

GENERAL BOARD

Convener: THE CLERK

SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

As the Board Report is long and varied members may wish to note:

1. **In the Introduction** (pp 15-17) there is reference to the Board Conference; Correspondence on the 2013 Assembly meeting in Londonderry, the Belfast Marathon, the Church of Scotland Special Commission, Financial Strain and new arrangements for Communications.

2. **The Memorial Record** (pp 17-22) records the faithful service of Ministers who died since last Assembly.

3. **The Priorities Report** (pp 22-24) includes a proposal for future Assembly themes. **The Moderator's Advisory Report** (pp 24-25) refers to invitations to the papal visit. **The Doctrine Committee** (p 25) is bringing its substantial report next year. **The Church Relations Report** (pp 25-26) reports on the work of various inter-Church bodies. **The Reception of Ministers and Licentiates Report** (pp 26-29) now includes reports on recognised ministries and Ministers and Licentiates without charge.

4. **The Church and Society Report** (pp 29-52) contains a significant report on Presbyterians and Economics and two important appendices on Building Good Relationships and Sectarianism. In the **Global Concerns Report** (pp 52-55) there is information on the work of the **Environment, Building Good Relations** and **Race Relations Panels**.

5. **Important Panels reporting** include **Financial Crisis** (pp 55-63) on the Presbyterian Mutual Society; **Pensions and Assessments** (pp 63-69) mainly on Assessments; **Pastoral Care of Manse Families** (pp 69-70) and the **Future of Peacemaking** (pp 70-71).

6. **Briefer Reports** may be found on **Structures** (pp 71-72), **Consultations** (p 72) and **Judicial Appeals** (p 73).

INTRODUCTION

1. The General Board has had an interesting, if demanding, year. Once again in February the Board held a Conference to look more generally at some areas of its work. The Moderator, the Rt Rev Dr Norman Hamilton led an interesting session on "Leading God's People in Ireland Today". This led into discussion led by the Rev Dr Lesley Carroll on "Cohesion, Sharing, Integration – A Challenge to the Churches". In the afternoon the question asked was what this meant for the work of the General Board, particularly in four areas of its work – Church and Society; Church Relations; Peacemaking and Race Relations. It was a day of lively and profitable discussion.

2. During the year several matters were raised by Presbyteries.

- (a) the Presbytery of Derry and Donegal extended an invitation to the General Assembly to meet in Londonderry during the city's time as UK City of Culture in 2013. The invitation is being dealt with by the

Business Board but the General Board was also consulted and kept informed, particularly on the issue of invitations to Opening Night. The Board decided to consult Presbyteries and a further report will come in the Supplementary Reports.

- (b) The Ballymena Presbytery asked the General Board to consider making representation to the relevant authorities on the proposal to hold the Belfast Marathon on a Sunday from 2012 onwards. The Conveners of the Church and Society Committee were asked to write to and engage with Belfast City Council and Belfast City Marathon to express concern.
- (c) Four Presbyteries – Armagh, Ballymena, Newry and Tyrone – asked the General Board to express concern to the Church of Scotland, in the context of the continuing close relationship between the two Churches, about the Church of Scotland Special Commission reporting to the General Assembly in May. The General Board passed the following:

“That the General Board instructs the Clerk of the General Assembly to write to the Church of Scotland expressing appreciation of the long and valued relationship between our two Churches; indicating that the Presbyterian Church in Ireland strongly believes the scriptural position to be that sexual relations outside of marriage between a man and a woman are sinful and as such, in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, no minister or elder would be ordained or installed who continues to engage in such practices; and assuring the Special Commission of its prayers that wisdom and insight be given as it reports to the General Assembly in May.”

- (d) The Armagh Presbytery also expressed concern about the continuing drain on congregational resources in support of the central Boards and Agencies of the Church through the United Appeal and assessments.

3. The Board of Communications, meeting in November, invited *“the General Board along with the Communications Department and its Board officers, to consider how the communications needs of the Church may be effectively carried out in the future and, if appropriate, to bring forward proposals for the discharge of the Board of Communications.”* A possible new structure with a Communications Committee under the General Board, including a Media Panel, Production Panel and an ad-hoc Panel on Website was discussed. The Presbyterian Historical Society would report annually to the General Board, through an agent and the Church Architecture Committee would move to the supervision of the BMI. The General Board approved the new structure and recommends that the Board of Communications be discharged, but referred its comments back to the Communications Board for implementation.

4. The regular work of the Board Committees is reported later. Seven Panels on the Financial Crisis; Pensions and Assessments; Pastoral Care of Manse Families; the Future of Peacemaking; Assembly Structures; Consultations and Judicial Appeals are also reporting. This has created a heavy, though necessary workload for the Board although several of these have almost completed their work and it is hoped they may be discharged by the next

meeting of the General Assembly. Thanks are expressed to all those Panel members who have given freely of their time and expertise.

5. The Board is aware that there are several items on the agenda still to be advanced. The General Board itself set up a Financial Ethics Panel but some of its work may be anticipated by the final report of the Financial Crisis Panel. The Board will co-ordinate their work. The Board of Christian Training asked for a consideration of the wider role of Faculty at UTC. With the recent changes in College management it has not so far been possible to progress this request but hopefully there will be progress in the next year. At the request of the Union Commission the General Assembly last year directed the General Board "to allocate to the appropriate Board or Committee the task of preparing practical guidance to Presbyteries on the disposal of redundant buildings, particularly where sensitive issues such as graveyards surrounding Churches are concerned." As there is no obvious Board or Committee the General Board appointed an ad-hoc Panel.

An ad-hoc Committee has been appointed to consider the remit which was agreed last year on a resolution from the Moderator's Advisory Committee to consider possible terms of service for an elder on Kirk Session. It will report next year.

The membership of the ad-hoc Committee on planned and generous giving, called for last year in a United Appeal resolution, is in the process of being appointed. There was a reticence to move too quickly on this with the recent financial problems, but the work will progress next year. The suggested membership of both the ad-hoc Committees is in the Board and Committee booklet.

6. Much of the work reflected in these reports is possible because of the hard work and dedication of the staff in the General Secretary's Office. This has been a particularly demanding year with building work both above and beside the offices. While there were times of considerable disruption tribute must also be paid to the ready co-operation of the contractor. At no time did the staff complain but simply got on with the work which had to be done. Especial thanks are due this year to Joyce, Jennifer Michelle and Alicia.

MEMORIAL RECORD

The Very Rev Dr Donald Patton reports:

The Rev John McCaughan, BA, Minister Emeritus of Legacurry Congregation in the Presbytery of Dromore, Co Down, died on 14 August, 2010 in the 92nd year of his age and the 68th of his ministry. He was born on 7 November, 1918, one of nine children to Robert McCaughan and his wife Mary Jane, née McLernon, who farmed at Ballinlay, near Ballycastle. John attended the family Church of Croaghmore and was educated at Moyarget Primary School and then Ballycastle High School. He proceeded to Magee University College, Londonderry, and Trinity College, Dublin, graduating BA in 1940. Following theological training at Assembly's College, Belfast, he was licensed by the Presbytery of Route on 30 November, 1942 and served as Assistant in the Congregation of Nelson Memorial, Belfast. He was ordained and installed in the united charge of Cremore and Tyrone's Ditches, in the Presbytery of Newry, on

4 June, 1943. A countryman, he quickly settled into ministry in this rural parish commending himself through his faithful preaching and caring pastoral work. John had a warm heart and an interest in the lives of his people and in sport. On 29 July, 1948 he married Mary Agnes (Molly) Lyons a daughter of the Rev JA Lyons, Minister of Dublin Road Reformed Presbyterian Church, Belfast, enjoying long and happy years of marriage until Molly's passing on 28 August, 2005. Three children were born to the marriage, two boys and a girl. Kay is married to the Rev Ivan Hunter, Minister of Ballywatt, and James is Minister of First Dunboe. John and Molly knew the keen sorrow of loss as their other son, John William Lyons, lived for only seven months. John was installed as Minister of Legacurry on 6 October, 1949 and continued there until his retirement on 10 November, 1983. He followed a routine of pastoral visitation in the homes establishing a close bond between Minister and people. He had a heart for youth reflected in his initiative in starting a Company of the Boys' Brigade of which he was Captain for twenty-five years and encouraging the formation of a Girls' Brigade Company. He also taught Religious Education at Annadale Grammar school in the nineteen sixties and early seventies and was part-time Irish Secretary to the Christian Education Movement for some years from 1966. His solid work in the Congregation was rewarded with numerical growth from 120 families to 200 in the 1970's. In addition to his congregational duties he served as Clerk of the Presbytery of Dromore from 1977 to 1990 guiding his brethren through the business of the Presbytery and proving a friend to all. He was Moderator of the Synod of Armagh and Down 1982 to 1983. He exercised a wider and greatly appreciated ministry as Churches Correspondent to the Lisburn Star newspaper from 1960. In a published tribute to him following his demise, the editor of the Star described him as 'a cornerstone of the paper ... an extremely talented writer who could easily have made a career in journalism.' We give thanks to God for the ministry of this 'good and faithful servant' of whom his family can be proud and whom we commend to the comfort of Almighty God.

The Rev James Herman Brown, BA, BD, MA, Minister Emeritus of the Congregation of Dunloy in the Presbytery of Route, died on 4 November, 2010 in the 95th year of his age and the 69th year of his ministry. He was born in the Cregagh district of Belfast on 20 December, 1914, son of Charles Napeir Brown, a Post Office Inspector, and of his wife Elizabeth, née Boal. His home Congregation was First Ballymacarrett and he was educated at the Harding Memorial Public Elementary School and then Renshaw's Tutorial College. He started his working life in the furniture business and in response to the call of God to the full-time ministry attended Magee University College, Londonderry, and Trinity College, Dublin, where he graduated with First Class Honours in Classics. He remained a keen student and avid reader throughout his life and was described by Mr Alex Blair as 'a man with a fine brain, a sharp intellect and a vast knowledge of humanity.' He attended the Assembly's College, Belfast, graduated BD in 1938 and achieved his MA from Trinity College, Dublin, in 1948. He was licensed by the Presbytery of Belfast on 21 May, 1940 and served his assistantship in the Congregations of Newtownbreda and Crescent, University Road, Belfast. He was ordained and installed by the Presbytery of

Donegal as Minister of Carnone and Alt on 27 May, 1942 and moved to Dunloy on 27 June, 1944, where he remained until his retirement on 30 April, 1989. His pastoral visitation over the years formed a strong and intimate bond with his people. He reached across denominational boundaries and was a member of an inter-church group called Friends of the Way. These links became important in the local community when tensions built up during the years of the Troubles. Mr Brown sought to exercise a calming and moderating influence. He married Edith Lyle Orr Pollock from County Monaghan on 4 December, 1952 and they were blessed with the birth of their daughter, Jennifer. He was Chaplain to the Route and Robinson Hospitals, Ballymoney, and the Causeway Hospital, Coleraine, for over forty years, retiring from this work aged 80. He was the Moderator of the Synod of Ballymena and Coleraine from 1986 to 1987. He was a man with many interests, enjoying gardening, bee-keeping, peat cutting, and sport. His practical skills were put to good use in the building of much of his own bungalow. To Mrs Brown, daughter Jennifer, now Mrs Jennifer Beattie, and the wider family circle, we extend our sympathy as we give thanks to God for the life and work of His servant.

The Rev James Barr Irvine, BA, BD, DD, Minister Emeritus of the Congregation of Hillsborough in the Presbytery of Dromore, died on 10 December, 2010 in the 92nd year of his age and the 61st year of his ministry. He was born on 4 November, 1919, the son of James Irvine and his wife Mary, née Gordon, who lived in Tate's Avenue, Belfast. His mother died shortly after his birth and he was raised by his father, his father's sister Margaret and his grandmother. He was nurtured in Christian faith in the Congregation of Ulsterville on the Lisburn Road and he responded by taking Christ as his Saviour at an early age. He was educated at St Nicholas Primary School and Belfast Royal Academy. On leaving school he worked for some years with the Ocean Accident and Guarantee Corporation Ltd, achieving a qualification for the Associate Chartered Insurance Institute during the same period. He became convinced of God's call to the ordained ministry and so attended Magee University College, Londonderry, from 1943 to 1945 then on to Trinity College, Dublin, where he won a blue for Association football, and graduated BA in 1947. He proceeded to the Assembly's College, Belfast, for his theological training and graduated with a Queen's University BD in 1950. He was licensed by the Presbytery of Belfast on 26 May, 1950, serving his assistantship in the Congregation of Ravenhill. Upon receiving a call to the Congregations of Lecumpher and Union Road, Magherafelt, he was ordained and installed on 18 July, 1950, resigning in 1955 after accepting a call to Alexandra, Shore Road, Belfast, where he was installed on 31 May, 1955. There he continued until 1963 when he was called to the Congregation of Hillsborough and was installed on 20 February serving as Minister until his retirement on 30 September, 1985. During his ministry in Hillsborough he actively encouraged the formation of the 1st Hillsborough Company of the Boys' Brigade. He was Moderator of the Synod of Armagh and Down, 1971 and Convener of the General Assembly's Retired Ministers Fund, 1980-1987. In 1963 he was appointed a part-time Lecturer in Sacred Music in the Assembly's College and also in Homiletics from 1978. Outwith his Church duties he served for a period in the Royal Ulster

Constabulary Part-Time Reserve and was a volunteer with the Samaritans for ten years. He was awarded the Degree of Doctor of Divinity (honoris causa) by the Presbyterian Theological Faculty of Ireland in 1985 in recognition of his service to the wider Church. In all of his work he was loyally supported by his wife Edith Victoria, née Gray, whom he married in 1948. In retirement Jim remained very active, helping in several Congregations where his giftings were greatly appreciated. Delivering the tribute at his funeral Service the Rev Dr Jack Richardson said of him, 'His preaching was convincing, his teaching was authentic; his pastoral caring and his friendship was enduring.' We give thanks to God for his life and work and express our sincere sympathy to his wider family circle.

The Rev Robert (Robin) Beulah Logue, BA, Minister Emeritus of the Congregation of Ballygomartin in the Presbytery of North Belfast, died on 16 February, 2011 in the 91st year of his age and the 67th year of his ministry. He was born at Londonderry on 29 April, 1920, the son of Robert Logue and his wife Isabella, née Connor. He was educated at Magee University College, Londonderry, followed by Trinity College, Dublin, graduating BA and then the Assembly's College, Belfast. He was licensed by the Presbytery of Derry on 2 February, 1943 and served his assistantship in McQuiston Memorial, Belfast. He was ordained and installed by the Presbytery of Newry in the Congregations of 2nd Newtownhamilton and Creggan on 28 November, 1944. He resigned on 31 August, 1949 to take up a call to Clifton Street United, Belfast, where he was installed by the Presbytery of Belfast on 1 September. A brother, the Rev CPA Logue followed him as Minister in Newhamilton and Creggan. He accepted a call to the Congregation of Ballygomartin in West Belfast in 1955 where he was installed on 15 September remaining until his retirement on 12 June, 1985. He gave himself fully and enthusiastically to parish ministry in his successive charges delighting to be among people of all ages, showing Christian concern for their welfare. He was well known by all within the districts in which he worked, well beyond the boundaries of his own Congregations. In Ballygomartin, which began as a Church Extension charge following the Second World War, he established new Sunday Schools which later became the foundation for the work of the Belfast City Mission on the Springfield Road and in Glencairn. The Troubles brought communal strife and demographic change to the area, and throughout these years until his retirement he sought to counter the actions of the paramilitaries, whose leaders he knew, and to help young people avoid being caught up with them. He was always well prepared for his pulpit ministry bringing a devotional tone to the worship of God and possessing the ability to speak without notes. From time to time he escaped the city streets and the stress of ministry through his love of fishing on the River Fane. Other fishermen would know he was around when they heard the strains of 'All things bright and beautiful' carry downstream. The Presbytery tribute 'gives thanks to God for a faithful Minister, valiant for truth, who loved his fellow men and women and children.' He is survived by his wife Lottie, née Charlotte Kilpatrick, whom he married on 11 September, 1945, and their children Alan, Pamela and David, and their families. We honour the ministry of their loved one and assure them of our prayers in their loss.

The Rev Maurice Bolton, MBE, TD, MA, Minister Emeritus of the Congregation of Strand (Second Derry) in the Presbytery of Derry and Donegal, died on 8 March, 2011 in the 81st year of his age and the 54th year of his ministry. He was born at Lismoyle, Swatragh, on 12 August, 1930, one of five children to Samuel James Bolton, farmer, and of his wife Elizabeth, née Bolton. His early spiritual experience was shaped in the Congregation of Swatragh and he was educated at Rainey Endowed School, Magherafelt. In response to the call of God he set about preparing himself for the ministry by attending Magee University College, Londonderry, then Trinity College, Dublin, graduating BA. He studied theology at New College, Edinburgh, and the Assembly's College, Belfast, and served as Assistant to the Rev Ross Greer in Cooke Centenary Congregation, on the Ormeau Road, Belfast. He was licensed by the Presbytery of Magherahoghill on 27 May, 1956 and ordained and installed by the Presbytery of Newry in the Congregations of Tullyallen and Mountnorris on 11 December, 1957. He married Josephine (Jo) Mulholland Armstrong on 18 July, 1956 and they were blessed with three children, Christine, Janine and Kathryn. In his first charge he started a company of the Boys' Brigade and encouraged youth work and involved himself in the life of the wider community. After eleven years he received a call from Strand Congregation, Derry, and he was installed as Minister on 19 June, 1968 serving until his retirement on 31 December, 1995. He and his family arrived in Derry on the eve of the outbreak of the Troubles and he exercised his ministry through turbulent and trying times, pastoring his people and playing his part in building bridges across the political and religious divide. In the early years he lost considerable numbers of his Congregation who moved from the West bank to the Waterside and further afield. He served as President of the YMCA and Chairman of the Board of Management of the Model Primary School. He was also a Director of the Inner City Trust. He was Moderator of the Presbytery of Derry 1972 to 1973 and Moderator of the Synod of Derry and Omagh 1985 to 1986. On 26 March, 1975 he was appointed Stated Supply to the Congregations of Inch and Buncrana in County Donegal. He continued his work as a Chaplain, begun in County Armagh, to the Army Cadet Force and also a padre in the Territorial Army with the Royal Irish Rangers which later became the North Irish militia, and then the 4th Battalion of the Royal Irish Rangers. He conducted services of worship, took training courses, and went with the cadets and soldiers to camps and on military exercises. He rose to the rank of Major and was awarded the MBE and the Territorial Decoration for his services. Maurice found relaxation from these duties by farming, keeping sheep, cattle and other animals on his farm at Warbleshinney. In all of his work he was faithfully supported by his wife, and to Mrs Bolton and her surviving children, Janine and Kathryn, and their families, we convey our sympathy and assure them of our prayers.

The Very Rev Dr David Burke, BA, DD, Minister Emeritus of the Congregation of Hamilton Road, Bangor, in the Presbytery of Ards, died on 8 March, 2011 in the 92nd year of his age and the 65th year of his ministry. He was born at Belfast on 31 July, 1919, the son of David Burke, a local government official and of his wife Edith, née Callaghan. Raised in the Congregation of Crescent, University Road, he received his early education at

Rosetta Public Elementary School followed by Methodist College. He gained his BA at Queen's University and studied theology at New College, Edinburgh, and the Assembly's College, Belfast. He was licensed by the Presbytery of Belfast on 17 May, 1945 and was Assistant in the Congregation of Seaview, Shore Road, Belfast. He was ordained and installed by the Presbytery of Derry in the Congregation of Great James Street on 6 March, 1947. He married Sheila Margaret Elliot Burrows on 26 April, 1949, and they had four children, Caryl, Alistair, Rosemary and Bryan. In 1955 he was called to the Congregation of Hamilton Road, Bangor, where he was installed on 6 October, 1955 and ministered there until his retirement on 8 April, 1984. In the work of the wider Church he was involved with the Foreign Missions Board. He was Moderator of the Synod of Armagh and Down 1974 to 1975, elected Moderator of the General Assembly in 1978 and awarded the Degree of Doctor of Divinity (*iure dignitatis*) by the Presbyterian Theological Faculty Ireland. As Moderator he presided over the Special Assembly held on 21 November, 1978 which decided to suspend membership of the World Council of Churches, anticipating the decision taken at the General Assembly of June 1980 to withdraw altogether. During his year he and Sheila visited Thailand and India forming a link between the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Lamp of Thailand Bible Correspondence organisation. The visit so impacted them that in retirement in October 1990 they went to Pakistan to teach in the Gujranwala Theological Seminary, strengthening the partnership with our Church, and then to Thailand to renew personal links with the Lamp of Thailand. They were invited to Myanmar and visited India before returning home later in 1991. He was deeply moved by the poverty he witnessed in those regions and by the generosity of Christians who were so willing to share what little they had. David Burke was noted for his gift of communication. He was an engaging preacher, creative and thorough in his preparation and vivacious in presentation. His approachability invited confidence in him as a caring and wise pastor. He was a Religious Advisor to Ulster Television in the nineteen sixties and seventies, and his gift of communication opened up opportunities for him in broadcasting. Many will remember his televised talk on the Rubik's Cube, a best-selling 3-D mechanical puzzle. His legacy endures in the hearts and minds of his people who knew him best and we, with them, and his family whom we keep in our prayers, give thanks for the spiritual ministry he exercised and the many who were won to Christ and nourished in faith in Him as Lord and Saviour.

PRIORITIES COMMITTEE

1. The Priorities Committee is now well established as the means by which the General Board is enabled to make informed decisions about the work of the Church and how it may best be focussed to fulfil the objectives set by the General Assembly. Its membership is partly made up of senior members from the Boards, but equally important is the component of General Board members drawn from the Presbyteries. This provides an important balance in the critical decisions which have to be made and reflects the remit which was given to the Committee:-

“The Priorities Committee’s main function is to prioritise the mission and ministry needs of the whole Church. It will therefore need to develop a close relationship with the other Boards and provide co-ordination between Boards. It may also give guidance at times to the Business Committee (of the General Board) on the Board’s own priorities.”

2. The Committee, at the beginning of the year, decided that this should largely be a year to consolidate its work. It returned to the five aspirations for our Church already agreed by the General Assembly, recognising that resolutions passed by the General Assembly are not always “owned” by the Church at large. The five key inter-related themes on which the Church has been asked to focus are in providing:-

***A prophetic voice**, confidently proclaiming where it stands and who it stands beside, in a society which is increasingly secular and often opposed to Christian values and lifestyle.*

***A caring fellowship**, welcoming the stranger and learning from one another, valuing the gifts of each individual, while offering prayer and pastoral support to all in need.*

***A platform for service and outreach**, with each Congregation seeking to identify the needs of the community where it is placed and encouraging its members to act as Christ’s representatives in the place where they live and work.*

***A place of transformation**, where people do not leave as they have entered but are challenged and changed, having encountered the living God present in the worship and the lives of his people.*

***A community of global concern**, learning from and sharing with our brothers and sisters in the world Church, while recognising with them those issues of concern for our stewardship of the world’s resources where together we must challenge injustice, poverty and oppression in Jesus’ name.*

3. The question which the Committee asked itself this year is how to ensure that each of these themes, in all its aspects, is explored at all levels of Church life. The Committee believes that they are strong biblical themes around which the Church is able to unite, although not everyone will approach them in exactly the same way. In order to promote widespread discussion, the Committee recognises it has a role in ensuring resources are available e.g. for bible study, small group discussion and worship material. It would also encourage articles in the Church’s magazines and perhaps initiate a conference at an appropriate time of year. The internet would also be an important vehicle to promote discussion.

4. Clearly it would be neither possible nor helpful to provide material on all five themes at the same time, although they should be seen as a whole to indicate the breadth of the gospel imperatives. The Committee therefore suggests that for five years (2012-2017) one of these aspirations should become an Assembly theme for the year. With the Moderator’s co-operation it would be launched at an Assembly Rally on the Wednesday evening of Assembly week. This would mean that thought and preparation may be given to how the rally may become a launching pad to create informed discussion throughout the Church, while at the same time being an inspirational event within itself. If the

Assembly agrees the Committee suggests that for 2012-13 the theme would be “*A prophetic voice*” and for 2013-14, “*A place of transformation*”.

5. The Committee continued to fulfil its remit by reviewing the work of all the Boards. It looked first at those who receive United Appeal funding and is impressed that the Boards are themselves keeping a tight grip on financial matters. It is grateful that Boards are taking their stewardship very seriously. While recognising this, it made a strong recommendation to the United Appeal Board that there should be no increase in the Appeal this year.

6. This year, the Committee also considered the work of those Boards who do not receive funding from the United Appeal, but are supported by the Church in other ways. The Business Board receives a grant from the Incidental Fund which is modest. The General Board is also funded by the Incidental Fund. While the issues before the General Board are constantly changing and it is often responsible for time-limited projects, the Committee is satisfied that budgeting is robust. This is also the case for the Finance and Personnel Board which provides an essential service to all the work of the General Assembly and so is funded through an allocation drawn from the other Boards and Agencies.

7. The work of various ad-hoc Panels was also reviewed, especially the Panels on the Pastoral Care of Manse Families and the Future of Peacemaking. Both will report independently to the Assembly but the Committee is appreciative of their work.

8. At the request of the Priorities Committee the General Board appointed two Panels to consider:

- (a) the policy-making and administrative structures reporting to the General Assembly (i.e. Boards and Committees);
- (b) the process of consultation between Presbytery and Congregations, especially in the light of mission planning.

These Panels will report separately.

DONALD WATTS, Convener

MODERATOR'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE

1. The Moderator's Advisory Committee met to advise the Moderator in regard to two invitations received in connection with the papal visit to Britain. The first was to a Reception at the Palace of Holyroodhouse to mark the Visit to the United Kingdom of His Holiness the Pope, on Thursday, 16 September, 2010. The other was a service of Evening Prayer in Westminster Abbey on Friday, 17 September, 2010. His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI and His Grace The Archbishop of Canterbury would both attend the service and take part. Following the service it was proposed that the Moderator should be presented to the Pope.

2. The Committee first considered the Invitation from Westminster Abbey. It was aware of discussion at the General Assembly following the then Pope's visit to Ireland in 1979. However, the Committee was of the opinion that attitudes have changed in the last thirty years and while there are still different views sincerely held in the Church the majority of members would accept a decision of the Moderator to attend. It was the recommendation of the

Committee that, unless the Moderator has strong personal reservations, he should accept the invitation from Westminster Abbey.

3. The Invitation to a Reception at the Palace of Holyroodhouse was issued on behalf of Her Majesty the Queen. The Committee took the view that it should be accepted, and as the Moderator would be in South Africa that day it was agreed that the Clerk of the General Assembly should attend in his place.

4. During the year the Committee appointed assessors to assist Presbyteries in six situations of difficulty in Congregations.

DONALD WATTS, Convener

DOCTRINE COMMITTEE

1. The Doctrine Committee presented its report on the issue of spiritual incompatibility and marriage to last year's General Assembly in the expectation that it would receive a mixed response. This has been the case. In broad terms, six Presbyteries were hostile, five were supportive, three were either very bland or mixed and four did not reply. The mechanism by which business is sent down to Presbyteries and received again centrally is slow and the Committee could not begin to work at a consideration of the responses until January. Bearing in mind that, in order to have a report ready for inclusion in the Blue Book, it would need to have finished its work by mid March, it has been impossible to do full honour to the Presbytery responses in such a short time. Therefore this is an interim report, in the expectation of a final report being ready for the 2012 Assembly.

2. Apart from the time lag, consulting Presbyteries has been a good way of doing things. The Presbytery responses have raised a number of issues and identified a number of weaknesses in the last report. The next report will be better. Undoubtedly it will still not say what everyone wants it to say but it will be clearer and, the Committee trusts, will be helpful.

PATTON TAYLOR, Convener

CHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE

1. The Committee met twice during the year to consider issues and to work through matters of common concern. Time was also taken at the General Board day away to talk through the important aspects raised on the day. It was good to hear from Elders and Ministers alike, about local inter-church relations as well as to have a look at some of the global relationships.

Irish Council of Churches (ICC)

2. The Committee noted with joy the appointment of Mr Mervyn McCullagh to Executive Officer. A stimulating AGM was held in Lisburn on Thursday, 7 April. The theme of the Churches in the Public Square was explored by Fintan O'Toole (Irish Times) and Peter Lynas (Evangelical Alliance). There were about 20 representatives of PCI present.

Irish Inter Church Meeting (IICM)

3. The topic for this year's meeting was Education. Presentations were made from those who work in Northern Ireland and in the Irish Republic. Common concerns and difficulties were highlighted. Helpful information was given out by those who are directly involved in the school systems.

World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)

4. Three members of PCI were present at Grand Rapids to share in the forming of this new body (a merging of two world reformed bodies). It was good time to share and to see firsthand the ways in which God is working through the many Reformed Church bodies throughout the world. It provided valuable experience for those who were directly involved and hopefully an encouragement especially to those who work in places of extreme political and economic pressures.

The Rev Cheryl Meban was elected to the WCRC Executive, and keeps the Committee up to date with the discussions taking place. She attended, with the Clerk of Assembly, the annual WCRC Europe Council meeting in Prague. A brief report will be included in Supplementary Reports.

Conference of European Churches (CEC)

5. The Conference of European Churches is going through a period of assessment and reflection. It is also seeking a new General Secretary. PCI has not been involved in any meetings during the year but the Clerk has been nominated to a Working-Group of the Church and Society Commission of CEC on Human Rights. It will hold its first meeting in May.

Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE, formerly Leuenberg)

6. The CPCE is seeking to set up area groups to more adequately carry out its work. An English speaking group from the Churches of the British Isles and Scandinavian/Baltic countries held an exploratory meeting in Copenhagen on the theme of "The Theology of Worship". The Clerk represented PCI and found that it was a useful meeting both for making contacts with European Churches and potentially influencing the work of CPCE, which can be dominated by other regions of Europe. The Rev Prof Gordon Campbell has also been involved in a consultation on theological education.

LORRAINE KENNEDY-RITCHIE, Convener

COMMITTEE FOR THE RECEPTION OF MINISTERS AND LICENTIATES

1. The Committee met on two occasions during the year and Panels of the Committee interviewed four people.

2. The Presbytery of Monaghan requested the Committee to interview the Rev Christy Irwin, a Minister ordained in the Congregational Union of

Ireland, for service in PCI as a Stated Supply or Assistant to a Convener. The Committee accepted Mr Irwin in the following terms: “that Mr Irwin be rendered eligible for ministry within the Presbyterian Church as a Stated Supply or Assistant to a Convener”.

3. The Board of Social Witness requested the Committee to interview the Rev Glen Jordan, a Minister ordained in the Congregational Union of Ireland for service in the Kinghan Church. The Committee accepted Mr Jordan in the following terms: “that he be received and assigned to the Kinghan Church as Assistant to the Convener; that he completes a course of study and any other requirements as approved by the Board of Christian Training and that he be declared eligible for a Call on the satisfactory completion of the course of study and assistantship”.

4. Mr Rory McClure, a Licentiate of the Presbyterian Church of America, applied in the normal way and was interviewed. The Committee accepted Mr McClure in the following terms: “that he be received as a Licentiate and undertake both a supervised assistantship, (it is recommended that this be two years in length), and any course of study required by the Board of Christian Training and that he would only become eligible for a call to a Congregation, or other service within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, when he was deemed to have satisfactorily completed both the prescribed course of study and assistantship”.

5. Mr Elijah Obinna, a Minister of The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, applied in the normal way and was interviewed. It was agreed that he be not received as the Committee was not persuaded that he had articulated a clear sense of Call to the Pastoral Ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

6. The list of Ministers and Licentiates without charge was reported by Presbyteries as follows:-

<i>Presbytery</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Recommendation</i>
Ards	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).
Armagh	Rev JWP McConnell	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
Ballymena	Rev JD McGaughey	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.
	Rev WA Shaw	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev WM Smyth	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).

	Rev FW Vincent	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
South Belfast	Rev 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 RA Crooks	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).
	Rev W J Harshaw	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev Dr Eliz Jamison	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).
	Rev Rex Pedlow	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).
Carrickfergus	Rev DJ Paul	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
Derry/Donegal	Rev KG Patterson	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev JC Teeney	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
Down	Rev Samuel Armstrong	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev 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.
Dromore	Rev JD Mark	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev Kiran Wimberly	To be retained as Minister without Charge
Iveagh	Rev EG McAuley	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).
Route	Rev William Brown	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).
	Rev Dr Victor Dobbin	To be retained as Minister without Charge.

7. The following reports were received from Ministers in Recognised Service.

The Rev Dr Ruth Patterson reports:

For the last 23 years Restoration Ministries has had its base at Restoration House in Dunmurry. Largely due to the on-going economic crisis Restoration Ministries is now planning to downsize which could involve letting the centre

go. However the ethos of the ministry will continue in terms of prayer, retreats, conferences and spiritual direction.

I find these days incredibly challenging with wonderful opportunities here in Ireland and further afield to announce good news and be a bearer of hope. I am grateful to God and to all of those who make such a ministry possible.

The Rev Dr Paul Bailie reports:

Mission Africa (The Qua Iboe Fellowship) is one of Ireland's oldest mission agencies. It is an unambiguously evangelical mission agency, working in partnership with like-minded missions and Churches in Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Chad and most recently, Kenya. Through our daughter agency, African Christian Textbooks, our literature ministry is reaching many other countries in East and West Africa.

As Chief Executive I continue to have responsibility for strategic planning, administration of personnel, finance and partner relations. We appreciate deeply all those within PCI who maintain an interest in our work and remember us in prayer.

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 and the Boards of the Church; I am particularly glad to have been able to serve the Church through some part-time teaching at Union Theological College over the past two semesters.

IVAN J PATTERSON, Convener

CHURCH AND SOCIETY COMMITTEE

1. Since last General Assembly there have been many political changes both North and South of the border. The Committee is aware of change and particularly of the speed of change. Change is inevitable and with it the changing circumstances of life can both threaten and inspire. It is important to affirm, for ourselves and for the world, that the Church worships a God who is unchanging in mercy and love and power, a God who walks with His people through change, guiding, sustaining, protecting and transforming.

2. At Westminster a change of government brought a new type of coalition which has given food for thought and provided a change in Secretary of State. In the Republic a change of government was not unexpected. In Northern Ireland there were changes in party leadership for the SDLP and the UUP. By the time the General Assembly meets there will have been an election in Northern Ireland and more changes will have taken place.

3. These changes are a reminder that society is moving from the familiar into the new all of the time and that for the Christian prayer remains the constant in every changing situation of life. Congregations are therefore encouraged to continue to pray for our political leadership at every level as they address the circumstances of each new day.

THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

4. Usually a report of this nature takes the form of the past tense: who did what, when and why. Indeed much of the larger report from the Committee offers just that. However, the seismic shifts in Irish society and their importance for the General Assembly demand a future perspective.

5. Following the intervention of the IMF/ECB/EU, the internal crisis within Fianna Fail and the withdrawal from government by the Greens, a General Election was called for 25 February, 2011. The ruling parties inevitably lost heavily (FF experiencing their worst defeat ever and the Greens suffering a wipe-out). Whilst Fine Gael and Labour enjoyed their best showing ever – Enda Kenny will lead the coalition – it is important to point out the significant gains also enjoyed by SF and the far left parties. Given the state of the economy and the growing dissatisfaction amongst the electorate this is hardly surprising. The major challenge for the victors will be finding sufficient wriggle room with the IMF/ECB/EU to renegotiate the bailout conditions. It is obvious to the vast majority of people within Ireland, the markets, and Europe, that Ireland's economy is simply not big enough to repay the sovereign debt when the bondholder debt continues to be rolled into one. Unless measures are taken by Europe to help shoulder bondholder debt, it is only a question of time before Ireland will default. The far left is calling on the government to 'burn the bondholders'; a tactic that, given the incalculable risks to the domestic and European economy, is unlikely to be heeded by the centrist parties. Their preference is to go down the diplomatic line and argue the need for a consensus that will assist the weak economies and protect the common currency. The new government will have no honeymoon period with a crucial summit of European powers scheduled for the end of March.

6. Meanwhile, individuals, families and businesses continue to suffer. Irish emigration stands at 1000 people per week. Low and middle income families are feeling the disproportionate pain of the 'universal social charge' on their pay-cheque, (this on top of the tax rises and welfare cuts; including the reduction of the minimum wage by 1, and mortgage arrears and negative equity and escalating fuel prices). A 2011 report serves as a stark reminder of the number of households that are in negative equity, mortgage arrears (8.6 billion/ increase of 55.6% / 31,338 mortgages more than 180 days in arrears), and repossession (106 in 2010 despite the soft approach taken by the authorities). Suicide rates are amongst the highest in the world. According to Noel Smyth, property-developer and anti-suicide campaigner, his helpline receives between 2,500-3,000 calls per month. David Mellon of the Irish Property Council describes the lot of many teachers, police and lawyers as one of "suffocating despair." News of banker bonuses and Ministerial severance pay and pension funds in the millions of Euros adds to the sense of hopelessness.

7. As workers work to pay the interest on the bank bailout and recompense financial gamblers for betting and losing, it is little wonder that emigration is seen as a brighter alternative. Businesses of all kinds and sizes are also suffering the ill-effects of liquidity loss and there is little evidence that this will be halted any time soon. Sub-contractors have been especially hard hit as a result of poor protective measures within Irish law. FG/L know that they must get Ireland back to work and they must protect the important but fragile export

figures, but this will come under severe strain if France and Germany succeed in challenging Ireland's low corporation tax with their fixed-band demands.

8. Whatever the fall-out economically, there is a growing movement of social engagement; the first fruit of which was seen in the remarkably high election turnout (+70%). This growing swell for substantial economic, political and social reform will certainly be exploited by the far left and, if the new government fails to make an immediate impact, one can expect a plethora of strikes, marches, civil disobedience and worse. It would be fair to say that the Irish population has moved from a sanguine acceptance of their national plight to a simmering resentment of the authority structures and golden circle they hold responsible.

9. It is impossible to judge the precise impact this is having on Presbyterians. When the Dublin and Munster Presbytery sought to ascertain the repercussions of the PMS demise on southern Presbyterians, very little response was forthcoming and the Committee simply does not have access to precise data to draw meaningful conclusions. One must suppose that our working/middle class families are as susceptible as their non-Presbyterian peers, but this may only become evident as Congregations record giving levels and Ministers engage pastorally with family crises. The denomination will need to be vigilant and prayerful in the coming days. However, to leave it at that risks passing over the real pain of brothers and sisters in Christ and the Church will have missed the crucial signs of the times for the Church. So with relatively little hard data and a fair degree of imagination, here are some important points for the Presbyterian Church to ponder:

- (a) *A sea-change in Irish politics* – the Church must not underestimate the massive changes already apparent. The FG/Labour coalition will be looking over both shoulders at the vocal far left and at the far right independents. They are all more media and techno savvy, more charismatic and more trusted than the old guard. They have strategies for supplementing their meagre speaking rights in the Dail and for holding the government to account. If the major parties fail to deliver on significant Dail/Senate reforms early in the programme for government, the people will be mustered. Some commentators believe that FF will disappear into oblivion (managing a mere 17% of first votes and vastly outnumbered by both FG/L), but even if this proves premature the political landscape has certainly changed. From a Northern perspective it is especially important to note SF success (strengthened by their association with the far left) and FF rumours of becoming an all-island party themselves.
- (b) *The 'Stubby-pencil Revolution'* – commentators outside Ireland have been amazed at the people's acquiescence during these last three years of economic mayhem. They have looked at Greece and wondered why the Irish have not been rioting. The General Election, given its resounding dismissal of the government, has been described as 'the stubby-pencil revolution', but don't think for one moment that the electorate is satisfied. There is a variety of grass-root movements determined to challenge the old order and to build a republic worthy of the name. Some are economists and businessmen who uphold the

tenants of free-market capitalism while accepting the need for brave unilateral and collective policies to realign the economy. Some are virtual Communist and anti-capitalist agitators who interpret the crisis as proof of their long-held criticisms of inherent injustice. It is rather strange to find voices from both ends of the spectrum agreeing on some fundamental strategies.

- (c) **Programme for Government** – FG/L coalition has a massive majority in the Dail to push through their agreed programme. Given the unpopularity of some policies down the line, this majority will certainly be required. The programme for government contains measures in respect of the following: EU-IMF Deal, public finances, political reform, banking, jobs and enterprise, taxation, mortgage debt, health, public sector reform, social policy, environment and climate change, crime and justice, education and Irish language. Certain of these areas will inevitably remain in the headlines and much has already been said about them, so the Church should take note of one or two matters that might slip unnoticed. **Under Social Policy:** Labour has pressed for a referendum on same-sex marriage and on a referendum on children's rights. Much of the respective legislation has been developed by the previous administration, however that government had assured representatives from PCI that 'civil partnership legislation' would not be confused with calls for 'same-sex marriage'. The measures proposed include: LGBT people who teach in schools should be supported; all State boards to have at least 40% of each gender; legal recognition and extension of equality legislation to transgender persons; enacting measures relating to taxation and social welfare for those in civil partnerships and addressing anomalies relating to children in the Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabiting Couples Act 2010. The issue of same sex marriage will also be examined. There is no reference to legislation in response to European Court of Human Rights ruling on abortion. **Under crime and justice:** the abolition of automatic entitlement to remission for prisoners. Under a new system, violent criminals and sex offenders will have to "earn" remission; sentencing and penal reform, less use of prison for non-serious offences, for sentences under one year, judges obliged to consider Community Services Orders; Legislating for the use of 'soft information' in implementing the Child First guidelines; Modernising family law; strengthening Freedom of Information legislation; comprehensive reform of the immigration and asylum system, including sharing of DNA profiles with other EU countries; promotion of social inclusion for those from minority and immigrant backgrounds. Following a recent ruling in Brussels (March), the government will also be considering the deportation of non-Irish parents of Irish children.

10. It is more important than ever that Presbyterians in the South get informed and get involved in the movements that are sweeping across the land. There is a sense that a new Ireland must and will emerge from the economic

catastrophe. There is also a danger that passions could spill over and minorities be made the whipping boys for frustrated hopes. The Church should not underestimate the relevance of biblical principles and the transformative power of the resurrection hope that Christians can bring to proceedings.

NORTHERN IRELAND

11. Despite change in the socio-political and economic climate across these Islands there are some things that seem to remain unchanged. The threat arising from the variety of dissident Republican groups has been of concern for some time. Last October the Home Secretary raised the terrorist threat level and many across the community experienced anger and fear.

12. The Committee is conscious of the anxiety in which some members of this society live, of the threat to members of the PSNI and the Prison Service and of the threat to the future stability and rebuilding of society that comes from dissident groups. It believes that falling back into the ways of the past must be resisted. Violence did not pay in the past and it will not pay in the future but can wreak havoc in a society and bring suffering to many. It is concerned that all who can should bend their efforts to bring those who are disenchanted to see that society has already come a long way, based on mutuality and respect and that violence will mean further division, separation and unnecessary destruction.

13. Across the Island of Ireland citizens continue to find themselves in the grip of the economic downturn. Banks have to be rescued, individuals continue to suffer, and no-one is certain if things have stabilised or have still to get worse. The Committee is concerned for the impact on people and concerned too that local Congregations will find ways to support those who may increasingly be out of work.

14. In October last year the General Board asked that the Youth and Children's Ministry Board and the Board of Social Witness look at ways to help Congregations to use the resources they have, e.g. their buildings, to provide space for those who are unemployed and need something to do and that they prepare themselves to provide volunteering programmes to help people with a sense of value as they seek for employment. The Committee realises that there is still considerable wealth and talent in the Presbyterian Church and emphasises that talent has not been lost because economics have gone awry. Wealth can still be used, and should be used, for the good of others. Talent comes in many forms and without financial wealth the Church has many ways to celebrate God's gift and blessing.

15. The Committee is considering how to encourage debate across the Church about alternative economic mindsets. It is concerned too about who shapes culture and about how gospel challenges are brought to bear on the present situation. At present the Committee is working towards a symposium with informed Christian economists. Some of the early work is in the section – Presbyterians and Economics.

16. Concern was raised with the Committee about the upcoming anniversaries, specifically the anniversary of the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant 1912 and of the Easter Rising 1916. The Committee recognises that there are many more anniversaries over the next few years. As the Decade

of Centenaries approaches it is vital to be careful in how they are remembered. There will be additional material available in the Supplementary Reports.

17. During the year the Committee had the opportunity to respond to the usual host of consultations. All of these responses can be viewed on the PCI website:

- Consultation on Cohesion, Sharing and Integration
- Draft Strategic Plan Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
- Consultation on the Temporary Recruitment Provision which allowed 50/50 recruitment in policing
- Sunday Trading Consultation

18. Further consultations remain on the agenda and responses to these will be available by the time the General Assembly meets. See Supplementary Reports.

19. Over the year the Committee added to its Position Paper on Human Rights a paper on Cohesion, Sharing and Integration which it called, 'Building Good Relationships: Our hope for a more reconciled society.' This too can be viewed on the PCI website.

20. The Committee believes that the matters arising from how to share space and how to contribute as a Church to the 'shared future' debate is something that Congregations can give some consideration to. To that end it has prepared a paper which may be useful to Congregations either for individuals, groups or the Minister or youth leaders to use. The paper is attached at Appendix A (pp 37-45) and the Committee invites the General Assembly to agree to send this paper to all Congregations for their information and use.

21. The Committee continues with the round of meetings that has now become a cornerstone of the work. Meetings have been held with the DUP, Sinn Fein and it is hoped that by the time the General Assembly meets that it will have met with NICCOSA (Northern Ireland Catholic Council for Social Action). The Committee had hoped to have met also with the UUP and the SDLP but in the election period this is difficult.

22. At the 2009 General Assembly work was undertaken regarding sectarianism. A summary of Presbytery responses is available at Appendix B (pp 45-52). The Committee will bring specific resolutions to the General Assembly requesting action across the denomination in this area. See Supplementary Reports.

23. The Committee has added two further focus areas to its work:

- (a) **Prisons.** Dame Anne Owers was appointed by the Justice Minister, David Ford, in June 2010 to head up a team that is presently reviewing the conditions of detention, management and oversight of prisons. The full report is expected in June and it is anticipated that this will be a significant report. It is important to begin to think and consult with prison chaplains, among others, as the Committee prepares for this report. In the past work has been done on restorative justice which sits well with this focus area. This will be a major piece of work and the Social Witness Board will partner the Committee in it. A Panel is in the process of being put together for the purpose of giving this work the attention that it needs.

- (b) **Social Justice/Poverty.** There is little need to explain why this is a matter which the Church needs to have an eye to. The Committee is aware, that there are others in the General Assembly who may already be doing work in this area.

Presbyterians and Economics

24. The Church and Society Committee has undertaken the awesome task of understanding the nature and implications of the economic crisis from a Presbyterian perspective. Following the presentation of a discussion paper outlining important Christian principles and significant new trends in economic thinking, the Committee considered possible next steps.

25. The Paper opens with the following challenge: “A theology of economics, or at least a process by which to develop such a thing in order to inform our denomination, respond to policies and their effects, and offer workable and redeeming alternatives seems rather overdue. This paper is offered only as a stimulus to that process and as such it dares to offer a range of practical options to ground the discussion and stimulate debate. Neither of the authors pretends to have economics qualifications, rather they share a pastoral concern for the many Church members that are increasingly suffering the fallout resulting from the hegemony of Capitalism, or as Walter Brueggemann prefers, ‘technological consumerist militarism’. For too long the Church has not dared to question the macro-economic that has delivered such wealth and comfort, it is now time to think again.”

26. According to Michael Schluter, Corporate Capitalism is “one of the main drivers of social and moral breakdown in the western world.” He identifies **five moral flaws of Corporate Capitalism:**

- (1) ***An exclusively materialistic vision*** – The focus on capital lends itself to idolatry or wealth at a personal level, and the idolatry of economic growth at a corporate and national level. It invites Mammon to supersede God as the focus of human loyalty and thus to break the first and most foundational of the Ten Commandments. Shareholders pursue personal wealth with little knowledge of how it is generated, and senior management with scant regard for pay structures at lower levels of the company, while customers are persuaded by corporate advertising to pursue self-gratification in its many forms. At a systemic level, under Capitalism companies seek to expand current consumption beyond satisfied appetite, in order to generate supranormal returns for current suppliers of capital; they seek to generate this additional consumption through advertising, built-in obsolescence and expansion of debt...
- (2) ***Reward without responsibility*** – The business of provision of capital as investors with little interest in the company or institution seems to be an example of ‘reaping where we have not sown’... of taking no responsibility. This produces a relational distance, impersonal and without capacity to care for those people at the other end of the transaction.
- (3) ***Limited liability of shareholders*** – It is important in Biblical understanding that the individual is responsible and accepts

responsibility. However the corporation can now act as a legal person separate from its shareholders. By registering as a limited company shareholders have no liability beyond their capital in shares. This allows debts to remain unpaid and in the present climate is having a catastrophic effect on many people as insolvency increases and creditors are abandoned and even destroyed. Perhaps this is seen in the big scale with RBS, Enron and Worldcom. This is indeed part of the very painful story just now in UK and Ireland. It may free much capital for investment but at little risk and few penalties. Such big losses are now passed to the taxpayer.

- (4) ***People disconnected from place*** – Under Jubilee law and principles there was a mechanism of social unity ... property reverted back to the original owners every 50 years free gratis. As a result society was not splintered into fragments and relationships were sustained in a manner that reflected God's honour and human dignity. Capitalism separates people from place ... land is a commodity devoid of relationship. Mass urbanisation follows and this may succeed in providing a source of cheap labour for the industrial power ... such a move was witnessed in the collectives of the former Soviet Union and its satellite states ... to a tragic end. The price Western Europe has paid in the dismantling of family and the resultant loss of welfare roles is presently leaving a culture of lonely, dysfunctional people and causing burgeoning social welfare budgets that cannot solve the problem.
- (5) ***Inadequate social safeguards*** – Deregulation, the removal of government rules and regulations, which was a theme since the 1950s is blamed by some as a key factor in the crisis of 2007-09 but seen by others as beneficial to make supplies more competitive and efficient. Many regulations arose in the wake of the 'Great Depression' and these have slowly been removed since the 1980s (e.g. lowering the mandatory reserves required by banks etc). Originally entry to some markets was restricted to stimulate and protect the initial investment of private companies into infrastructure to provide public services, such as water, electric and communications utilities. With entry of competitors highly restricted, monopoly situations were created, necessitating price and economic controls to protect the public. Policies have certainly changed, and with a high social cost ... The deregulation debate is on-going but it seems that it is a crucial factor in the present sad story. With it has come the promotion of consumer credit leading to the enslavement of much of society to financial institutions.

26. Macro-economics is by its nature a complex and technical discipline and the Committee has no pretensions to expertise in the field; however, it believes it to be vital for the denomination to formulate a mind on the issue to facilitate meaningful contributions to the public debate. It is imperative that Church members get *informed* and get *involved*. The Bible has a great deal to say on matters of fiscal and social policy, the Christian Church possesses immense experience (good and bad) on the matter of wealth creation and wealth distribution, and Christians are called to be a people of grace and generosity. As

soon as the discussion paper has been prepared for circulation amongst those with relevant expertise, the Committee intends organising a symposium to garner their insight and apply this to the Committee's subsequent work.

APPENDIX A

BUILDING GOOD RELATIONSHIPS: OUR HOPE FOR A MORE RECONCILED SOCIETY

Paper for Congregations

With aching hands and bleeding feet
 We dig and heap, lay stone on stone;
 We bear the burden and the heat
 Of the long day, and wish 'twere done.
 Not till the hours of light return,
 All we have built do we discern.

Matthew Arnold 'Morality'

1. Introduction

In 1998 the signing of the Belfast Agreement brought hope across Northern Ireland for a better future. Clearly something better has been achieved, although not everyone is in agreement with the arrangements that have been made. However, in 2011, more than ten years after the Belfast Agreement, we as a society still struggle to hear or articulate our vision for a better society. The publication of the Shared Future Strategy in 2005 provided a step on the way, helping to put into words a vision for a future together into words and setting out a roadmap for achieving that new vision. The publication of the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy in 2010 has done little to further that hope. As a Committee we are in no doubt that a vision needs to be articulated and worked towards and this paper is intended to engender discussion of what a more coherent, shared and integrated society would look like and how we as a society, and as a Church in this society, begin to bend our energies towards building that new society. This paper is a small contribution, we hope, to that rebuilding process.

We want to recognise that many of those working in the field of 'reconciliation' have felt like giving up. They feel that the work that they have done has not been acknowledged by government in its strategy nor has the learning of the many years of work been integrated into that strategy. At the same time, funding for the work they have been doing and without which society would be the poorer in its relationships across divides, is being withdrawn. The little that remains is much harder to access than ever before.

We have no doubt that those genuinely involved in reconciliation work are involved because of their sense of vocation. They are sustained by the Biblical vision of a society at peace with itself, of a world in which shalom is the aim. They are kept going because they firmly place their feet in the footprints of the Lord who came to break down walls of division and to bring hope where hopelessness abounds. The notion of shalom which is aimed for is one which

comes from the Hebrew Scriptures and indicates the kind of peace which is more than the absence of war and conflict. To seek shalom is to seek the kind of peace where there is wholeness and a sense of being complete. This cannot happen without good relationships. Reconciliation, respect, justice, healing and trust all play their part in building a society in which there is wholeness and human flourishing, even where there is diversity and difference.

Now is not the time, then, to give up. It is clear that the work done in the past has not yet reached its conclusion - the vision has not reached outwards and upwards and the inspiration that many have experienced because of their work in every place where there is division has not yet inspired society or its leaders to the extent that the learning of such work can be included in a strategy for the way forward. We recognise that because of the shortages of funding and the added pressures that come from a critical economic situation there are those who may feel like giving up. We believe that this is the time for Christian people to reorientate themselves around a Christian vision, a vision drawn from the Scriptures and written into the history of our society through the Church of Jesus Christ. We are encouraged by the words of Galatians 6 v9:

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

We offer you this short paper as a conversation starter to help put words on the vision of a better, more peaceful society in which human beings can flourish, in which everyone can contribute to making a better society and in which each human person can discover value and worth.

2. God's people in God's world

The Biblical communities of faith, whether they were New Testament house groups or the people of God in exile or living in Jerusalem, were communities built around a shared value base. That value base was expressed since the time of Moses in the Ten Commandments. While the Commandments provided the value base for the Christian community there were also values imparted to God's people as being key to how they were to live in the world.

2.1. God's people are to live in the world with respect to those who are unable to represent themselves.

Those who are weak in the sense of being unable to access the power structures of a society and who are quite simply unable to meet the needs that they have each day, are to be the concern of God's people. There is no instruction to discriminate just to, 'look after orphans and widows in their distress' (James 1 v27) and in this way to live the kind of religion that is pleasing to God. As God's people in God's world, therefore, there is a call to be committed to those who are found on the edges of a society.

2.2. Those who are different, known to us as 'other', are also to be a matter of concern.

On more than one occasion the instruction to God's people is to take care of foreigners or strangers as some interpret the word. In-so-doing a value base is developed which is one of movement to those who are different from us and to their inclusion. (Deuteronomy 10v18, 26 v13) In the New Testament Jesus develops this into the challenge of loving our enemies and praying for those who persecute us. (Matthew 5 v44; Luke 6 vv27 & 35) As God's people in God's

world we are, therefore, to be concerned for those who are different from us. They are not to be ignored, overlooked or denigrated.

2.3. New ideas are to be welcomed.

If those who are other to us and those who are on the edge of our society are to be included it can be extrapolated that new ideas are to be welcomed rather than received as threat. For Presbyterians this is more classically expressed as refusing to 'receive light from any quarter.' This is only possible if the people of God have, first and foremost, a strong and foundational identity in Jesus Christ which throws all other identity forming aspects of life into its shadow. So in the letter to the Romans we read:

So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.

Our utter and complete belonging to God above all other belongings is further emphasised in chapter 14 v8:

If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

New ideas are never a threat, be they political, social or economic. Different world views and people who are different from us are equally no threat. Rather they are to be engaged with so that the values we own, and indeed often discover that we share with others, become more deeply embedded as a shared society is built.

Out of these three values Christian people can situate themselves in the world in a way which enables them to engage with others, including those who are different from them. These values mean that Christian people can both give and expect respect and can develop relationships both with those who are of like mind and with those who are not of like mind. There is no question of compromise but rather of honest relationship through which shared values are sought and out of which new relationships emerge to weave a new, shared and reconciling fabric to society.

While living in the world with these values God's people are at one and the same time a people reconciled to God in Christ, discovering what that reconciliation means and sharing that mission of reconciliation with God in the world. The letter to the Corinthian Church helps us to understand both how to view the world and ourselves in it given the work of God in Christ:

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

This ministry and work of reconciliation has clear challenges in a society where there is brokenness coming from the past. In our meetings with those who are victims and survivors and with those who work with them it is clear that the sores run deep and the memories resist reconciliation with those who have hurt

families and damaged communities. This is an area in which there has often been hurt heaped upon hurt. As a Committee we have heard the hurt of those who are different from one another, those who blame one another and those who cannot forgive one another. We commend the work of all those who are focussed on assisting in this area to give victims and survivors the support and help they both need and deserve. Sometimes that will be justice, sometimes it will be company and listening, sometimes it will be challenge and sometimes it will be practical responses, particularly from government, to meet the needs of those who continue to face health challenges. It is our view that Presbyterian Ministers and Congregations should continue in offering pastoral care and support to victims and survivors, that those working on behalf of victims and survivors should continue to do all that they can to provide a context in which there is healing and that government should make realistic provision for the ongoing and changing needs of those who have been damaged by the divisions that for too long dominated our society.

We as God's people are invited and encouraged to be involved with others in developing and building a cohesive, shared and integrated society. It is a challenge to us to develop good relationships with those who are different from us and to work with them in three specific areas which we believe will move society toward a better future. These three areas of work are clarified in the next section.

3. Key elements for building good relationships

3.1. Developing community around shared values, challenge and opportunities.

Working towards a reconciling and more shared community will require hope, trust and mutuality, all of which take time to develop. This process does not require trust to be built before anything can be done. It is important to recognise that sometimes trust comes from working together and develops as enemies have to look one another in the eye around a common task. Emerging trust is inevitably fragile but when it is acknowledged it can provide a foundation for more action. This mutuality of trust and action together move society forward in small but significant steps. The process is not always one of steady building. Trust is given and withdrawn throughout the process, testing fragile developments before committing to on-going trust. Every dimension of a society's life has to participate for a balanced growth and development - economics, social policy and action, health, education and the Churches too. Participation is key and the degree to which participants are committed to the on-going process of building is a measure of how far there is yet to go.

The key value in developing community is respect. Alongside respect there needs to be a commitment to honesty. Relationships have to face the challenges of suspicion, diverse political viewpoints and different cultural approaches. What is sought is trust which then also becomes a value in developing good relationships. As it develops trust also becomes an opportunity and therefore a challenge. Values, challenges and opportunities are integrated as community is developed, good relationships grown and a more reconciled society constructed.

The challenge for Irish Presbyterians is to identify relationships which are not good, or not good enough, and to do something about them, building

community where the opportunity arises. This may be within Congregations or between Congregations, as a matter of our own integrity. But for society as a whole this begins locally. Congregations are encouraged:

- to identify groups with which they share values and to work with them in whatever way possible for the good of the whole community, and
- to identify groups which they distrust and to begin to talk with them in exploration of new ideas, which need not threaten us.

3.2. Learning how to share space

Shared communities built on good relationships are communities no longer torn apart by disparate groups and ambitions. These communities provide tools for building together, negotiating goals and embracing those goals across diversity. All of that requires the space to talk, to disagree, to negotiate and to reach agreement together with a real hope that what is being planned can be achieved. The process requires access to as many people as possible to represent as broad a cross-section of society as possible. Ultimately the 'big' vision is a vision for everyone, although groups may come to the process with separate or more local visions. This does not happen by chance but has to take place in environments which are safe and where there are at least some explicitly shared values.

In a community learning how to share space it is a vocation to provide space in which sharing can happen. Churches have done this over many years and in a variety of ways. Individuals have provided meeting space for gathered groups of disparate people who need to talk with one another in a safe environment. Congregations have opened their doors to groups of people who are different from them and sought to become friends with them. Committees have sat down with groups from different sections of the community. But the shared space challenge is not over. It includes the challenge to share geographical space, to be prepared to live next door to people who are different from us and to learn to trust our neighbours, to assist in the provision of resources which are accessible to all and which everyone feels safe to go to. Shared space also includes sharing the spaces that we have, not least our Church buildings which are too often only for our own. The challenge to share space also requires us to turn our attention to areas where sharing is a matter of raw contention, along so called 'peace-lines' for example. Evidence shows that investment in shared spaces is beginning to pay dividends.

If we as a Church want to make a contribution to shared space we can consider opening up our premises where and when possible to those who would not traditionally be found within the walls of the building. This is already being done in many Congregations. Over the years the General Assembly has encouraged members of PCI to become involved where possible in resolving contention relating to space and territory. In the Presbytery responses on sectarianism land and territory were pointed to as still being significant issues which cause division and separation. Sharing is about space, about land and territory, but not simply about dividing and distributing. Sharing is about co-operating to share in a way which benefits society as a whole and brings that society to a better place. This we do in the knowledge that the land is not ours

but is given into our care by God. It is not for us to take such a generous gift to ourselves without consideration for others.

The past rings loud in certain communities where territory has been occupied by others and Presbyterians feel they have been driven from the land. There is considerable work to be done in learning about each other, in learning what we have done to each other, in spreading out the responsibility across the board for taking and not sharing. In different parts of the country the takers have been of different shades of political opinion. To continue to carve up and to take back is to avoid the invitation to share and to build better and reconciling relationships. But the journey will be long and at times painful. In the meantime we are invited to share what we can and to push ourselves a little bit further than we think we can go.

3.3. Facing the challenge of integrating groups who are minority or excluded

One aspect of integration which is well known to us in Northern Ireland is that of integrating minority groups who have come to live here. But integration can mean so much more - the integration of groups who see each other as different and who once were suspicious of one another, economic integration and the sharing of wealth etc. Any understanding of integration is shifting and fluid depending on the circumstances in which a society finds itself and will, therefore, have to be unpacked at a particular point in history and in a particular geographical location.

For the building of a more shared society all parties within society will need to accept that there are those on the margins who have to be included and whose voices need to be heard. There are those who are different from us who are to be welcomed and accepted. As we move towards them in the attempt to build better relationships and to seek a reconciliation for our times, then there will be a sharing and acceptance of new ideas, even if that means those ideas are renegotiated and reshaped as relationships form and develop. Governments CSI strategy does not, for example, deal with sexual orientation and OFMDFM have agreed to publish a separate strategy. Our Social Witness Board has already done considerable work on this issue. The document approved by the General Assembly The Church and the Homosexual can be viewed at <http://www.pcibsw.org/downloads.html>. A separate Race Relations Policy also remains to be developed by OFMDFM.

It is undoubtedly the case that walking the way of reconciliation for our society is a difficult and challenging one. As the Church takes up these three ways to help bring society to more cohesive and reconciled place then some commitments have to be made. These commitments are made not as a way to compromise or dilute who we as Presbyterians are but as a means to share this geographical space, to integrate others into our lives and us into theirs and to build a society which holds together in a way which allows the weak to be heard and attended to, those who are different from one another to come to appreciate each other and new ideas to be aired and developed.

4. Key commitments for building good relationships

On this way to a more reconciled society it is essential that:

4.1. Good relations are at the centre of policy making and action at every level in society and in every institution within society.

As a central aspiration of policy making Good Relations is hindered by a feeling across society that ‘they’ are getting everything and ‘we’ are getting nothing. Or to put it another way – ‘everything is being held up because of them’. Good Relations requires a sense of joint enterprise, of joint responsibility, of shared privilege, of willingness to engage. But Good Relations is not just a matter for policy makers. In our own family and congregational lives it is often only too glaringly obvious how drastic the cost of broken relationships is. Good Relations, as a central value and building block of society, begins in our homes, on our streets and in our fellowships.

4.2. Commonalities are seen to be as important as differences when we seek to define ourselves in relation to others.

If commonalities are to be valued across society then they have to be cherished and valued by government, by Church leaders, by leaders in every area of society. We share a very small piece of ground and in sharing that space we have to at least acknowledge that there are things we hold in common. These need to be given priority e.g. a desire for peace, hopes for our children, willingness to help neighbours in distress, security in our homes and on our streets, good public representation etc.

4.3. Reconciliation is valued and sought after.

The dominance of the rights agenda as we build our society while essential and to be valued has sometimes skewed society and its hope of reconciliation. The way in which the rights agenda has been used politically and its tendency to abdicate notions of responsibility, means that reconciliation is subverted both as hope and as reality. Human rights is not about a legal arrangement but about human relationships and the elevation of those relationships to a place in which they are said to be the best that they can be. Reconciliation depends upon mutual respect and civility which ultimately change the very nature of relationships so that they are mended rather than broken, elevated in importance rather than collapsed into a legal arrangement. It is obvious that reconciliation is not easy and that there are many reasons given not to even start down the road. But if we are to be obedient to Scripture then we have no option but to start out on that journey for Scripture teaches us:

5. Key outcomes as good relationships are built

5.1. There will opportunities available to everyone equally within society and steps will be taken to create a context in which those offered opportunities may be accepted and developed e.g. through education and its delivery into a context in which it can be received and effective. The Church must continue its work to see that social justice is done and to provide every opportunity for human flourishing. The public role of the Church will be understood to be important, whether at Congregational, Presbytery or Assembly level.

5.2. Building relationships will be more important than emphasising divisions or defining identity by difference alone e.g. people will be able to articulate another’s point of view as clearly as their own and to work to address the concerns of others with the same vigour as addressing their own. The Churches at least might learn how to speak for one another and to articulate one

another's concerns as well at their own. This would be an excellent prerequisite to speaking together and perhaps and even more powerful witness.

5.3. Trust will matter both locally within and between communities and in government at all its levels. Building this trust is absolutely essential to building a cohesive, shared and integrated society. Putting projects in place to build trust and taking actions to build trust between those who do not know each other must, therefore, become a key aspect of congregational life and in a Congregations life locally. Relationships of trust between people of different cultures, backgrounds and experiences have to be seen to matter to us in our Congregations.

5.4. Society will be more defined by how it is reconciling than by how it has been separated. In other words, the future will come to be more important than the past. How do we know if we are being more defined by what is bringing us together? The media will be a good guide for whatever progress is being made for there is no doubt that the media provides what the majority wants. So if the more regular stories are of progress towards reconciliation rather than of division and its consequences, then we will know we are on the way. The media will, on behalf of society, then come to challenge the notion that we are a fatally divided society.

6. Conclusion

In Paul's letter to the Church at Colossae he urged the people of God to put to death all that belongs to the earthly nature because we belong to Christ. We should not, having died with Christ and belonging to him, live as if we still belonged to the world, dominated by its rules. (Colossians 2 v20) In our culture and context there are adopted norms which have to be resisted if witness is to be given to the Gospel which belongs to no one culture and no one context. In Northern Ireland today that has everything to do with resisting division and sectarianism which lead to violence and murder and instead turning towards good relationships from which a shared and reconciled society can be built.

At Cape Town 2010, The Lausanne Movement agreed a confession of faith and a call to action. They call us to adopt lifestyles of reconciliation and to become beacons and bearers of hope.

Adopt the lifestyle of reconciliation. In practical terms this is demonstrated when Christians:

forgive persecutors, while having courage to challenge injustice on behalf of others;

give aid and offer hospitality to neighbours 'on the other side' of a conflict, taking initiatives to cross barriers to seek reconciliation;

continue to witness to Christ in violent contexts; and are willing to suffer, and even to die, rather than take part in acts of destruction or revenge;

engage in the long-term healing of wounds after conflict, making the Church a safe place of refuge and healing for all, including former enemies.

Be a beacon and bearer of hope. We bear witness to God who was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. It is solely in the name of Christ, and in the victory of his cross and resurrection, that we have authority to

confront the demonic powers of evil that aggravate human conflict, and have power to minister his reconciling love and peace.

This is our Christian vocation in our diverse community as we, together with society, seek to be reconciled and built together in our diversity.

APPENDIX B

SUMMARY OF PRESBYTERY RESPONSES ON SECTARIANISM

In 2009 the General Assembly passed the following resolution:

That accepting the reality of sectarianism and its widespread effects, the General Assembly support further work in this area, direct Presbyteries to examine the nature and extent of sectarianism within their bounds and to develop ways to address sectarianism, and report back to the Church and Society Committee by the end of February 2010.

The Committee provided a definition of sectarianism which Presbyteries could choose to use - some did and some didn't. The definition was developed by Liechty and Clegg in their study of sectarianism, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism: Religion, Conflict, and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland* (Columba Press 2001). They understood it to be a useful analytical tool when considering the nature and extent of sectarianism.

Sectarianism ...

... is a system of attitudes, actions, beliefs and structures

At personal, communal, and institutional levels

Which always involves religion, and typically involves a negative mixing of religion and politics

.. which arises as a distorted expression of positive, human needs especially for belonging, identity, and the free expression of difference

... and is expressed in destructive patterns of relating:

Hardening the boundaries between groups

Overlooking others

Belittling, dehumanising, or demonising others

Justifying or collaborating in the domination of others

Physically or verbally intimidating or attacking others.

This definition is a generic one, i.e. it has elements that could equally well be applied to other types of 'isms' such as racism, of which sectarianism is a close relative. It is an attempt, which some may regard as unwieldy, to focus attention on the different layers of the system, without allowing anyone the luxury of imagining that they are not somehow implicated in it. It is also an analytical tool, which can be used by individuals and groups to help them make judgments about the sectarian nature of actions or events, their own or other people's. One of the keys to making judgments about whether actions of events are sectarian is the relationship between intentions and consequences.

Responses were received from the following Presbyteries:

Ards, Armagh, Ballymena, Derry & Donegal, Newry, Omagh, Route and South Belfast.

Understanding Sectarianism

Some aspects of the Liechty and Clegg definition were pointed to as being particularly pertinent in understanding sectarianism:

- when boundaries between groups are hardened
- when others are overlooked
- when others are belittled, dehumanized or demonized
- when dominating others is justified or collaborated with
- when others are physically or verbally attacked or intimidated
- when difference is maximised
- when difference is minimised.

The Ballymena Presbytery developed its own understanding of sectarianism:

loyalty to any group, philosophy or creed before loyalty to Christ.

They emphasised that these misplaced loyalties can be seen in the lives of Christians as well as in society. So, for example, the kind of behaviours which lead to violent acts against people of other cultures or traditions cannot be set apart from the behaviours of Christians which might be driven by cultural loyalties and ties. This is to say that sectarianism is something which effects everyone and can even be seen in the simplest of comments e.g. 'that's more Protestant looking.'

The insidious nature of sectarianism was noted and a warning given by more than one of the responding presbyteries that when it comes to sectarianism everyone needs to be vigilant lest they fail to identify the beam in their own eye. Sectarianism is no respecter of class or creed. The Ards Presbytery wrote of 'soft' sectarianism to emphasise that no one escapes it and they defined this type of sectarianism as:

attitudes differentiating ourselves from others, without justification, (which) exist within all levels of society ..

It was important for most Presbyteries to state that sectarianism is not simply about holding a belief which conflicts with someone else's. There is a right to culture and a right to a different opinion or worldview. What matters is how rights and cultures are expressed and experienced by others. Culture and opinion are passed on from one generation to another, as is sectarianism. Sectarianism has to be addressed as each new generation can be hampered by baggage it doesn't understand. When it is passed on friendships are restricted and decided along sectarian lines and the potential for movement away from sectarianism is decreased. Thus sectarianism becomes historically rooted and fed by parallel interpretations of history it sustains and builds itself with perception playing a dynamic role in its continuation.

It was also pointed out that at times sectarianism can be confused with anti-social behaviour. Equally, all events defined by the PSNI as sectarian may not, on further examination, actually be of that nature at all as the process of defining them can sometimes be subjective. Presbyteries acknowledged therefore, that sectarianism can be difficult to pin down.

Experiencing Sectarianism

Across the presbyteries the experience of sectarianism is broad and deep. It is played out on the traditional stages of housing, education, politics, marriage and religion, although in every area improvement can be seen, not least because of the development of laws to counter sectarian practices. For many, however, there is a deep memory of sectarianism which makes it alive for them every day:

- the empty chair reminds families of sectarianism at its worst in the murder of a loved one because of a uniform they wore or a community they belonged to. From individual murders to atrocities such as Kingsmills and Tullyvallen sectarianism has a shocking outworking when left to run its course. Sectarianism at its worst has scarred families, Congregations and communities leaving them with a ‘legacy of suspicion.’
- parading and the experience of being dismissed, overlooked, pushed into a corner
- language and the campaigns associated with it e.g. the campaign to change the name of Londonderry or for bi-lingual signage which some experience as sectarian
- the forcing of a community out of its area e.g. the movement of the Protestant community out of Derry’s City side and the consequent feeling of being under siege by those who remain; the change of some rural towns to being predominantly or entirely Catholic. In rural areas in particular sectarianism is still very much played out around land and territory. Intimidation and attack, particularly in border areas, with the intention of driving out the Protestant population led to a destruction of both trust and respect. Incidents of attack and intimidation against Protestant businesses and homes were sometimes mirrored in similar attacks by Protestants on Catholic homes and businesses but it would have to be said that there was never such a sustained campaign.
- shared space is sometimes the point of sectarian experience, even over such seemingly non-threatening spaces as play facilities. But in every area of leisure there can be tensions, seen not least in the difficulties around the support of teams and the wearing of team colours whether that be Gaelic Sports or Football
- housing segregation is a remaining and on-going evidence of sectarianism as we find it hard to live comfortably together. It is not now always the case that families will be ‘put out’ but it is the case feeling comfortable is a factor in what neighbours we choose to live beside. While the act of ‘putting out’ may not be so prevalent, and presbyteries welcomed this, the housing situation remains a challenge to a society seeking to move beyond sectarianism
- targeting was a word that emerged a number of times to describe the experience of sectarianism, whether it be the targeting of homes, businesses, Orange halls or other symbolic buildings

- the undertow of paramilitarism remains, in many areas, as a sign that sectarianism is alive and well on both sides of the community

One Presbytery drew on the work of the local councils within its bounds to communicate how people ranked a variety of actions as sectarian. It was interesting to note from these figures that emblematic representations of a community's culture and identity were high up the list i.e. territorial markings such as kerb painting, murals and flags. Also high up the list were a lack of dialogue and respect. These things were viewed as militating against good relations within and across communities. Other figures drew attention in particular to parading and to all that goes along with it - flags, dialogue and the lack of it, for example.

From the perspective of the Omagh Presbytery it is impossible to speak of sectarianism without referencing the Omagh Bomb. Clearly that one event has had a deep and significant effect on the local community. It is important to say that bringing the perpetrators to justice would help the movement towards closure for those who continue to grieve and suffer and also give a resistance to ongoing sectarianism.

Some were careful to note that sectarianism is an experience that Presbyterians inflict on others as well as experiencing it for themselves. The notion that what we have is for our 'own' excludes others and that moment of exclusion is a moment of sectarian experience e.g. in some areas the BB is not considered to be for Catholics. The way in which we negatively label others can also mean that bad behaviour toward them is permitted in a way which undermines good relations. Parading is not only a matter about which Presbyterians can be offended but also a matter by which they can cause offense.

While identifying the experience of sectarianism across the Presbyteries it is also clear from the responses that there is an improvement which has to be welcomed. Improvements were attributed to:

- demography
- a transition among paramilitary organisations
- a reduction in sectarian symbolism
- the efforts Churches make to facilitate conversation and dialogue
- the existence of peace groups and 'clergy' groups
- joint vigils and events to discourage sectarianism and encourage better relationships,
- the willingness to make some moves on the parading issue e.g. bands agreeing to play music which is not perceived to be sectarian
- the Women's World Day of Prayer and various joint worship activities e.g. on Good Friday
- joint bowling clubs held in Church halls

Some Presbyteries drew particular attention to projects within their bounds. e.g. Cheers Drop-in Centre in Ballymoney brings young people of all denominations and none together and they report the formation of a cross-community Youth Council; Good morning Ballycastle; the iprod project run by The Link in Newtownards; the formation of a 'Community Issues Panel' in the Ards Presbytery to look at trends and concerns and formulate and propose responses. The Church wide initiative 'Preparing Youth for Peace' has also

made its contribution in enabling Presbyterians to move beyond sectarianism and where it has been used as a cross-community course it may have assisted others who are not Presbyterian.

Given then, all that has been experienced, all that has been learned and the journey beyond sectarianism that is yet to be made, what have Presbyteries proposed to move the Church and society forward

The challenge that many face, particularly those who have been injured or bereaved over the years of the Troubles, has to be recognised. Presbyteries recognised the challenge but also emphasised the Christian obligation to reach out to others in Christian love and friendship and to co-operate without compromise.

Proposals to the Statutory and Governmental levels of society:

1. Presbyteries should encourage councils to develop their community relations work;
2. Ensure that social service provision is not situated in localities where people cannot access it because of feeling threatened but in space where everyone feels not only safe but welcome;
3. Develop contact between Churches on a range of social issues;
4. Support shared places and neutral venues;
5. Encourage greater understanding, participation and integration of schools from diverse religious backgrounds;
6. Develop more effective cross party and multi sectoral approaches to the problem of sectarianism;
7. An interdepartmental initiative should be developed to encourage mixed social housing areas where work can be done to understand and appreciate cultural diversity
8. Community policing should be given a high priority in resource allocation thus undermining any perceived need for paramilitaries.

Presbyteries

1. Should explore how they can give voice to the marginalized as this will help mitigate against a poverty of aspiration and will combat lethargy thus assisting the building of more cohesive community.
2. Mission Plans should recognise the particular challenges of Churches located in low income, historically entrenched communities and seek to resource those Congregations accordingly. Partnerships with stronger Congregations may be worth considering.
3. Mission Plans generally should address themselves to the problem of sectarianism.
4. Consider ways to become facilitators of listening to one another's stories. As long as stories remain unheard across the sectarian divide they feed exclusive ideologies.
5. Should consider setting up interaction groups.
6. Encourage Congregations to support anyone who has been the victim of sectarian incident. This could include helping to clean up buildings, sending

letters to those suffering and messages to the wider community that such things are unacceptable.

7. Should continue in dialogue with local representatives in areas where symbols are being used offensively and attempt to develop new understandings of the impact this can have and therefore new behaviours.

8. Encourage its members to go as far as they can in sharing in community events and making the most of opportunities to be bridge-builders for the sake of the Gospel.

9. Encourage Congregations to help families to address sectarianism in their homes - it may even be helpful for materials to be developed.

10. Local Congregations, many of them quietly, are trying to build bridges with those who are different from them. This should be continued and extended.

11. Ministers and priests/clergy have to give a lead.

Denominationally

It is recognised that in 1965 the General Assembly passed a resolution asking Catholics in Ireland to forgive Presbyterians for, 'attitudes and actions ... unworthy of our calling as followers of Jesus Christ.' But more can always be done. Words of condemnation and commiseration across the denominations over the years of the conflict are also to be appreciated and commended as attempts to stand against sectarianism. Additionally as a denomination we should consider:

1. Setting up a working group with the remit of looking at the problems experienced by single identity communities who have a history of conflict and sectarianism.

2. Including in ministerial training imparting skills and tools so that if they choose to work in single identity contexts they will be able to assist people to both understand and work at engaging with others who are different from them. The 1994 Peace Vocation should take a prominent position in this education.

3. That the PCI should bring pressure to bear on government to hear the voice of marginalized loyalist communities so that further sectarian conflict can be resisted. Overt displays may have reduced, but it would be a mistake to assume that the problem has gone. Sectarianism will re-emerge if poverty of aspiration, together with the fears and concerns of loyalist communities are not recognised and articulated.

4. The wording of public statements should be weighed carefully so as not to imply any sectarian attitude or motive.

5. Support courageous activity in the political arena.

6. Look at how to impact primary school children for good and against sectarianism.

7. Move some Peace and Reconciliation events out west, out of Belfast.

8. Consider how to help those who have suffered in the Troubles.

9. That the General Assembly correlate the results from each District Council in Northern Ireland of their good relations surveys with the aim of making the results available to Presbyterian. The purpose of this is to identify

what each side of the community think, to further identify common fears and desires and in the process to lessen and weaken sectarian views.

10. Consider producing material for youth groups and schools which draws out the biblical meaning of loving our neighbours. There is the need to try to reach beyond Church members on this.

Generally across the denomination at every level:

1. Everyone should endeavour to treat their neighbours without distinction and with Christian love.

2. Ministers and Church leaders, while recognising differences in doctrine and practice, should be seen to meet on social, domestic and more general religious issues.

3. Faithful and consistent biblical teaching about the necessity of full and foremost commitment to Jesus Christ and about love of our neighbour.

4. Encouraging everyone who claim to be Christian to be Christlike in behaviour. This is perhaps especially important to emphasise among those whose evangelical conviction does not permit participation in 'ecumenical' worship. So those who are theologically different as well as culturally and experientially should not be excluded from being treated in a Christlike manner. (This is seen, for example, in the story of the woman at the well and Jesus response to her John 4)

5. Support of the PSNI and provision of information through crime-stoppers. All members should be encouraged to provide the information necessary for the police to continue to work against the violent outworking of sectarianism in society.

6. We must ask ourselves whether our identity is in Christ or in culture. While we are all beings who are culturally situated and therefore influenced by the culture in which we find ourselves, being firmly rooted in Christ and his mission would dispel fears and confusion about our identity and purpose and enable the Church to have a greater impact on the lives and culture around us.

7. Developing an approach in which we attempt not only to express ourselves but also to stop and try to see ourselves as others see us.

Education

Presbyteries recognised that some within the denomination feel strongly that as a society we should be working towards integrated education. It is with some sorrow that it has to be acknowledged that for the Catholic Church this is a non-starter. One Presbytery pointed to research which shows that there is peer pressure among young people to remain separate from one another during their years in education. The separation could be seen in some sectarian incidents such as the shouting of abuse at one another and occasional violence linked to the wearing of school uniforms etc. Sectarianism would be diluted by the nurturing of more cross-community links through education and cultural events.

Some saw integration as one of the factors in undermining sectarianism.

Sport

Presbyteries believe this is one area in which sectarian attitudes can be broken down. The NI Football Association have set a good example and rugby is becoming a sport in which people from all backgrounds are involved. Every attempt through sport to allow people to be together and to build friendships of respect is to be commended and encouraged.

Politically

Presbyteries spoke of the need to foster a more generous spirit in politics. It is clear that difficulties are very real for some politicians as they work together. Some were once in fear of others and are now asked to work alongside them as if nothing happened. More generous words would help to break down mistrust and crack the sectarian grip.

The Gospel Solution

Presbyteries looked for the Gospel Solution to sectarianism. We are all sinful people and Paul wrote about our sinful nature in terms which echo the sectarianism about which we are concerned - hatred, jealousy, discord, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissension, factions etc. Sectarianism, as it plays on our sinful nature, does what it can to drive people apart and set them against one another. Ultimately the solution will require a spiritual dimension to it - this is the only way to complete the picture as we turn ourselves towards the eradication of sectarianism in society and in our hearts. That will require the word from God about Jesus, prayer that former enemies will be reconciled to God and to one another and that God's grace will do the work of transformation in our hearts. Our own prejudice and intolerance also need to be a matter of prayer so that they will be revealed to us and the work of God accomplished, by His grace in us.

LESLEY CARROLL, ALAN BOAL, Co-Conveners

GLOBAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

1. This report will focus on four areas of the work of the Committee
 - Building Good Relations (Peace and Peacemaking)
 - Environment Panel
 - Race Relations' Panel
 - Christian-Muslim Relations
2. Concern has been expressed in the Committee about the fact that the Global Concerns Committee work on global matters relating to Ireland, but not necessarily on global matters in general. The area of international relations as part of the work of this Committee has been mentioned. Since there are many overlapping areas between Committees and Boards in this area, an on-going discussion on the Committee's work and future involvement in international relations is taking place. The focus and task of the Committee's work will also be determined by the possible review of the work of the Committees of the General Assembly.

BUILDING GOOD RELATIONS (Peace and Peacemaking) PANEL

1. An annual morning Conference took place on Saturday, 27 November 2010 in Lowe Memorial. It was well attended as usual. The Moderator, the Rt Rev Dr Norman Hamilton and Mr Joe Campbell spoke at this Conference.

2. An on-going discussion took place on the future name and task of this Panel. It was decided that “Building Good Relations” would be the new name. The Rev Stephen Johnston has been appointed the Convener of the new Panel. At this stage, this Panel will report to the General Board through the Global Concerns Committee.

ENVIRONMENT PANEL

The Rev Dr Robert Buick reports:

1. Two members of the Environment Panel represented PCI at the meeting of the 8th Assembly of the European Christian Environmental Network in the International Baptist Theological Seminary, Jeneralka, Prague (9-13 June 2010). The theme was “Our Daily Bread - Living in a Time of Climate Change.” The Assembly gave delegates the opportunity to hear keynote speakers reflect on the issue of climate change and how it both affects and is affected by modern food production. Areas of interest covered included, Climate change, Eco-management, Food, Lifestyle transition. Delegates attended Creative workshops dealing with issues across the environmental spectrum and there were visits organised to see how Czech Churches are addressing Climate Change and Care for Creation. Areas such as consumption of food, the effect of transport (food miles) and excess food packaging were also subject to consideration by delegates. It was challenging to see comparisons in the quantity of food purchased for a typical week by a typical European (German) family with that by families in Africa, South America, Indonesia, and other parts of the world. Not only was the quantity many times greater, but the distance the food had travelled was very much greater. It was stressed that local food production and consumption should be encouraged where possible combined with an emphasis upon sustainable farming methods, as this had a beneficial effect upon local agriculture and the environment. It also had a benefit for the people in many third-world countries where cash-crop production for export had a detrimental effect upon local agriculture, environment and social issues.

2. It is important to build on the links developed with other Churches throughout Europe, many of whom are much more advanced in their witness to society through care for God’s Creation. The website, www.ecen.org has much more information available.

3. Delegates were to encourage their Churches to celebrate “Creation Time” (1 September – 4 October) in keeping with the UN International Year of Biodiversity. This, of course, falls within the time that many of our Presbyterian Churches celebrate their Harvest Thanksgiving Services. The Committee decided to ask the Panel to look into the possibility of having an “Environmental Sunday” in PCI.

4. The Environment Panel visited more local sites of environmental interest over the winter session, including a waste management plant, and have set up an Environment Panel page on the PCI web site which will be developed throughout the coming year. Future visits planned include a fisheries agency and a commercial power station.

5. The Committee recognise the importance of youth involvement in this area and would like to encourage future involvement of SPUD in environmental issues. The Panel will look into the matter.

6. The Panel also worked on guidelines for environmentally friendly Churches, in conjunction with the Church Architecture Committee.

7. 2011 is the UN International Year of Forests.

8. The Panel is seeking to encourage the Presbytery environmental agents, by inviting them to attend local site visits by the Panel so that these agents can raise environmental issues at their Presbyteries.

RACE RELATIONS PANEL

The Rev Richard Kerr reports:

1. Over the past year the Panel has been engaged in a strategic review. The main purpose of this process is to clarify the role, direction and priorities of the Panel. Much progress has been made and the Panel is convinced of its strategic importance to our Church's mission with immigrants and minority ethnic people.

2. In September 2010 Ministers were sent an e-mail making them aware of a number of resources available for encountering Immigrants and Black and Minority Ethnic people in local communities and enabling them to find a home in Congregations. Those interested in this or additional information are encouraged to contact the Convener.

3. The Larne Detention unit is to go ahead despite protests and scare-mongering from a number of parties. The Panel is of the view that detention is not desirable and should only be a last resort. However, detention in a central, fit-for-purpose unit is preferable to detention in PSNI cells across NI. Meetings have been held with UK Border Agency officials regarding proposals for providing chaplaincy services to this facility.

4. The economic situation has had a significant impact on immigrants, many of whom are on short term contracts and most vulnerable to redundancy. Although both jurisdictions are affected, immigrants in the ROI have been hardest hit. Agencies and Churches providing support are seeing additional social challenges while often operating on reduced budgets.

5. Although the recession has contributed to changing immigration patterns; the picture is complex. Many immigrants have left to find employment in other EU countries or returned home. Many others have stayed; especially those who have ties here such as families, education, mortgages.

6. Relationships with other agencies and groups have been maintained. Of particular importance are our links with Embrace, The All-Ireland Churches Consultation on Racism (AICCMR) and the Churches Asylum Network (CAN).

These networks have been invaluable for the sharing of information and resources.

7. The Panel maintains its support of Vuleka Trust and the Diakonia Council of Churches in South Africa as they continue their work of inter-racial reconciliation. In March the Convener met with two representatives of Diakonia who were attending a conference in Belfast.

Christian-Muslim Relations

1. Meetings took place in Dublin between representatives of the Abrahamic faiths. In PCI it was agreed earlier to establish a group with BMO and BMI representatives to try and take this area forward. On-going discussion is taking place in the Committee. The Committee agreed that the relations between the Abrahamic faiths should be the focus area. The Committee acknowledged that this issue is of utmost importance in our context, but that there are important questions to be addressed. Some of these questions were mentioned by the Committee:

- How does the Church relate to issues in the Middle East?
- Do these issues belong to the sphere of work of the Global Concerns Committee?
- Should a separate Panel be established to look into the area of the relationship between Abrahamic faiths, or should it be an inter-Board Panel?

The Committee is therefore looking into the possible review of the Panel's work.

ANNES NEL, Convener

PANEL ON THE FINANCIAL CRISIS

The Rev Dr Donald Watts reports:

1. At the time of writing this report the Administrator of the Presbyterian Mutual Society has just issued his Scheme of Arrangement to PMS members. The members themselves must vote, but the Panel hopes that the Scheme will now map out a clear way forward, in which all PMS savers will receive most of their funds without further delay. The Panel pays tribute to the patience of many savers, but also to the hard work of responsible lobby groups, politicians, Executive ministers, civil servants, the Administrator, his staff and many others who have worked hard to bring this tragic episode to a point where a resolution seems possible.

2. The Church also played an important role and thanks are expressed to members of the Panel and to the informal group of "advisers" who gave enormous time and commitment in seeking a solution. Gathered together by the Very Rev Dr John Dunlop were Sir George Quigley, Mr Frank Cushnahan and Mr Ross Reed. Without their particular expertise and insights the pressure for genuine engagement would have been so much more difficult. The media role of the Very Rev Dr Stafford Carson was also a significant and demanding one.

3. In the months after the last Assembly not much seemed to be happening as the new Westminster government settled into power. The Church therefore updated and resubmitted its arguments for a "commercial" solution as

the best way forward. It increasingly became evident, however, that it was not likely to happen. In meetings during the Autumn with both the Secretary of State and Executive ministers it became clear that while the “commercial” option was still on the table, government was really working up a Plan B.

4. The scheme which emerged, however, was significantly different from the Plan B that had been outlined to the Church at the time of the Special Assembly. At that time the Church was asked to contribute to a “Hardship Fund” which “would meet the test of use of funds for charitable purposes” and very willingly agreed to contribute £1m. It was becoming clear that what was being called a “Mutual Access Fund” would not be charitable in law.

5. It was also clear, however, that the new arrangement would be of greater benefit to savers and so the Church did not want to oppose it. The nature of the fund was confirmed in a letter of 26 January, 2011 from the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment which also asked the Church to “give careful consideration to the principle of increasing the contribution from £1m to £5m”.

6. The General Assembly’s Solicitor confirmed that on the basis of the briefing note supplied by DETI the fund would not be charitable and so it was decided to apply to the Attorney General for permission to use charitable Church funds to contribute the £1m. The Attorney General decided that in the circumstances it would be preferential to have the matter dealt with by the Chancery Court. The Hon Mr Justice Deeny heard the case on 18 March, 2011 and generously agreed to give a verbal judgement in time for the General Board meeting the next day. He granted authority to the Trustees to “make an ex gratia contribution of £1m from its unrestricted charitable funds to an access fund which is being proposed as part of the Government’s ‘rescue package’ in respect of the Presbyterian Mutual Society”. For information, his full written judgement is appended.

7. At the General Board the following resolutions were passed:

(3) That the General Board confirms the contribution of £1m agreed at the Special Assembly would now be paid to a Mutual Access or other Fund which is part of the scheme of arrangement of the Presbyterian Mutual Society and asks the General Assembly’s Trustees to make payment, as appropriate, when the scheme is finalised.

(3) That the General Board encourages the Financial Crisis Panel to seek ways to enhance the Presbyterian contribution to the scheme of arrangement beyond £1m, so that our long-term goal to enable small savers (up to £20,000) to have their shareholding paid back in full may be achieved.

Responding to the General Board the Trustees have agreed that payment of £1m will be made from the Discretionary Fund when the Scheme is finally agreed.

8. The General Board also considered if an additional contribution should be made. The Panel had previously had discussion with the Administrator to see if the Church could help to ensure that all those who were simply shareholders in the PMS received back all, or virtually all, of their savings. The Panel was of the view that this would best be achieved by encouraging creditors to voluntarily defer up to an additional 10% of their loan. The Administrator has allowed for this in the scheme which is at present being put to members. The General Board passed the following resolution:

That the General Board understands that there may be an opportunity for creditors to voluntarily defer the return of a slightly larger share of their capital than will be proposed in the scheme of arrangement and asks congregations and other Church agencies, where their particular circumstances make it possible, to consider this as a significant contribution.

9. The PMS crisis has indeed been difficult for everyone, but above all for those who needed their savings and couldn't get access to it. At times there have been misunderstandings and hurts but many involved have also shown remarkable resilience and patience. The Panel asks that it be continued for a further year to reflect and report on lessons to be learned.

APPENDIX

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

CHANCERY DIVISION

**IN THE MATTER OF THE TRUSTS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH IN IRELAND**

-and-

IN THE MATTER OF THE CHARITIES ACT (NI) 1964

BETWEEN:

THE TRUSTEES OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND

Plaintiff;

-and-

**HER MAJESTY'S ATTORNEY GENERAL FOR NORTHERN
IRELAND**

Defendant.

DEENY J

[1] In this Summons brought by the plaintiff, the Trustees of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland ("the Church") seek authority from the court to make an ex gratia contribution of up to £1,000,000 from its unrestricted charitable funds to an access fund which is being proposed as part of the Government's "rescue package" in respect of the Presbyterian Mutual Society (In Administration) ("the Society"). Ms Sheena Grattan appeared for the Trustees. The defendant to the action is Her Majesty's Attorney General for Northern Ireland who is represented by Ms Denise McBride of counsel. She confirmed to the court that the Attorney's role in this matter was confined to his role as a custodian of the public interest in regard to charities and not in his capacity as advisor to the Northern Ireland Executive.

[2] The plaintiff had asked for this matter to be listed for early hearing before the court as an urgent decision was required to facilitate the creation of the access fund prior to the adjournment of the Assembly on 24 March. The

court was told at the hearing on 9 March that the General Board of the Presbyterian Church was actually meeting the next day 10 March and were anxious to have a judgment by then. This is far from ideal. The court has been able to facilitate this request by announcing its ruling on 10 March. These are the underlying reasons.

[3] It is necessary, for present purposes, to recall the factual background to this application. The Presbyterian Mutual Society Limited received monies by way of investments or loans akin to deposits from persons, largely in Northern Ireland. It was not, but might have been mistaken for, a building society. Rather it was a Society governed by the provisions of the Industrial and Provident Societies Act (NI) 1969. This meant that it was not covered by Government guarantees extending to banks and similar institutions when there was a run on such institutions after they had lost the confidence of the public. The Society went into administration on 17 November 2008.

[4] By the Rules of the Society the persons who invested up to £20,000 in the Society were credited with shares in the Society. Indeed that was the maximum shareholding. Sums invested over and above that level, attracted by the interest rates which the Society paid, were treated as loan capital to the Society. This had an unintended effect that these different investments, without the original investors very largely being aware of it, had a very different status in law once it became apparent that the Society would be unable to recover all its loans. While loans had been extended to Presbyterian congregations, individuals and various enterprises who had owned or acquired buildings paying a secure rent, much of the Society's money had gone to developers on schemes which proved speculative and currently worth less in aggregate than the monies advanced. As I had to conclude in *Boyd v Howie* [2010] NI Ch 2 the shareholders could not be creditors in law and therefore the Administrator was not enabled to distribute a dividend he had accumulated to them. Furthermore they could only ever recover after the loan capital holders were repaid in full, which was regarded as an unlikely scenario.

[5] It was subsequently indicated that public money might be available from both the Northern Ireland budget and the general body of taxpayers in the United Kingdom through HM Government to assist the investors. A contribution was sought from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

[6] The Presbyterian Church in Ireland had no legal responsibility for the Presbyterian Mutual Society Limited. That is clear. But I accept the averments of the Rev Dr Donald Watts, Clerk of the General Assembly and General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland that this distinction was not apparent to very many members of the Church. They tended to consider the Church responsible for the Society.

[7] "Enormous pressure" was put on Moderators, in succession, of the Church and others such as himself because of, in particular, the hardship which many persons were suffering because they had committed their modest life savings solely to the Presbyterian Mutual Society. They were in the very unhappy position that they could not gain access to these modest savings, even for their day-to-day living. Furthermore there was virtually no prospect of them ever doing so given the state of the Society.

[8] It is important to bear in mind, as I pointed out in my earlier judgment, what the membership of the Society was. This was governed by Rule 4 of the Rules. It reads as follows:

“Membership shall only be available to members of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland over the age of 18 years and their families together with officers and employees of the Society but the Board of Directors of the Society, (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Board’), has the absolute right to refuse any application for membership without having to furnish any reason for the refusal. Any Corporation or unincorporated body shall be admitted to membership if the Board is satisfied that the Corporation is representative of members of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.”

Therefore the perception that the Presbyterian Church owed a moral obligation for the Society is not only a matter of nomenclature or encouragement to invest but also because members of the Society had to be Presbyterians.

[9] As appears from the first affidavit of Dr Watts, sworn on 22 February 2011, a Special General Assembly of the Church was convened on 13 April 2010. The Special General Assembly passed a resolution to contribute £1m towards a hardship fund. I set out the resolution which was apparently passed unanimously by the General Assembly:

“That in the event of the Government failing to secure a ‘commercial’ solution and the Northern Ireland Executive bringing forward a final comprehensive proposal which includes a ‘Hardship’ Fund element, the General Assembly agree in principle to contribute £1m while affirming their view that the members of the PMS are thrifty savers and not risk taking investors.”

[10] While looking at these minutes of the General Assembly it is interesting to note that immediately prior to this resolution the Assembly also recorded, inter alia:

“That the General Assembly welcomed the commitment of the Prime Minister (Mr Gordon Brown) to seeking a resolution of the PMS crisis and his acknowledgment of a moral obligation to do so.”

[11] It is common case that the use of the monies held by the Church to relieve the poverty of its individual members who happened to be small investors in the Society and were now suffering hardship as a result would be charitable in nature for that reason.

[12] However, in the events that have transpired the proposal emanating from Government is wider in nature. It has been described by the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment in her letter of 26 January 2011 to Dr Watts as a “mutual access fund”. The Minister acknowledges, and I am informed by counsel now, that the final details of the scheme are not in the public domain and are indeed not fixed. However what can be said is that the fund would consist of the £1m from the Presbyterian Church (subject to the approval of the court), some £25m from the Government of the United Kingdom and a further £25m from the Northern Ireland Executive. The administrator of the Presbyterian Mutual Society is confident that this would give a high return for small savers. These grants are coupled with the offer of a loan from the Government of the United Kingdom of a further £175m. The effect of this in combination with the

grants just mentioned would be to also substantially recompense the loan capital holders who are creditors of the Society.

[13] The difficulty for the Church is that as its money could not be identifiably only used for the relief of poverty it would not in law be a charitable disposition which it was entitled to make without more. It is common case that if the legal test to which I shall turn in a moment had in the view of the Attorney General for Northern Ireland been met he could have authorised this expenditure. He was empowered to but he thought it “preferential” (i.e. preferable) to put the matter before the court. I have considered not only the written submissions of Ms Grattan but the written submissions of Mr Larkin QC and Ms McBride and the oral submissions of both junior counsel.

[14] The general principle is that a charity is not allowed to make disbursements for non-charitable purposes. That would be inconsistent with the purpose for which the charity was set up. Furthermore it would be an abuse of the privileged position in tax which a charity can enjoy. However in Re Snowden Deceased (1970) Ch. 700 the High Court was invited to consider whether there was an exception to this general rule. It is interesting to note the submissions of NCH Browne-Wilkinson QC, as he then was, counsel for the Attorney General at page 706:

“It has been a long established view that the Attorney-General has no power to authorise application of the funds of a charity for non-charitable purposes. This precise problem has been put to counsel for the Attorney-General for over 40-50 years. Each counsel has treated it as clear law. In the present case the point of moral obligation has been raised. The Attorney-General thinks there is something wrong if a charity cannot given effect to a ‘moral claim’” [in appropriate cases].

[15] In the event Cross J, as then he was, was persuaded that a moral obligation, in that case in relation to wills, could ground such an exception to the general rule. He said, at page 710:

“In the result I am satisfied that the court and the Attorney-General have power to give authority to charity trustees to make ex gratia payments out of funds held in charitable trusts. It is, however, a power which is not to be exercised lightly or on slender grounds but only in cases where it can be fairly said that if the charity were an individual it would be morally wrong of him to refuse to make the payment.”

[16] It was suggested on behalf of the Attorney that this was a high hurdle for the plaintiff here to meet but I prefer to content myself with the actual language of Cross J with which I agree. It is common case that the principle is one that has wider application for charities and is not confined to the facts of the particular cases before Cross J.

[17] A further case referred to by counsel was Attorney General v Trustees of the British Museum [2005] Ch. 397, a decision of Sir Andrew Morritt V-C. In that case the British Museum had acquired four old Master drawings after the Second World War. It was established to the satisfaction of the Trustees by the heirs of Dr Feldmann that they had been seized from Dr Feldmann by the Nazis in occupation of Czechoslovakia after the invasion of that country by Germany and because he was Jewish. Therefore the Trustees felt morally obliged to address the claim of the heirs. However, they were bound by the provisions of

Section 3 of the British Museum Act 1963 which prohibited the disposal of objects in the museum's collections, save for certain exceptions which were not applicable. The judgment of the Vice Chancellor includes the following:

"[46] In the case of the Benevento Missal the Spoliation Advisory Panel concluded that restitution by the Trustees of the British Library was barred by Section 3(5) of the British Library Act 1972 applying Section 3(4) of the British Museum Act 1963. In the report dated 23 March 2005 (HC 406), at para. 77, the Panel under the chairmanship of Sir David Hirst, recommended to the Secretary of State that legislation should be introduced to amend the British Museum Act 1963, British Library Act 1972 and the Museums and Galleries Act 1992 so as to permit restitution of cultural objects of which possession was lost during the Nazi era (1933-1945). The Panel also recognised the possibility that legislation might relate to a specific object or objects. I have, in fact, reached the same conclusion. In my judgment only legislation or a bona fide compromise of a claim of the heirs of Dr Feldmann to be entitled to the four drawings could entitle the Trustees to transfer any of them to those heirs."

[18] As it happens I have the honour to serve as a member of the Spoliation Advisory Panel under the wise and distinguished chairmanship of The Rt Hon Sir David Hirst, a former Lord Justice of Appeal. I am happy to find that my view has not changed from the view collectively expressed in that report and that it has been approbated by the Vice Chancellor. It is relevant to my jurisdiction here in that it might well have been the case that the role of the court was affected by the provisions of the Charities Act (NI) 2008 which came into force in Northern Ireland on 18 February of this year. If the provisions of the statute had expressly substituted the role of the Charity Commission for that of the court it would not have been open to me to deal with the application of the plaintiffs here. In the absence of such an express provision I accept the submissions of counsel that the application is properly brought before the court.

[19] The attention of the court has been drawn to the briefing note regarding the mutual access fund which accompanied the Minister's letter of 26 January 2011. From that one learns that "there has been extensive opposition from PMS members to the use of means testing and lobbying that the fund should operate on a formula basis and Ministers are now prepared to adopt this approach." It is the absence of means testing which deprives the gift of the sum of £1m of its charitable character.

[20] What is a moral obligation? The industry of counsel did not discover any accepted definition. It might be said that a person or organisation is under a moral obligation to act in a particular way towards another not by reason of law or force but because, on account of some earlier promise or the relationship with that other person or some other reason, their own conscience or that of right thinking people generally would consider they behaved honourably and well if they acted in that way but badly and wrongly if they failed or neglected so to do. How would that apply here? In his affidavits Dr Watts gave a few moving examples of the hurt felt by some of these small savers deprived of an investment, modest by some standards but substantial to them. These people will benefit by the scheme proposed to a considerable extent. If the Church does not contribute it may well be that the scheme does not proceed and therefore the

persons exposed to poverty will not be assisted. By operation of law and the realities of the state of the Society it is extremely unlikely that they would receive any of their money back without such external assistance.

[21] It is interesting to note that the resolution of 2010 referred to the gift going to a solution which included a hardship fund i.e. that it would not be exclusively for those in hardship. I bear in mind that any saver who finds themselves deprived of money which they had invested in an apparently reputable financial institution in the United Kingdom may be aggrieved to find themselves deprived of it when others in apparently similar circumstances have been compensated or indemnified.

[22] Perhaps the matter goes further. It can be seen that the contribution of the Church is a modest one compared to the contribution to be made by taxpayers in Northern Ireland and throughout the United Kingdom. It would be paradoxical if the general body of taxpayers consisting of Anglicans, Catholics, atheists, agnostics, Moslems and Jews (as well as Presbyterians and many others) contributed to this solution but the only Church to which the members of the Society could belong did not make any contribution. I am satisfied that Dr Watts' apprehension that the Presbyterian Church would be considered very widely to have acted badly in such circumstances is a correct one. I am satisfied that the surrounding circumstances, including in particular the promise previously given by this resolution, constitute a moral obligation on the Church which enables and allows the court to authorise the payment of up to £1m towards this mutual assistance fund.

[23] As indicated above, as it happens the Charities Act has come into force within the last month. As the Commission was only in the process of being set up and the Attorney General had previously been applied to it is quite understandable that the plaintiffs continued with their application to the High Court. The court has been able to give them an expeditious hearing of their application. I have decided this matter on the basis that moral obligation does exist here. However for the avoidance of doubt I find that it would be proper for me to take into account the most recent statutory enactment on the topic. The relevant provision is Section 46(1) of the Act of 2008. It reads:

“Subject to the provisions of this Section, where it appears to the Commission that any action proposed or contemplated in the administration of a charity is expedient in the interest of the charity, the Commission may by order sanction that action, whether or not it will otherwise be within the powers exercisable by the charity trustees in the administration of the charity; and anything done under the authority of such an order shall be deemed to be properly done in the exercise of those powers.”

[24] Both counsel submit that expedient means something more than convenient. Ms McBride referred to the guidelines published by the Charity Commission in England and Wales at page 132 of these papers as follows:

“Expedient means something more than ‘convenient’ and means that there must be a definite advantage to the charity.”

Without dissenting from that I would be inclined to think that the language of Cross J was applicable to a decision to be made in this regard i.e. that the power was one “not to be exercised lightly or on slender grounds”. It may well

be that the intentions expressed in any original Trust or other instrument establishing the charity would have to be very carefully taken into account. The expenditure must be expedient in the interests of the charity, not those of its trustees or employees.

[25] It is not for me to usurp any future decision of the Commission and I do not so do, although their decisions are likely to be subject to judicial review. Suffice it to say that I am satisfied that this new statutory test would be one which the plaintiffs here could meet consistently with the decision at which I have arrived. I take into account that there is a loss to the funds of the charity i.e. the Church by the disbursement of this money but that the disbursement will lead to very considerable benefit to a considerable number of members of the Church and thereby in both the reputational and in all likelihood financial sense to the Church itself, bearing in mind Dr Watts' report of some diminution in contributions which may be caused not by the current economic difficulties but by the controversy over the Presbyterian Mutual Society. It is in the broader interests of the Church.

[26] I therefore grant to the Trustees of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland the authority they seek pursuant to this summons to make an ex gratia contribution of up to £1,000,000 from their unrestricted charitable funds to the mutual access fund which is proposed to assist the investors, whether shareholders or creditors in law, in the Presbyterian Mutual Society Limited (In Administration).

FOOTNOTE

Source: The Trustees of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland v Her Majesty's Attorney General for Northern Ireland, In The High Court of Justice In Northern Ireland, Neutral Citation No. [2011] NICH 4, Author Deeny J. Year 2011, Crown Copyright protected. This reproduction of Crown Copyright information is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/>). Northern Ireland Court and Tribunal Service (http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/24772B93-02E6-4736-A922-586F67084818/0/j_j_DEE8126Final.htm accessed 20/04/2011).

PANEL ON PENSIONS AND ASSESSMENTS

The Rev Dr Donald Watts reports:

CONGREGATIONAL ASSESSMENTS

Introduction

As part of the consultation on the proposals of the Tyrone Memorial Review Panel, Congregations were asked to respond to the following question:

Do you support, in principle, the move from assessments being based on stipend to assessable income so that Congregations contribute according to their means?

207 Congregations responded to the consultation and in relation to the above question, 73% of Congregations supported the change, 21% did not support the change and 6% did not respond to the question.

Written responses to this question indicated concern

- at the increased assessments Congregations with larger income would have to pay and the consequence this would have for local mission and specifically for present staffing levels
- that the definition of assessable income needs to be clarified
- that some Congregations might seek to divert income to non assessable sources
- about the on-going level of assessments

A. Current Assessment Arrangements

1. At present assessments are based on the full year stipend “paid” to the Minister in the previous year. Where a Congregation is vacant, the previous stipend is used or if leave to call has been issued in the previous year that figure is used. The Funds currently financed by way of assessment include:

- (a) Central Ministry Fund
- (b) Retired Ministers’ Fund
- (c) Widows of Ministers’ Fund
- (d) Incidental Fund
- (e) PCI Pension Scheme (2009) Fund
- (f) Prolonged Disability Fund
- (g) Sick Supply Fund
- (h) Church House Repairs Fund
- (i) Ministerial Development Fund
- (j) Student Bursary Fund

2. Provisional rates of assessment for the incoming year are set annually by the Board of Finance and Personnel at its stated October meeting e.g. the provisional rates for 2011 were set by the Board at a meeting in October 2010. These provisional rates were applied from the 1st quarter assessment of 2011. The General Assembly will be asked to confirm the provisional rates for 2011 in June 2011.

B. Proposed Arrangements

1. It is proposed to change the basis of assessment for all funds except the PCI Pension Scheme (2009) Fund from stipend to assessable income (see section C below and Appendix 1).

2. The change is not intended to result in an overall increase in assessments being collected from Congregations as a whole.

3. It is evident that to apply a uniform percentage on all Congregations would mean the assessments on some Congregations could double. The Panel affirm the view expressed in some of the consultation responses that this is not desirable as those Congregations may not be able to respond without e.g. the need to reduce the number of staff employed in local mission.

4. The Panel fully support Congregations with larger financial resources assisting Congregations with limited resources but recognise that Congregations

have a responsibility to endeavour to be as self sufficient as possible and not become over dependent on support from the Central Ministry Fund.

5. In order to address some of the issues raised during the consultation it is proposed that a sliding scale of assessments be applied (with the exception of contributions to the pension Fund – see 6 below). All Congregations will pay the same rate of assessment up to a certain level of assessable income, but that reduced rates of assessment apply to income above agreed levels. The proposed table is as follows:

Assessment Band	Assessable Income (£)		Assessment Rate
	From	To	
1	0	75,000	16.50%
2	75,000	150,000	12.25%
3	150,000	225,000	8.00%
4	225,000	300,000	3.75%
5	300,000	and above	0.00%

For Congregations in the Republic of Ireland the above rates will be converted to Euro at the average rate of exchange ruling for the year of assessable income.

6. One further change that is proposed is in relation to the pension assessment. It is proposed that the assessment for the pension fund does not change to be based on assessable income. Instead, it would be charged based on the stipend paid using the pension scheme “employers” contribution rate (currently 27.4%). In other words, Congregations would pay contributions based on the stipend paid to their Minister. **No pension assessment would therefore apply during a vacancy.** The Central Ministry Fund will bear the pension cost on amounts paid to Ministers through that fund i.e. augmented and incremental grants and the payment due to Ministers under The Code Par 315(2). The assessment for the Central Ministry Fund will reflect the pension costs of these amounts.

7. Associates

Under the present arrangements assessments are collected for the Central Ministry Fund, Retired Ministers’ Fund, Widows of Ministers’ Fund and Prolonged Disability Fund in respect of Associates. These are calculated as 5% of the normal assessment rates based on the current “salary” up to ministerial minimum. Full assessment on amounts in excess of the minimum are collected. No pension assessment is collected up to the minimum, but is thereafter. National Insurance is payable on the “salary”. It is noted that most Congregations now pay the full salary of their Associate.

It is now proposed that Congregations only contribute to national insurance and pension based on the “salary” set by Union Commission.

8. Ordained Assistants

Under the current arrangements, Congregations are charged for part of the “salary” of their Ordained Assistant, the national insurance on the full salary and half the house allowance. There is no assessment for pension but an assessment for the Prolonged Disability Fund is collected on the proportion of salary paid by the Congregation.

It is now proposed that Congregations contribute to national insurance and pension based on the “salary” set by Union Commission.

9. Licentiates

It is proposed that the present arrangements continue and Congregations contribute to part of the “salary” of Licentiates, the national insurance on the full salary and half the house allowance or as determined by Union Commission.

The changes in 7, 8 and 9 would not affect the entitlement of Associates, Ordained Assistants or Licentiates to grants from the Central Ministry Fund or to eligibility for the Prolonged Disability Fund or Ministerial Development Fund.

C. Impact of Change

1. In order to gauge the possible impact on Congregations of such a change the assessment for 2010 based on the present system has been compared with the assessment based on assessable income (*using specified sources for 2009 as this is the closest figure to assessable income readily available*).

2. Overall, 270 Congregations assessments would have increased and 264 would have decreased. Of these 141 Congregations assessments would have increased by less than 10% and 191 Congregations assessments would have decreased by less than 10%

The following table summarises the results for the 534 Congregations included in the comparison exercise

	Increase	Decrease	Total
Increase or decrease	270	264	534
Increase or decrease of 0% -10%	141	191	332
Increase or decrease of 10% -15%	40	43	83
Increase or decrease of 15% -20%	38	21	59
Increase or decrease of 20% -25%	15	4	19
Increase or decrease of 25% -33.33%	20	3	23
Increase or decrease of 33.33% -50%	8	1	9
Increase or decrease of greater than 50%	8	1	9
TOTAL	270	264	534

4. The Panel proposes that no Congregation’s assessments should **initially** increase by more than 10%. Therefore, where a Congregations assessments increase by more than this amount on introduction of the scheme a “Transitional Rebate” will be applied for a four year period. The transitional rebate will be calculated on introduction of the scheme, but will not be recalculated each year thereafter. The “Transitional Rebate” will be the difference between assessments calculated on the new basis and the previous year’s assessments plus 10%. The transitional rebate will be reduced by 25% each year. In Year 1 (year of introduction), the rebate will be 100%, Year 2 - 75%, Year 3 - 50% and Year 4 - 25%. Thereafter no rebate will apply. Example:

Assessments on proposed basis	£19,000	A
Assessments on current basis	£15,000	B
Increase	£4,000	C (A less B)
Increase limited to 10%	£1,500	D (B x 10%)
Transitional Rebate – Year 1		E (C less D)
	£2,500	
Year 2	£1,875	E *75%
Year 3	£1,250	E*50%
Year 4	£625	E*25%

5. It is proposed that the approved rates of assessment will be applied to assessable income for the year preceding the year just finished e.g. if implemented on 1 January, 2013 the rate would be based on 2011 assessable income.

6. The arrangements for setting the rates of assessments, as outlined in Section A above, will continue to apply.

D Assessable Income

The proposed definition of Assessable Income is as follows

Included	Excluded
Weekly Freewill Offering (WFO)	Amounts received where the donor has included a restriction that it cannot be used for general purposes e.g. collections for Property, United Appeal, Mission Funds, World Development, Third Party Charities.
Gift Aid on WFO	Grants from outside bodies.
Loose Offerings	All Bequests and Legacies.
Special Collections for general purposes	Income which is passed on to a third party e.g. leaving gifts, presentations.
Gifts and Donations for general purposes	
Surplus rental Income (i.e. rental income retained for general purposes less related expenditure including financing cost on related loans)	

Income on bequests for general purposes	
Any other income on which no restriction has been placed by the donor	

Congregations should note that they are not permitted to create designated funds to excluded income from “assessable income”. Designated Funds should be approved by Presbytery with reference, if necessary, to the Pensions and Assessments Committee of the Board of Finance and Personnel.

E. Implementation

It is proposed that the above changes are implemented on 1 January, 2013. A resolution is appended seeking the approval of the General Assembly for the change and relevant Code changes will be brought in the Supplementary Reports.

The Annual Statistical Return for 2011 will be amended so that Congregations are required to report their assessable income figure.

PENSIONS

Following the decisions of last year’s Assembly the Panel considered some additional issues:

National Employment Savings Trust (NEST) and Auto-enrolment

1. In October, 2012 the government plans to launch the NEST scheme and auto-enrolment for all those not in a pension scheme. At present the recommendation would be that the Church should offer an enhanced contribution to the NEST scheme, but a definite decision should be left to the Board of Finance and Personnel when details of the scheme become available.

Cross Border Issue

2. The Panel noted that there would be a difficulty for the Pension Scheme if any member working in the Republic was designated as employed. At present that is not the case, but Boards need to be aware of the issue.

Pensions and Salaries “Commission”

3. As reported last year a concern raised during the Pensions review consultation was that beneficiaries of the scheme are also involved in decision-making on behalf of the “employer”, i.e. the Church. The idea of a “Remuneration Commission” was suggested, but it was not possible in the time available to explore this fully. The Panel hope to bring a carefully considered report to the 2012 Assembly.

APPENDIX 1

Under the provisions of the Code Par 235 Specified Sources are defined as follows:

235. (1) Within the total income of a Congregation certain items are designated income from "Specified Sources, to include contributions in respect of -

- (a) *Weekly Freewill Offering;*
- (b) *Stipend;*
- (c) *Central Ministry Fund;*
- (d) *Sunday and other collections for general congregational purposes.*

(2) Money received by way of repayment of Income Tax on a contribution shall be treated as part of that contribution.

(3) Other income not under Specified Sources may include collections for building and repairs, repayment of debts, and other designated objects, monies raised in Sunday School or Church organisations (other than for general congregational purposes), collections for the United Appeal or other religious and charitable objects, endowment income, etc.

The Panel propose that the definition of specified sources is changed to be the same as the proposed definition of assessable income. This is to avoid having separate definitions for "specified sources" and "assessable income". The proposed Code changes would be as follows:

235. (1) Within the total income of a Congregation certain items are designated as Assessable Income and include –

- (a) Weekly Freewill Offering;
- (b) Income for Stipend;
- (c) Income for the Central Ministry Fund;
- (d) Sunday and other collections for general congregational purposes.
- (e) Rental income retained for general purposes less related expenditure including financing costs on related loans
- (f) Income on general bequests
- (g) Any other general income on which no restriction has been applied by the donor

(2) Money received by way of repayment of Income Tax on a contribution shall be treated as part of that contribution.

(3) Assessable Income does not include: collections for building and repairs, repayment of debts and other designated objects, monies raised in Sunday School or Church organisations (other than for general congregational purposes), collections for the United Appeal, World Development or other religious and charitable objects, bequests, grants, restricted endowment income.

PANEL ON PASTORAL CARE OF MANSE FAMILIES

The Rev Gabrielle Farquhar reports:

1. ***Who cares for the carers?*** A question used when thinking of those who care for people who are physically or mentally in need. But how many ask this question when thinking of their Minister?

How many ask their Minister, the person who cares for their spiritual needs, this question:

2. *‘Who cares for you/your family’?* This is the question which drives the work of the Panel for Pastoral Care of Manse Families. Over the past 18 months an information leaflet has been distributed to Ministers and Spouses of Ministers detailing the care that is available and in particular from members of the Care Panel.

3. The Panel is concerned about the lack of uptake of what is available. In 2010, one Minister and three spouses availed of what is offered. This is despite issues arising, for Ministers in particular, where support could have been given by talking the matter through in a safe, neutral and confidential place.

Current observations and known needs were highlighted by the Panel:

- lack of support for Ministers following difficult Pastoral issues in a Congregation: e.g. Mental Health, Suicide, or a family leaving the Congregation in dissent.
- lack of necessary Management Skills to deal with the conduct of meetings coupled with some instances of bullying and aggravation by members of session resulting in extreme pressure for some Ministers.

What was more revealing was the following:

- expression of feeling isolated. (A real lack of Fellowship appears to exist for Ministers – sometimes due to re-location but more often because friendships have not been maintained as their ministry has developed)
- questioning of their call to Ministry. (When some have been in a Congregation for a couple of years disillusionment about their call appears and expectations of what they thought would have happened through their Ministry, are often crushed.

4. The Panel now intends to re-issue information about the ‘Care Panel’. It also agreed to request a meeting with the Ministerial Development Committee to discuss some of the issues highlighted so that together we care for each other in a healthier and more Christian manner.

5. The Panel also wish to note their appreciation of the response to a request and issue by Union Commission on ‘Guidance in situations of bereavement in a Manse family’.

PANEL ON THE FUTURE OF PEACEMAKING

The Rev Dr Donald Watts reports:

1. The Panel to consider the Future of Peacemaking continued to meet this year. It recognises the progress that has been made since the Committee on Peace and Peacemaking was first formed and acknowledges the dedicated effort that has gone into establishing this work at a difficult time in Ireland’s history. It appreciates the contribution of the two full-time Peacemaking Officers – one concentrating on youth and the other on adult development. This has given the Church a strong foundation on which to build.

2. The nature of the society to which the church bears witness, however, has changed over the past twenty-five years. Even though the underlying issues

and tensions remain, society in Ireland, on the surface at least, is much more at peace with itself. It may be a superficial peace which is easily disturbed, but the perception is of a peaceful accommodation. The Panel is convinced that the gospel imperative of building good relations with all who are our neighbours still remains central to the Church's witness. This is not just a task for the few but one which is essential to effective mission in society, therefore the Review Panel believe it is important to mainstream this work and root it in our mission to the world.

3. For this reason the Review Panel recommends that a core Panel remains, under the General Board, to stimulate thinking and challenge the Church to build good relations at every level, showing good practice. Each of the Mission Boards should also be invited to appoint a representative to the Panel, in order to encourage and co-ordinate work within the Boards and share experiences. The Panel would be called the "Building Good Relations" Panel, with the role of promoting a culture of good relations within the Church and society. It is recognised that the complementary role of speaking prophetically on societal issues is largely that of the Church and Society Committee. The Panel is very pleased that the Rev Stephen Johnston has agreed to convene this work.

4. In discussion, the Review Panel recognised that the reporting mechanisms within the General Board are not ideal and was pleased to learn that the General Board Business Committee is being asked to consider this matter. For the moment the Building Good Relations Panel will report through the Global Concerns Committee.

5. The Review Panel considered a brief outline of the remit of the Building Good Relations Panel. This is –

TO PROMOTE good relationships at all levels in society and in the Church.

TO FACILITATE, support and share ideas with those who want to explore ways to reach out to others.

TO EDUCATE ourselves and the Church on the gospel necessity of being good neighbours and particularly what that means in Ireland today.

TO TRAIN those who are willing to act as enthusiasts and facilitators of this work.

TO CONSIDER PASTORALLY how those who are hurting through past experience may be supported and encouraged.

6. The Review Panel is aware that for this vital work to be given the impetus which the gospel demands it needs someone to be working at it in the Church, preferably full-time. At present the application of the Inter-Church Peacemaking Project to the Special EU Programmes Body is still being considered, although it would seem that a favourable outcome is likely. That would provide a worker in this field within the Presbyterian Church as part of a larger project. However, it is not certain that funding will be available and the Review Panel has asked the Priorities Committee of the General Board to consider how support to the Panel on Building Good Relations may be secured.

PANEL ON ASSEMBLY STRUCTURES

The Rev Dr Donald Watts reports:

1. Last year the Assembly passed a resolution to “encourage the General Board to continue its thinking on how the Courts of the Church, including General Assembly Boards and Committees, may effectively support mission and ministry”. This has resulted in two Panels reporting directly to the General Board.

2. The first of these is looking at the structure of Boards and Committees which enables the General Assembly to carry out its policy-making and executive role. While there have been some changes over the years the basic shape of the Boards was formed in the 1960’s and so the General Board has asked for a fundamental review.

3. The Panel membership is: Moderator, Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Very Revs Dr Alastair Dunlop, Dr Donald Patton; Revs Tony Davidson, Sam Finlay; Mrs Rosemary Hamilton, Mrs Pauline Kennedy, Mr John Hunter.

4. The General Board has agreed the following remit for the Panel:

To consider the structures and processes that are needed to ensure:

- *That the General Assembly is able to formulate policy effectively and in relation to its identified priorities at any given time;*
- *That the structures are sufficiently flexible and adaptable;*
- *That the structures allow for both representation and effectiveness;*
- *That there are agreed lines of leadership responsibility;*
- *That a positive relationship is established and maintained among the Boards, Presbyteries and Congregations;*
- *That the process of decision-making in Boards will encourage the wide engagement of congregational members;*
- *That the wider talents of congregational members are identified and utilised.*

5. At present, to further refine its own thinking, the Panel is holding a series of conversations with Board Conveners and Secretaries. As the process develops it would plan to hold discussions either with individual Presbyteries or representative groups. Its substantive report should come to the 2012 Assembly.

PANEL ON CONSULTATIONS

The Rev Dr Donald Watts reports:

1. The other Panel appointed by the General Board is to consider the Consultation Process, especially in the light of Mission Plans and a possible Presbytery Mission Audit. This Panel has just begun its work and is consulting Presbytery Clerks and the Board of Mission in Ireland.

2. The present thinking of the Panel is that any mission audit should be part of the consultation process, but that the consultation should perhaps have a more specific mission focus. The Panel asks the permission of the General Assembly to trial a new consultation process during the year, having first

received the approval of the General Board. It will then report fully to next Assembly.

PANEL ON JUDICIAL APPEALS

The Rev Dr Donald Watts reports:

1. When the ad-hoc Panel on Judicial Appeals reported in 2010 there were a few outstanding issues, including an easy-to-follow Guide to the Judicial Process; whether an opportunity to appeal is necessary where the Judicial Commission is the Court of first instance; and the interpretation of Code Par 126(3). It is hoped to report more fully in the Supplementary Reports.

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the Report be received.

Financial Crisis

2. That the General Assembly give thanks for the progress in finding an acceptable solution to the Presbyterian Mutual Society crisis and gratefully acknowledge the contribution and commitment of many people in Government, Civil Service, the Administrator's office and the Church in reaching this point.

3. That the General Assembly acknowledge with gratitude the patience and forbearance of the vast majority of savers in the Presbyterian Mutual Society throughout this difficult period when there was no access to their funds.

Priorities

4. That the General Assembly accept the five aspirational headings noted in the Priorities Committee report as five Assembly themes for the years 2012-2017.

5. That the theme for the 2012-13 year be, "A Prophetic Voice" and the 2013-14 year be, "A Place of Transformation".

Pensions and Assessments

6. That the General Assembly approve the proposed arrangements, as outlined in the report of the Pensions and Assessments Panel.

Church Relations

7. That the General Assembly appoint the following:
to the Irish Council of Churches Executive: Revs John Brackenridge, Lorraine Kennedy-Ritchie, Dr Donald Watts;

to the Irish Inter-Church Committee Revs Lorraine Kennedy-Ritchie, Dr Donald Watts.

8. That the following grants be made available from the Incidental Fund:

Irish Council of Churches	£19,000
Irish Inter-Church Meeting	£10,000
World Communion of Reformed Churches	£13,000

Conference of European Churches	£5,000
Church and Society Commission (Brussels)	£2,000
Community of Protestant Churches in Europe	£3,000

Reception of Ministers and Licentiates

9. That the General Assembly adopt the recommendations of the Reception of Ministers and Licentiates Committee on Ministers and Licentiates without charge.

10. That the Rev Colin Harris be appointed as Acting Convener of the Reception of Ministers and Licentiates Committee

Pastoral Care of Manse Families

11. That Ministers and Manse families be encouraged by Presbytery Clerks and colleagues to avail of the care available.

Church and Society

12. That the General Assembly, recognising the awesome and God-given responsibility which political leaders have, do not want to abandon them to the task but assure the political leaders of the Assembly's prayers and willingness to engage with them.

13. That the General Assembly encourage Congregations to continue to pray for those given leadership in society.

14. That the General Assembly express concern for the citizens of the Irish Republic and for fellow Presbyterians in particular, wish them well in these challenging times and assure the new government, under the leadership of Mr Enda Kenny, of their concerned prayers and good wishes.

15. The General Assembly, conscious of the anxiety in which some members of this society live, of the threat to members of the PSNI, the Prison Service and others, and of the threat to the future stability and the rebuilding of society that comes from dissident groups, encourage the wider church to pray without ceasing for those who remain afraid and anxious because of the divisions in this society and to work for peace in every way possible.

16. That the General Assembly affirm the talent with which God has gifted members of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and that this talent remains despite our economic difficulties, enabling them to continue to joyfully and willingly serve God.

17. That the General Assembly commend the Church and Society Committee on its determination to stimulate meaningful responses by the Church to the broad and deep economic issues being faced across the island.

18. That the General Assembly note the consultation responses made by the Church and Society Committee during the past year.

19. That the General Assembly adopt the position paper, 'Building good relationships: our hope for a more reconciled society' and ask that a version prepared for congregational use be provided and circulated as a cost to the Incidental Fund.

20. That the General Assembly encourage the Church and Society Committee, together with the Social Witness Board, in its work on Prisons.

Global Concerns

21. That the General Assembly note the Environment Panel is considering the possibility of initiating an “Environment Sunday”.

22. That the General Assembly encourage the Race Relations Panel as it resources the strategic mission of the Church with immigrants and minority ethnic people.

23. That the General Assembly approve the following grants from the Incidental Fund:

Vuleka Trust (South Africa)	£750
Diakonia Council of Churches (South Africa)	£750
Emrace (NI)	£5,000
Churches Asylum Network (ROI)	£500

24. That the General Assembly encourage the on-going discussions of the Global Concerns Committee on Abrahamic faith relations.

Panel Reports

25. That the General Assembly instruct the General Board to appoint a new Panel on Building Good Relations, with the remit outlined in the Future of Peacemaking Report.

26. That the General Assembly note the work of the Panel to review Board and Committee Structures.

27. That the General Assembly note the work of the Panel to review the Presbytery Consultation process and authorise the General Board to approve for trial any new Consultation process.

General

28. That the General Assembly approve the following budgets from the Incidental Fund:

General work of the Board	£6,000
Church and Mutual Society	£2,000
Building Good Relations	£8,000
Environmental Issues	£2,000
Pastoral Care of Manse Families	£2,000

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

OVERTURES ON THE BOOKS**Anent Par 25 of the Code**

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 25 of the Code an additional sub-paragraph (3) be added:

(3) Remunerated employees of the congregation may be members of the Kirk Session but shall not sit and deliberate with the Session when matters affecting their employment, and that of other remunerated employees, are under discussion.

Anent Par 48 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 48 of the Code an additional sub-paragraph (5) be added:

(5) Remunerated employees of the congregation may be members of the Committee but shall not sit and deliberate with the Committee when matters affecting their employment, and that of other remunerated employees, are under discussion.

Anent Par 33 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 33 of the Code the following sub-paragraph (3) be added: "A ruling elder who has reached the age of 65, or is in special circumstances, may retire from their duties in a congregation with the consent of the Presbytery, who may if it so wishes, in consultation with the Kirk Session, deem the elder to be an 'elder-emeritus' of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland." and subsequent sub-paragraphs re-numbered.

DJ WATTS

Anent Par 81 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 81 of the Code the following sub-paragraph (6) be added:

Par 81(6) The minister emeritus of a congregation shall not exercise any pastoral role or conduct any services in connection with the congregation without the specific prior permission of the minister of the congregation, or in a vacancy, the convener of the Vacancy Commission.

JW LOCKINGTON