendix 2: Final Personnel Specification

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND

PERSONNEL SPECIFICATION

Job Title:	Professor of Systematic Theology
Location:	Union Theological College
Responsible to:	The Principal of Union Theological College
Salary:	E6 (£40,125 - £48,884)

CRITERIA

1. Qualifications and Knowledge

Essential

- A PhD in Systematic Theology from a recognised university or academic institution
- * An ordained Minister of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI), or a Licentiate eligible to become such a Minister, **or a Minister of another denomination (or eligible to be ordained as such), and deemed eligible to transfer to PCI.
- The ability to provide research led teaching in the area of Systematic Theology
- An informed understanding of the main theological issues affecting the contemporary Christian Church

Desirable

- A record of research and publications in the area of Systematic Theology
- An understanding of the challenges and opportunities of ministry in Ireland
- A postgraduate qualification in education, or the willingness to work towards achieving a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Teaching (PGCHET)

2. Relevant Experience

Essential

- 2 years' experience of pastoral ministry or of working as part of a ministry team in a Christian congregation

- Previous experience of teaching in an academic or educational environment
- Proven administrative competence e.g. organisational skills, report writing, etc.
- Appropriate IT skills and experience

Desirable

- Experience of teaching Theology in a variety of contexts with students from different backgrounds.
- 2 years' experience as a Minister of a congregation
- Experience in the management and delivery of on-line courses or learning experiences
- Experience of effective monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning

3. Personal Attributes

Essential

- The ability to supervise the academic work of undergraduate and postgraduate level students
- A commitment to working with colleagues in achieving and maintaining the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education
- A commitment to undertaking academic research
- A commitment to continuous professional development
- The ability to contribute to the spiritual and ministry formation of students for the ministry
- A commitment to the work of Union Theological College, and the wider ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, which takes precedence over other opportunities and invitations
- A commitment to play a full and active part in the life of a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland
- Good communication skills, written and verbal, in both informal and formal settings
- Well-developed relational skills in both informal and formal settings
- The ability to work co-operatively as part of a team
- The ability to inspire, motivate and encourage others
- The ability to work under pressure
- The ability to work creatively and to use initiative

4. Physical Requirements

Essential

- Health – such as to allow for attendance reliability and work proficiency (reasonable adjustments will be made for those with a disability)
- Dress and appearance – must be acceptable to management within the working environment

5. Special Circumstances

Essential

- Respectful of the diversity of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, including theological diversity
- In full sympathy with the doctrinal position and ethos of the PCI and willing “loyally to implement” all decisions of the Courts of the Church
- Willing to subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith in terms of the General Assembly's formula;
 - *I believe the Westminster Confession of Faith, as described in the Code (Chapter 1, Pars 12-14), to be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God, and as such I subscribe it as the confession of my faith*
- Willing to be flexible in working arrangements and hours to suit the needs of the post.

* The essential nature of this post requires that the successful candidate be a Minister of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland as provided for under excepted occupations in the Fair Employment Treatment (NI) Order 1998.

** PCI reserves the right to determine whether a candidate is eligible to transfer from another denomination

Appendix 3: Rev Dr Michael McClenahan

A: Academic Training and Qualifications

The Friends' School, Lisburn 1985-1992: 10 GCSEs and 3 'A' levels.

St John's College, the University of Oxford 1992-1996: MA (Hons)

Jurisprudence (2.1).

Exeter College, The University of Oxford 1999-2006: MA (Hons) Theology (1st class); MST (Ecclesiastical History); DPhil.

Union Theological College, Belfast 2006-2007: PG Cert in Ministry, PTFI (Passed).

B: Ministry Training and Experience

Union Theological College, Belfast 1998-1999.

Union Theological College, Belfast 2006-2007: PG Cert in Ministry, PTFI (Passed).

Licensed, West Kirk, North Belfast: 2007.

Licentiate Assistant, Greenwell Street (Newtownards), Ards: 2007-2010.

Ordained Knappagh & Lislooney, Armagh: 2011.

Minister Knappagh & Lislooney, Armagh: 2011-2015.

Minister Without Charge, Armagh: 2015-date.

Stated Supply, Vinecash, Armagh: 2015-date.

Additional Resolution:

8a. That the Rev Dr Michael McClenahan be appointed Professor of Systematic Theology from 1st September, 2017.

TREVOR D GRIBBEN

Item 12 – GENERAL COUNCIL: Section 3 (Wednesday afternoon – 4.30pm)

SUPPORT SERVICES COMMITTEE – PROPERTY PANEL

1. Since the report of the Property Panel was finalised, the tendering process for the work on the ground floor of Assembly Buildings has progressed. The Property Panel, with the permission of the Support Services Committee and the General Council, included in the tender documents work relating to a number of

practical and beneficial improvements, some of which will be necessary to complete in the foreseeable future. These included:

- upgrade of sprinkler system;
- upgrade of the ‘Comms Room’;
- new gas boilers for the entire Assembly Buildings complex;
- necessary repair work on the flat roof above the concourse area, including new drainage system;
- ‘flooring over’ the current open space at the concourse level (to greatly increase the usable space on the concourse).

At the time of finalising the tender document, the estimated cost of these items was £154,000. Though additional to the amount of approx. £1,126,000 reported to the 2016 General Assembly (based on figures drawn up in late 2015), these items will in a few years’ time mostly fall into the ‘essential’ category, and are much more cost efficient to progress as part of a larger contract at this juncture.

2. The tender documents also include some provisional items which can be removed from the contract if necessary:

- the fit out of units to facilitate the return of the Presbyterian Historical Society (Ireland) to the ground floor of Assembly Buildings (final inclusion is dependent on grant aid being forthcoming) - £238,000;
- the basic preparatory fit out of new lettable office accommodation in space not required by PCI - £76,000;
- the AV fit out of the new downstairs meeting and conferencing area.

3. The actual cost of the contract will only be finalised once a tender is accepted, following detailed negotiation and decisions regarding the inclusion or exclusion of certain items. As costs have no doubt increased since the original estimates were drawn up, and in the light of the inclusion of the additional items above, this may necessitate a slight lengthening of period of the annual assessment for the Church House Repair Fund. An appropriate resolution is therefore appended to give retrospective approval for the inclusion of the additional items listed in point 1 above and authorisation to agree the final tender price.

Additional Resolution:

15(a) That the General Assembly give approval to the additional items included in the tender document (as listed in paragraph 1 above) and authorise the Property Panel of the Support Services Committee to agree the final contract price, with the leeway of up to an additional 15% if deemed essential.

JOHN HUNTER

**Item 16 – GENERAL COUNCIL: Section 4
(Thursday afternoon – 3.30pm)**

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER DENOMINATIONS TASK GROUP

Since the report of the Relationships with other Denominations Task Group was finalised, the formal notice has arrived from the Conference of European Churches regarding its 15th General Assembly, which will be held from 31st May – 6th June 2018 in Novi Sad, Serbia. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland will be entitled to send one delegate, with the formal registration process anticipated during the next few months. Therefore, having consulted, the name of the Rev John Brackenridge (Convener of the General Assembly's Church Relations Committee) is proposed for appointment as PCI's delegate. An appropriate resolution is appended.

Additional Resolution:

24(a) That the Rev John Brackenridge be appointed to represent the Presbyterian Church in Ireland at the 15th General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches, from 31st May – 6th June 2018 in Novi Sad, Serbia.

TREVOR D GRIBBEN

**Item 17 – GENERAL COUNCIL: Section 5
(Supplementary Report Thursday afternoon – 4.45pm)**

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Since the submission of the General Council's report the Nominations Committee has had further meetings and is now able to bring nominations for all the vacancies for Convenerships of Councils and Committees. An appropriately amended resolution is appended.

Revised Resolution

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 Rev Mark Goudy 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

- The Rev WJ Murdock 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 The Rev JE McDowell 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 the Rev SD Finlay 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 as 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 the Rev AAP Baxter 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.

JONATHAN A CURRY

GUYSMERE CENTRE TASK GROUP

Licensed Amendment to Resolution 33 (Page 183)

“That the General Assembly instruct the Guysmere Centre Task Group to further investigate economically viable options for retaining the Guysmere site, consulting with the Presbytery of Coleraine and Limavady (and any other parties the Task Group deems appropriate), and to report to the 2018 General Assembly to enable a decision to be made regarding the sale, or otherwise, of the site.”

JIM A McCAUGHAN

Item 18 – OVERTURES: AD-HOC**(Supplementary Report Thursday afternoon – after 4.45pm)****SECTION A: OVERTURES ON THE BOOKS (pages 184-188)****Resolution:**

1. That the Overtures anent Pars 85; 137; 16(3); 16(4); 47(1); 51(1); 52; 33; 61 and 97; 61; 62; 72; 81(6); 97(h); 97(j); 98; 128(1); 46(h); 46(h); 59(2)(a); 76(e); 137; 72(e), 74, 132(5) and 134(3); 36(f); 57(3)and(6), 73(d) and 82(3)and(4); 57(5); 76(b); 79(e); and 116(2) having lain on the books for one year, be enacted as the law of the Church.

SECTION B: NEW OVERTURES (pages 189-194)**(I) General (pages 189-190)****Resolutions:**

1. That the Overtures anent Pars 35, 47(2)(f), 65(2) and 85(1) of the Code be received and placed on the books.
2. That the Overtures anent Pars 35, 47(2)(f), 65(2) and 85(1) of the Code be made Interim Acts.
3. That the Overtures anent Pars 173, 222(3), 239(2), 260(b) and 260(d) of the Code be received and that, under Par 111 of the Code, it be made the rule of the Church.

(II) Council for Congregational Life and Witness (page 191)**Resolutions:**

1. That the Overture anent Par 85(5)(6)&(7) of the Code be received and placed on the books.
2. That the Overture anent Par 85(5)(6)&(7) of the Code be made an Interim Act.

(III) Council for Mission in Ireland (pages 191-192)**Resolutions:**

1. That the Overture anent Par 36(f) of the Code be received and placed on the books.
2. That the Overture anent Par 36(f) of the Code be made an Interim Act.
3. That the Overtures anent Pars 201 and 305(11) of the Code be received and that, under Par 111 of the Code, they be made the rule of the Church.

(IV) Council for Global Mission (page 192)**Resolution:**

1. That the Overture anent Par 290(4) of the Code be received and that, under Par 111 of the Code, it be made the rule of the Church.

(V) Council for Training in Ministry (pages 192-194)**Resolution:**

1. That the Overtures anent Pars 190(2)(a), 193(1)(b), 219(5), 219(3), and 219A(i) of the Code be received and that, under Par 111 of the Code, they be made the rule of the Church.

(VI) LINKAGE COMMISSION (page 194)**Resolutions:**

1. That the Overtures anent Pars 57(5) and 76(b) of the Code be received and placed on the books.
2. That the Overtures anent Pars 57(5) and 76(b) of the Code be made Interim Acts.
3. That the Overture anent Par 198(10) of the Code be received and that, under Par 111 of the Code, it be made the rule of the Church.

TREVOR D GRIBBEN

ITEM 20 - OVERTURES: JUDICIAL COMMISSION

(Supplementary Report Friday Morning – Private Session)

(A) Overtures relating to membership of a congregation (pages 350-351)**Resolutions:**

1. That the Overtures anent Pars 39(1), 39(3), 41(1) and 45(twice) of the Code be received and placed on the books.
2. That the Overtures anent Pars 39(1), 39(3), 41(1) and 45(twice) of the Code be made Interim Acts.
3. That the Overture anent Par 195(6) of the Code be received and that, under Par 111 of the Code, it be made the rule of the Church.

(B) Overtures bringing clarity to some matters re. Commissions and appeals (pages 351-352)

Resolution:

1. That the Overtures anent Pars 161(1)(g), 165(1) & (2) and 166(1) of the Code be received and that, under Par 111 of the Code, they be made the rule of the Church.

(C) Overtures regarding transfer of congregational property to an associated body (pages 352-353)

Resolutions:

1. That the Overtures anent Pars 53(a) and 57 of the Code be received and placed on the books.
2. That the Overtures anent Pars 53(a) and 57 of the Code be made Interim Acts.

(D) Overtures regarding the right of appeal in cases of employment grievances

Resolutions:

1. That the Overtures anent Pars 38 and 75 of the Code be received and placed on the books.
2. That the Overtures anent Pars 38 and 75 of the Code be made Interim Acts.

(E) Overture regarding the right of appeal relating to the Council for Training in Ministry

Resolution:

1. That the Overture anent Par 146(1)(c) of the Code be received and that, under Par 111 of the Code, it be made the rule of the Church.

TREVOR D GRIBBEN

Item 23 – MEMORIALS TRANSMITTED
(Supplementary Report Friday Morning – after Private Session)

The Memorial of Prof Fred Boal

Resolution:

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

CECIL WL GRAHAM
 MORRIS S GAULT

The Memorial of the Rev Dr Ivan Neish

Resolution:

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

IVAN D NEISH
 JOHN R DICKINSON

Item 25 – LINKAGE COMMISSION
Supplementary Report (Friday Morning)

1. Amalgamation of Berry Street with Lowe Memorial

Further to the information given in the reports (page 370, par 21), the date of amalgamation agreed by Presbytery was 9th May 2017.

2. Additional Pastoral Personnel and Auxiliary Ministry Panel

Further to the information given in the reports concerning business assigned by the last General Assembly (page 379, par 44), it is anticipated that relevant documentation will be agreed and ready for distribution to Kirk Sessions by September 2017, if not earlier.

3. Amalgamation

Following discussions with the congregations and the Presbytery of Ards, the Commission has agreed to the Presbytery's request that Cloughey Congregation be amalgamated with Greyabbey Congregation.

Additional Resolution

4a. That the congregation of Cloughey be amalgamated with the congregation of Greyabbey on 1st July, 2017 or other suitable date, on terms set by the Linkage Commission; and that the Linkage Commission, in consultation with the Presbytery of Ards, bring recommendations to the 2018 General Assembly concerning parish bounds for the amalgamated congregation, and for neighbouring congregations.

WILLIAM J HENRY

Item 26 – GENERAL ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE – Second Report (Friday morning)

Church of Ireland Synod 2017 Report

The Very Rev Dr Ian McNie reports:

1. The Church of Ireland Synod began with an impressive Communion Service in Limerick Cathedral, led by the Archbishop of Armagh. The liturgical warmth coupled with its Biblical emphasis and theological depth reflected a tradition like our own, which created a bond of unity in respect of the beliefs of our distinctive denominations. At the conclusion of the Sacrament the Synod adjourned to the Southgate Hotel where the business sessions would straddle three days.
2. Much of the routine work of the Synod was a reflection of our own Assembly. Announcements were made and visitors welcomed en bloc with the assurance that some would be given the opportunity to bring greetings and address the Synod at various intervals throughout its duration.
3. The Archbishop of Armagh gave his Presidential Address focusing on the issue of ‘identity’, highlighting the fact that *“As Christian disciples, we recognise that we do indeed have a basic identity that we must share with all others, that of being made by God in His image and likeness. This means that others – all others must be treated with a complete dignity and with an utter respect, regardless of who and what they are, what they think or what they do.”*
4. He spent some time focusing on refugees, the homeless, victims of abuse and domestic violence, calling the Church to draw alongside those who, *“barely know us, or find it hard to believe that we have anything to offer.”* He concluded, *“can we have the courage and the faith to believe that our identity is not simply among those who resemble us in ways that give us pleasure, but in those whom Christ also loves, who need His love and hence our love?”*
5. The main business commenced with the consideration of ‘The Bills’, seeking to amend parts of the Constitution, (Code). These were presented formally with little discussion as the Synod rubber-stamped these amendments. The first sign of enthusiastic debate commenced when the ‘Liturgical Advisory Committee’ sought to deal with a slight adjustment regarding ‘Intercessory prayers’ for the country within the Prayer Book, an adjustment that would more accurately reflect the National arrangements regarding Northern Ireland’s new relationship with the Economic Union in the future. Any move to change the emphasis of the Prayer Book, even with addition of simply adding brackets, was resisted and defeated.
6. The Synod’s Board of Education seeks to keep in touch with all educational developments both North and South, liaising with appropriate

statutory bodies, keeping the interests of the Church to the fore and partnering with other Churches in respect of transfer representatives. It seeks to work with other Churches, including our own regarding curriculum support of the RE core syllabus in schools and seeking to uphold a credible relationship with the statutory bodies.

7. Youth and Children's Ministry seems to follow a similar pattern to our own, with one or two Church wide events during the year and each diocese providing its own individual training and youth events. The Youth Council are currently targeting some dioceses with strategic development programmes. The 'I believe' twelve week course launched a year ago for use in Confirmation classes, included elements of the Apostles Creed, ten commandments and Church Catechism has been hailed as an excellent resource explaining the essentials of the faith.
8. On Friday morning a breakfast was hosted at which a representative of 'Open Doors' spoke of their work in standing shoulder to shoulder with those who are part of the Persecuted Church. This less formal meeting dramatically illustrated the other side of Church life, outside the talking shops of Synods and Assemblies. This theme was also taken up during the Council for Mission report. This report highlighted the relatively poor response to overseas mission conferences organised by the Council, and the Synod was asked to consider what steps might be taken for a better awareness and action in the area of mission within the Church of Ireland.
9. The Church of Ireland, like ourselves, face the problems associated with uniting congregations, but as a denomination, there has been an additional ongoing debate regarding the uniting of two Southern Dioceses, both of which are numerically small, but geographically extensive. The option of appointing a Suffragan Bishop, in keeping with the practice within the Church of England, was given in principle a muted welcome, but this longstanding discussion has remained unsolved.
10. The Commission for Christian Unity and Dialogue highlighted the many ecumenical bodies with which the Church of Ireland is involved, in Ireland, the UK, Europe and the world. This commission dealt with how best to mark the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation, and a Theological lecture on the theme of Martin Luther's 'Sola Scriptura' will be held in Queens University. The Church of Ireland Historical Society and the Irish Catholic Historical Society are planning to hold a joint conference on 'Reformations' in October 2017. This Council also reported a deepening relationship between the Church of Ireland and the Moravian Church, and supported the desire to move towards 'the interchangeability of ministers'. This Council is also looking at the implications of Brexit, with particular concerns expressed in respect of a 'hard border'.
11. Undoubtedly the most highly charged and well attended debate of the Synod, and exceptionally well handled by the Archbishop, was a Private Members Bill, calling on the House of Bishops, '*to investigate a means to develop sensitive local pastoral arrangements for public prayer and*

thanksgiving with same-sex couples at these key moments in their lives and to present their ideas to the General Synod, 2018’.

12. The Church of Ireland continues to officially uphold the Biblical teaching on marriage, *‘that marriage is part of God’s creation and a holy mystery in which one man and one woman become one flesh.’* It was apparent that many within the Synod were concerned for unity within the Church of Ireland, and unity within their relationship with other denominations.
13. Prior to this debate, I was asked to extend greetings from PCI giving me the opportunity to express the view that within our Church we believe that we do not have the luxury of peddling our personal preferences, priorities and prejudices, or accommodating public opinion and social pressure which should not override the fundamental responsibility of the Church. As a Church our responsibility is to articulate the mind of God with conviction and clarity in a spirit of understanding, love and truthfulness as we seek to communicate the truth of what we believe and why we believe it, recognising that obedience to the authority of Scripture is fundamental to our belief and practice. Also it was appropriate at this juncture to speak in passing about the painful and fractured relationships that currently exist between PCI and the Church of Scotland in respect of decisions made at recent Church of Scotland General Assemblies over the issue of same-sex marriage.
14. As the debate ensued, many voices within the Synod were heard to speak on both sides of the argument, and the outcome was a rejection of the motion by a slender majority within both houses, the House of Clergy and the House of Laity, voting separately.
15. From the voting pattern replicated by the speeches, it was clear that the division of opinion substantially reflected a North/South divide, but it was also obvious that many wanted to preserve the unity of the Church, both within the Church of Ireland and with its ecumenical partners.
16. All in all, attending the Synod was an interesting and enjoyable experience as Trevor Elliott, an elder from Drogheda, and I interacted with members from all parts of Ireland. This year’s Synod was unusual in so far as it did not meet in Armagh or Dublin, but Limerick, where we were the recipients of a warm welcome, not only by Church but by the City Council, and were hosted to a generous reception on the Thursday evening by the latter.
17. Comparing the Synod to the General Assembly, there were significant similarities, but equally significant differences, the Synod having a wider spectrum of theological opinion. This has its advantages, challenging people to articulate their position with clarity, yet I could see the disadvantages, where at times the Church could be seen by secular society to send out conflicting and confusing messages regarding its understanding of Scripture, leading to a misunderstanding of the Church’s distinctive role and responsibility within the world to be ‘salt and light’ in a society that in itself is confused and generally out of step with God’s will.

TREVOR D GRIBBEN

**Item 26(a) – GENERAL ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE
– Final Report (Friday morning)**

The Business Committee met on X occasion(s) during the Assembly to review the Order of Business and license additional business.

Additional Resolutions

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

42. That the next General Assembly be held in Belfast on Monday, 4th June, 2018.

43. That the Final Report of the General Assembly Business Committee be received.

TREVOR D GRIBBEN