

BUSINESS BOARD

Convener: THE CLERK

1. The Business Board is grateful to all those who play their part in enabling the General Assembly to run smoothly – Conveners, staff, Arrangements Committee members, stewards, caterers, cleaners and so many others. This year may be especially demanding with the new facilities in place, so the Board asks members to show patience when needed. There is no doubt that all who use the Assembly Hall will benefit from the renovations and even more so as people become used to the new technology.

2. The order of business is presented for approval. The one significant change to the agenda this year is not to hold a “Presbyterians Talk” event on Tuesday evening to allow more time for members and guests to meet informally. It is hoped that a similar event (or events) may be held during the year.

3. The General Assembly last year agreed some changes to the format of Opening Night and the Tuesday Communion Service. These have been implemented in what the Board hopes is a sensitive and helpful way.

Invitation to Londonderry

4. An invitation has been received from the Presbytery of Derry and Donegal for the 2013 General Assembly to meet in Londonderry. That is the year in which the city will be the UK City of Culture. A small group from the Board met with an enthusiastic working-group of Presbytery to see the facilities available at the Millenium Forum. It reported that the Forum would be a very suitable venue, with room for meeting and catering. From the arrangements point of view the Business Board would be pleased to hold an Assembly in Londonderry during the Year of Culture and would value the opportunity to share Presbyterian culture and tradition with a wider audience. The General Board has also discussed the invitation and is consulting with Presbyteries. An appropriate resolution will be brought in the Supplementary Reports.

Nominations for Moderator

5. A suggestion was brought to the Business Board that with present-day communications it should be possible, should the voting at the February Presbyteries result in an equal number of nominations for more than one person as Moderator of the General Assembly, to vote again on the same evening. This would obviously require Presbyteries all to meet in the evening and for the vote to be taken early. The Business Board can see significant advantages to this, particularly in the time given to the new Moderator to prepare and has alerted Presbyteries that a resolution to this effect is being brought to test the mind of the Assembly.

Elders’ Representation

6. The Business Board was asked to consider if a Congregation could be represented at the General Assembly by a number of elders coming to different

debates during the week. It was pointed out that different people are interested in different aspects of the Church's work and not everyone can be free for the three days of debate. While sympathetic, the Board felt that only one individual may be commissioned in any year, but other elders with particular interests should be encouraged to attend. It is always possible to arrange, with the permission of the House, for such people, who may well have valuable insights to share, to speak at the Assembly even if they would not have a vote.

Invitations to Opening Night

7. The Board agreed for the first time this year to extend an invitation to Opening Night to representatives of the Gaelic Athletic Association, the Irish Football Association and the Irish Rugby Football Union.

Date of the General Assembly, 2012

8. It was confirmed that due to the two UK public holidays at the beginning of June to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, it is recommended the General Assembly be held from 28-31 May, 2012.

Delegates to other Churches

9. Delegates were appointed to attend other Church meetings as follows:

Presbyterian Church of Wales 2011: Rt Rev Dr Ivan Patterson

Church of Ireland General Synod 2011: Very Rev Dr Stafford Carson; Mr George Russell

Methodist Conference 2011: Very Rev Dr Norman Hamilton; Mr Samuel Douglas

Business Board

10. The Business Board is appointed in accordance with the provisions of Par 275 of the Code to take office on the 15 March preceding the Assembly. The Board for the year 2011-2012, together with the associated Arrangements Committee is as follows:-

The Clerk, Convener

- (a) The Moderator, Clerk and Deputy Clerk of Assembly, Moderator-Designate, former Clerks, preceding three Moderators, Conveners and Secretaries of Commissions and Boards.
- (b) Rev WT Cordner; Mrs Jean Mann – Rev CUR Bradley; WK Belshaw – Rev Desmond Knowles; John Suitters – Rev GF McKeown; Miss Muriel Torrens – Rev JR Burnett; David McCleery – Rev PP Campbell; DC Cowan – Rev AE Tolland; Roy Kennedy – Rev JA McCaughan; Joseph Cassells – Rev RL Craig; Thomas Allen – Rev SA Woodburn; William Reid – Rev DB Knox; Albert Maxwell – Rev CG Gamble; W McIlreavy – Rev MG McClelland; David Knight – Rev GJ Mackarel; Ronnie Gillanders – Rev DB Murphy; William Grills – Rev RN Orr; J Young – Rev RW Gaston; _____ – Rev WJ Murdock; JH McClurg – Rev Dr AR Rodgers; EM Carroll.

A. ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE (6)

Rev GE Best, Convener

- (a) The Moderator and Clerk of Assembly, Moderator-Designate, Deputy Clerk, Communications Secretary, Hospitality Secretary, Buildings Manager; Committee Convener.
- (x) Rev Alan S Thompson; DA Crowe, Maurice Fisher, Mrs Joyce Anderson.
- (y) Revs WT Corder, AE Tolland, RN Orr, WJ Murdock, JA McCaughan, MG McClelland; Miss Muriel Torrens, DC Cowan, David McCleery.

The Welsh Assembly 2010*The Rev George Moore writes:*

1. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Wales met at Lampeter University from 6-8 September, 2010. Valerie and I were warmly welcomed and enjoyed the fellowship. The residential nature of the occasion meant that there were opportunities to meet a good number of people over meals. The proceedings are in Welsh and so we were dependant on simultaneous translation through headsets. I had the opportunity to bring greetings to the Assembly on the Monday morning and to acknowledge the contribution being made to our denomination by the Rev Prof Stephen Williams who is remembered warmly in the Church of his birth. I was also given the opportunity to lead a seminar at a fringe meeting on the Monday evening.

2. The Rev Ian Hodgins from Penclawdd was installed as the Moderator on the Tuesday evening. Ian's roots are in Dublin where he grew up in Clontarf Congregation. The Rev Ifan Roberts who has served as General Secretary for the past eight years (their central posts are termed appointments) is returning to parish ministry and going to a Presbytery with only one minister in the whole Presbytery. This highlights one of the major concerns for the denomination. In the past ten years the number of full time ministers has dropped from 407 to 257; and the number of part time ministers has dropped from 67 – 40. Presently there are only 5 people training for ministry.

3. Membership is also in steep decline falling from 45,700 in 1999 to 29,136 in 2009. One member challenged the Assembly "Is the Christian Church in Wales today ready and prepared to face this challenge, or will it drift further towards oblivion?"

4. The highlight of the Assembly for us was the presentation of the Youth and Children's Department where we saw the enthusiasm of young people for the Gospel. The Department is introducing the concept of a "Family Friendly Church". The idea is that a set of criteria will be drawn up and Churches which meet the criteria will win commendation and be given the right to use the logo.

The Methodist Conference 2010*The Very Rev Dr Stafford Carson reports:*

1. The Methodist Church in Ireland met for its Annual Conference in Belfast from 10-13 June, 2010 and, along with Mr Campbell Young, I attended to represent the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Its theme was taken from a line in one of Wesley's hymns, "Our Calling to Fulfil". It was a good opportunity to renew personal friendships with many fellow ministers in the Methodist Church, as well as to chat with Bishop Harold Millar, the Church of Ireland representative to the Conference.

2. At the opening night service in St Mark's, Dundela, (famous for its close links with CS Lewis), the Conference installed the Rev Paul Kingston as its President, succeeding the Rev Donald Ker. In addition, for the first time, it also installed Mrs Gillian Kingston as its Lay Leader. It was an interesting innovation, and the way the duties of chairing the Conference were shared between the President and the Lay Leader reflected the concern of the Church to recognise the gifts of all God's people.

3. Paul and Gillian are not related, but one can imagine that many people will assume that they are. To complicate matters, a former President of the Conference in 1984 was also called Paul Kingston, and he is a first cousin of the current President. Added to that, the current President and the out-going President, Donald Ker, are also first cousins. Methodists in Ireland are a close-knit family.

4. The issues addressed at this Conference were remarkably similar to the issues which we have heard discussed at other Church assemblies this year: falling numbers, financial pressures and consideration of new models of ministry.

5. The statistics reveal that the Methodist Church in Ireland has lost approximately 2,500 people in the last five years, bringing its current full membership to around 51,500. Allied to this decline, serious concerns were expressed about the Church's financial position. The proposed budget increase of 5% was met with some expressions of concern. But in spite of fears that members will be stretched to reach the new target, the Conference approved the increased budget. There is a serious pension deficit that needs to be addressed and more funds are needed for the training and support of new ministers. Like many other Churches, the Conference directed its Finance Committee to undertake a wide-ranging review of all Church finances.

6. One strategy that was strongly commended to the Conference was the *Back to Church Sunday* in which a deliberate effort is made to invite people to come to Church on a given Sunday. In 2010, it was 26 September. This initiative challenges the general delusion that exists in many Churches that they are welcoming of new visitors, and that visitors will naturally feel at home. As well as being a simple strategy in getting Church members to invite their friends to come to Church, it also challenges Churches to re-think how accessible and welcoming they really are.

7. The Conference also considered a report on interchangeability of ministry between the Methodist Church and the Church of Ireland. The goal is to move to a position where there will be mutual involvement in the consecration of bishops and dedication of presidents, and eventually an interchangeable ministry where a duly ordained presbyter/priest of either Church may administer communion in the other Church according to either rite or ceremony.

8. The final service of the Conference was an impressive service of ordination and communion held in Bloomfield Presbyterian Church. The President of the British Methodist Conference, the Rev David Gamble, preached an engaging sermon on using one's God-given gifts, and four new ministers were ordained. Their personal testimonies of their call to the ministry were full of evangelical warmth and commitment.

9. Like many other Churches, the Methodist Church in Ireland is facing challenging times. They have a "calling to fulfil". The mood of this Conference reflected a real desire to respond to those challenges, to fulfil their calling, and to advance the gospel throughout Ireland.

ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE

1. This year the Assembly meets in the newly refurbished Church House, grateful for the greater comfort and practical benefits afforded by the modifications. The Committee however, asks for your patience as everyone gets used to the slightly altered layout of the building etc.

Guidelines to New Members

2. It has been agreed again to provide an opportunity for Elders and Ministers who are attending the General Assembly for the first time to be given an introduction to Assembly procedures. This will take place at 9.15 am on Tuesday, immediately prior to the first Business Session of the Assembly.

Communion and Worship Services

3. The Communion Service this year will commence at 11.45 am on Tuesday. There will be a coffee break immediately prior to this service, but members of Assembly are asked to be in their seats not later than 11.40 am. There will also be worship on Wednesday and Thursday at 12.15 pm, to which the public are warmly invited.

First Aid

4. St John's Ambulance personnel are in attendance on Monday and Wednesday evenings. Others trained in First Aid will be in the building at all times. Please notify the Convener or any of the stewards if First Aid is required.

Exhibition

5. Various exhibition stands will be displayed this year in the Concourse area. These will feature the work of Boards and other agencies within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

Web Streaming and Twitter

6. The public sessions of the General Assembly will be streamed again through the PCI Website, and proceedings can also be followed on 'Twitter'.

Tea/Coffee Breaks

7. Tea and coffee will be served this year in the Minor Hall and on the Concourse. As many people as possible are encouraged to make their way to the relatively spacious surroundings of the Minor Hall to minimise the usual congestion on the Concourse. Members and guests are asked to move away from the serving areas once served, to allow others to be attended to efficiently.

Queuing to Speak

8. The row of seats directly in front of the rostrum is reserved for those queuing to speak in debates. In the interests of efficiency and courtesy, members are asked to respect this. To encourage debate, there will be two alternative speaking points on the floor of the main Hall, with reserved seating adjacent to them, clearly visible to the Moderator.

Voting Cards

9. These should be obtained as soon as possible from the desk located on the Concourse, where they are available on Monday evening/Tuesday morning, after which members should contact the Financial Secretary's Office. Ministers please note once again this year that when obtaining your voting cards, you are asked to produce the Registration Card which is enclosed with these Reports.

Admission

10. Admission to the Private Session is by voting card only. In any vote, the Moderator may call for voting cards to be shown, and only those displaying their own voting card are eligible to vote.

Expenses

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

Thanks

12. Sincere thanks are expressed to Church House administrative staff, stewards, time-keepers, musicians, and many others, who work very hard behind the scenes to ensure that everything runs smoothly throughout the Assembly.

GORDON BEST, Convener

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the Report be received.
2. That on the first Tuesday of February Presbyteries should meet in the evening to nominate the next Moderator of the General Assembly and remain in session until voting is complete.
3. That the professional amplification controller and visual display operator be admitted to the Private Session each year at the General Assembly.

4. That a grant of £16,000 be made from the Incidental Fund to the Arrangements Committee.

5. That the Business Board, with its associated working Committee, be appointed in accordance with Par 275 of the Code for the ensuing year beginning 15 March, 2011.