**THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND**

**SUPPLEMENTARY REPORTS**

**TO THE**

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**OF THE**

**PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND**

**TO BE HELD AT BELFAST**

**JUNE 2023**



**Item 1 – GENERAL ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE**

 **(Initial Report) – Supplementary Report**

 **(Thursday morning)**

**FROM THE GENERAL COUNCIL**

The General Council, at a Special Meeting held on Monday 12th June 2023, noted the recent e-mail sent from the Clerk of Assembly to all Ministers and Clerks of Presbytery (with the request that it be forwarded to representative and corresponding elders), regarding Assembly Business in 2023. The Council in particular noted the following paragraph:

1. ***Supplementary Business*** *–* ***final date for submission is 12 noon on Thursday 15th June 2023***
* *The 2023 General Assembly Report Book is 416 pages long compared to 272 pages in 2022 and includes some lengthy reports. A number of very significant issues will be debated during Assembly week, with important decisions being taken. Therefore, the Business Committee are asking that this year all supplementary business, including any proposed amendments etc, be submitted in advance for licencing and by 12 noon on Thursday 15th June at the latest, (sent to the Clerk of Assembly* *clerk@presbyterianireland.org**). This will both enable business to be well ordered and also ensure that all amendments will be printed in the Supplementary Reports Booklet which will be available for all members at the start of business on Thursday morning 22nd June.*
* *It is recognised that members of Assembly may only feel the need to move an amendment when they actually hear the speeches relating to that item of business. This will of course still be possible, so long as the procedures in the Assembly ‘yellow pages’ are followed. However, amendments based on what is in the printed reports and resolutions should be submitted by 12 noon on Thursday 15th June. Please therefore take time to consider this in advance of that date.*

The General Council in response resolved that the following additional resolution be tabled in the 2023 General Assembly Supplementary Reports, to be taken with the Initial Report of the General Assembly Business Committee, page 4):

**General Assembly Business Committee (Initial report), Additional Resolution 2(a), page 401:**

2(a) Substantive proposed amendments, which have not been submitted to the Business Committee for licensing in advance of the Assembly meeting, will only be permitted, at the discretion of the Moderator, if they genuinely arise in the course of debate, or if they relate to additional resolutions tabled in Supplementary Business.

**PRE-ASSEMBLY MEETING OF THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE**

The General Assembly Business Committee met on Monday morning 19th June 2023. It received a number of reports regarding preparations for the General Assembly and amongst other agenda items:

* Considered the additional items of business submitted by the notified date, licensed the business that was in order and authorised the printing of the 2023 Supplementary Report Booklet. The Business Committee unanimously agreed not to license two submitted items of late business - one was deemed to be introducing a subject which was neither part of the resolution in question nor part of the report on which it was based, a second was deemed to be out of order in what it was attempting to achieve.
* Considered Item 13 of the 2023 Assembly Business, namely the reports of two councils and one commission that are not being presented to the Assembly verbally, but only in printed form. The Committee noted that two of the resolutions which are part of the report of the Linkage Commission related to the dissolution of three congregations (resolutions 1 and 2 on page 408 of the General Assembly Reports.). While no other speeches will be permitted, it was agreed to invite one representative of each the two Presbyteries concerned (Dublin & Munster and Monaghan) to make short speeches making the dissolution of these congregations.

**ADDITIONAL REPORTS FROM OTHER CHURCH ASSEMBLIES**

# Church of Ireland General Synod 2023

# 11 & 12 May 2023 – Clayton Whites Hotel, Wexford

*The Very Rev Dr Noble McNeely reports:*

It was a pleasure to visit the vibrant town of Wexford for the General Synod of the Church of Ireland, on 11 and 12 May 2023. The Clayton Whites Hotel was a superlative venue, with extensive facilities suitable for accommodating the 600 delegates and the business meetings. The beautiful two days of sunshine added to the convivial and relaxed atmosphere of the conference.

The proceedings commenced with a Communion Service in the Church of St Iberius in the heart of the town. I received an invitation to join the clergy for the service conducted by the Archbishop of Dublin and Glendalough, Most Rev Dr Michael Jackson. The preacher was the Bishop of the local Diocese of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory, Rt Rev Adrian Wilkinson.

The Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Rev John McDowell, opened the Synod by delivering his presidential speech. The Archbishop praised the resilience and perseverance of church members, whose dedication had brought parishes and dioceses through the ‘difficult period’ of the Covid Pandemic. The church survived, but not without some scars and the loss of membership. He referred to the numerical decline of membership, which was common in established churches, and said, “Numbers matter” because of Jesus’s Great Commission to make disciples. The church had launched previously the idea of pioneer ministry, and he referred to plans to collaborate with the Church Army to unleash pioneer ministry in Ireland.

Archbishop McDowell alluded to the ethnic make-up of Ireland and how it had changed almost beyond description in the past 50 years. He expressed dismay that there were far too few people of colour in Sunday congregations. He said, “I make many excuses to myself about why this is so, and have come to the conclusion that prejudices, including my own, are very deep seated and therefore out of view.” It was agreed by the Synod that a reference group of clergy and others from ethnic-minority backgrounds be formed to draw up guidance on diversity and inclusion.

The agenda for the Synod, like our own Assembly, was very full, including motions to be accepted, bills to be passed and numerous reports received. The business was conducted in two sessions on Friday and Saturday, and with two remote sessions on Saturday evening and on Tuesday 16 May.

Pioneer Ministry has been an evolving project intended to revitalise and refresh ministry in the Church of Ireland. A video was shown to highlight the concept of pioneer ministry and to introduce a new council to champion and oversee this ministry. This council would be responsible for scrutinising funding and training of personnel involved.

The Council for Mission presented a video on each of the Five Marks of Mission, which is available online. The Council reported that there were many stories of effective mission that was happening throughout Ireland. The report also alluded to the suffering of Anglicans around the world and commended their commitment to proclaim Christ under repression.

The report from the Commission on Ministry referred to the increasing awareness of the pressures being placed on clergy and the effect on clergy well-being. It was stressed that the church needed to consider the unrealistic expectations placed on clergy and, in particular, those working in part-time or in rural areas. The Commission recommended that each diocese create a sabbatical policy and that bishops encourage their clergy to take time for retreats.

A number of rectors shared stories of their pastoral challenges when trying to support people, who had been hurt or traumatised during the Troubles in Northern Ireland. A proposal to provide much needed resources to help parishes minister to those scarred by the Troubles was agreed.

1. A motion to offer congratulations to King Charles on his accession and coronation was approved. The speeches in support of the resolution acknowledged the significance of the four main Churches in Ireland being represented at the Coronation Service in Westminster Abbey, and the Archbishop of Armagh being directly involved by carrying the King’s Orb.
2. Highlight of the Synod was a presentation using drama, dance, poetry and music by a youth group from Mullingar. The theme of the presentation was ‘Lighten Our Darkness’. The performance was superbly choreographed and produced by an amazingly talented group of young people. The aim of this youth initiative is; to recognise God as creator, encourage believers as stewards of God’s planet, and to look at climate change through the lens of faith. A supplementary strand of the project - God’s Gardens of Hope - encourages churches to turn their churchyards into habitats for biodiversity.
3. I am extremely grateful for the warm reception I received and for the hospitality at the Synod. I enjoyed the opportunity to meet longtime friends and meet representatives from other churches in Ireland. The Church in Ireland like the PCI is recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic, and focusing on revitalising the church and its ministry in a transitioning culture.

**Annual meeting of the Methodist Church in Ireland Conference, 8 – 10June 2023**

**Assembly Buildings, Belfast.**

*The Very Rev Dr David Bruce reports:*

* + - 1. I accompanied Mr Brian Magowan, elder from Elmwood Presbyterian Church, as the Presbyterian representatives among the ecumenical guests for the annual meeting of the Methodist Church in Ireland Conference, this year held in our own Assembly Buildings. This was a departure from usual practice, as it is customary for the Conference to “move house” each year, being held in Methodist church buildings across the country.
			2. The conference opened on Thursday evening with installation of the new President of Conference, Rev David Turtle. The outgoing President, Rev David Nixon, reflected on his year of office which included his attendance with other Church Leaders at the funeral service for Her Majesty the Queen, and the Coronation of King Charles. He was warmly commended by the Conference for his pastoral emphasis and quiet determination to encourage those who were struggling after the Covid pandemic. His successor had been elected at the 2022 conference, so had a year to prepare. Rev David Turtle, currently the Minister of Seymour Street Methodist Church in Lisburn, was duly installed, and introduced his theme drawn from Jesus’s words of encouragement to “take my yoke upon you”. An interesting feature of the act of installation of the new President was that hands were laid upon him by a representative group, including two Bishops of the Church of Ireland, reflecting the covenant relationship which now exists between the two denominations.
			3. As ecumenical guests, we were warmly welcomed to the Conference, and this set the tone for the rest of the event. I was invited to speak offering some reflections on the conference, at the end of the first full day of business.
			4. Business on Friday and Saturday was divided under the headings of the major policy bodies within Methodism, which work on matters between Conference meetings. These were:
	1. The Council on Social Responsibility. The representatives gave examples of how the denomination has participated in marches and protests on a number of issues, including the cuts, poverty, racism and injustice. The speeches were passionate and energetic, calling the conference to be active in advocating for the values of the Kingdom of God in face of much that marginalises “the least of these”.
	2. Governance Board (three separate sections across the two days). This covered matters of internal audit of finances – a very challenging report in its own right – along with a number of structural changes to representation and remits for committees and sub-committees.
	3. The Faith and Order Committee. This looked at three main areas of ongoing work: How Holy Communion is administered when hybrid worship online has become part of church culture; the use of church premises by other (usually non-Christian) faith communities; a process of reflection on human sexuality which has included the circulation of some bible reading guides on the theme, and a series of local discussion meetings to explore the matter further. No decisions were made, and reflection continues.

5. There was one significant additional item, being the publication of a report from the Past Cases Review Group. Chaired by Dr Deborah Webster, this report has been several years in production, and addresses the issue of people who have testified to abuse and harm caused to them while participating in the life of the Methodist Church. In a solemn moment of reflection, the President led the Conference in an act of public apology to those who had been affected. This was of course picked up subsequently by the media, and the President was interviewed about the matter later.

1. Mr Magowan and I thank the Methodist Church in Ireland for their kind welcome of us at the Conference, thanking God for the many ways in the past, that the Presbyterian Church in Ireland has been able to partner with our Methodist friends in worship and mission.

TREVOR D GRIBBEN

**Item 2 – PRESBYTERY REPORTS**

 **Supplementary Report (Thursday Morning)**

**Addition to the report of the Ballymena Presbytery**

Under licensings, at line 11 of the report on P 216, the following should be inserted;

“that Dr. K.D. McIlroy was licensed as a Probationer for the Christian Ministry on 19 June 2022 and was given credentials to the Presbytery of Route;”

At line 18 of the report on P 216, the following should be deleted;

“that Mr K.D. McIlroy was given credentials to the Presbytery of Route;”

TREVOR D GRIBBEN

**Item 3 – GENERAL COUNCIL (SECTION 1)**

 **Supplementary Report (Thursday Morning)**

**REPORT OF THE PRINCIPAL’S APPOINTMENT PANEL**

The General Council, at a Special Meeting held on Monday 12th June 2023, received a report from the Clerk of Assembly indicating that, following some discussions, he had received a written request from the Rev Prof Gordon Campbell, indicating his desire to stand down from the role of Principal as and from 31st August 2023 rather than on 31st December 2023.

The Council noted that by that date, Prof Campbell will have fulfilled around 90% of the three-year term of appointment, and further noted that this period has seen an unprecedented measure and pace of change in the life and ministry of Union College. Correspondingly, leading the College has entailed a continual pattern of abnormal working hours for Prof Campbell as Principal. Stepping down from that role would enable him to return to a more normal pattern of working, with its focus on his roles as Professor of New Testament and Head of the Biblical Studies Department. He would also of course be available to support his successor in the early months of transition, prior to an anticipated Academic Sabbatical at the start of 2024.

As a consequence, the General Council agreed to submit the following amended resolution for consideration by the General Assembly:

 **General Council Section 1, page 401 – Amended Resolution 6:**

That the Rev Prof Michael McClenahan be appointed as Principal of Union Theological College for a three-year term, commencing on 1st September 2023.

TREVOR D GRIBBEN

**Item 4 – CORRESPONDING MEMBERS & DELEGATES**

 **Supplementary Report (Thursday morning)**

**Church of Ireland:** Venerable Elizabeth Cairns; Mr Vivian Suitor

**Methodist Church in Ireland:** Rev Dr Sahr Yambasu; Hazel Loney

**Religious Society of Friends:** Margaret Fraser; Anne Gamble

**Irish Council of Churches:** Rt Rev Andrew Forster – (ICC President);

 Mrs Gina Copty

**Presbyterian Church of Wales:** Rev Evan Morgan (Moderator)

**France:** Dr Paul Wells, representing the Faculté Jean Calvin (FJC), Aix en Provence

**Malawi:** Rev Dr Mwawi Chilongozi, Secretary General of the General Assembly of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP).

**Myanmar:** Rev Pek Muan Cuang, General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar (PCM)

**Pakistan:** Mr Adeel Rehmat (Executive Director) and Rev Dr Maqsood Kamil (Strategic Advisor) of the PAK Mission Society

TREVOR D GRIBBEN

**Item 7 – COUNCIL FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

 **Supplementary Report (Thursday afternoon)**

**Education**

1. Since the 2023 Reports went to print, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has introduced legislation which will come into effect on 1st July 2023, imposing a statutory requirement on the Northern Ireland Department of Education to introduce a new Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curriculum for post-primary schools, which does not allow for the moral and ethical consideration of issues such as contraception and access to abortion services.

2. This is a continuation of the patronising implementation of the flawed 2018 CEDAW Report and its recommendations by the Secretary of State and his predecessors, a report which has been accepted by the Northern Ireland Office without any discernment and erroneously incorporated into domestic UK law back in 2019.

3. Additionally, without stepping into a classroom to observe the teaching of RSE, the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) has earlier this month (June 2023) published its ‘compelling case for reform’ of RSE in schools. It is ironic that the NIHRC was able to access RSE policies from over 120 post-primary schools across Northern Ireland which is in stark contrast to claims within the CEDAW Report that formed the basis of the Commission’s investigation, namely that RSE is currently ‘underdeveloped or non-existent’ in post-primary schools in NI.

4. The General Assembly has, in previous years, consistently noted and affirmed the legal right of Boards of Governors to adopt a non-denominational Christian ethos as a valuable framework for nurturing the holistic wellbeing of children and young people, educationally, emotionally, morally and spiritually. Whilst the high-quality teaching across all our schools is deeply appreciated, it is a fallacy to suggest that any aspect of education can be presented in a ‘morally-neutral’ or ‘value-free’ environment.

5. In an increasingly pluralistic context, Relationships and Sexuality Education should, of course, be taught in a sensitive and inclusive manner, where teaching is reinforced and supported by policies and processes that schools have in place around safeguarding, bullying and pastoral care. Young people should have the opportunity to explore their own personal morals, values and beliefs including the moral and ethical considerations around sensitive issues like abortion and contraception. The actions of the Secretary of State and report from the NIHRC run contrary to these aspirations.

6. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland, along with colleagues in other denominations, remains committed to supporting the delivery of excellent RSE within schools which respects the rights of parents and the needs of young people, and provides them with the opportunity to explore their own personal morals, values and beliefs. There are also opportunities for teachers, parents and carers to be equipped to navigate this contentious and contested landscape in a better way. One good example of this is the “Time to Talk” resource produced by Evangelical Alliance.

**Human Dignity**

7. Again, since the 2023 Reports were submitted, two developments in the Oireachtas challenge the fundamental understanding of the dignity and sanctity of human life. A Joint Committee on Assisted Dying has been formed to ‘consider and make recommendations for legislative and policy change relating to a statutory right to assist a person to end his or her life (assisted dying) and a statutory right to receive such assistance’. It is deeply disappointing that not only do the terms of reference presume a direction of travel that will require legislative and policy change, but that the Committee does not intend to carry out an open call for submissions.

8. Additionally, a Private Members’ Bill to further liberalise the abortion regime in the Republic of Ireland is under active consideration in the Irish Parliament. Amongst other provisions, the legislation proposes that abortion be available on request prior to foetal viability (currently only up to 12 weeks); proposes the removal of the 3-day waiting period for abortion on request; and allows for the provision of abortion on the grounds of fatal foetal abnormality where death is likely before or within a year of birth.

9. In 2018, at the time of the referendum on the 8th Amendment, the Irish Government promised to make abortions ‘rare’ in Ireland, and to ensure that the unborn with disabilities, like Down’s Syndrome, would not have their lives terminated.

10. As a pro-life denomination, PCI values and upholds the dignity of all human life from pre-birth to life’s end. It is highly regrettable that that same amount of energy and focus is not dedicated to the development of world-leading, compassionate care for women, children and their families who experience pregnancy crisis. Furthermore, the lack of a committed and consistent approach to the delivery of excellent palliative care, particularly in more rural communities, is the cause of considerable distress.

**Devolution**

11. In April 2023, a number of major events were held to mark the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Good Friday Agreement and the subsequent referendum which was carried with a majority ‘yes’ vote in both jurisdictions. Many of these events were high profile in nature involving the attendance of international and local figures who played a part in making the Agreement possible. It was noted that there was a lack of recognition from those making public contributions of the role of the churches across the island of Ireland in pursuing peace and reconciliation.

12. The Agreement paved the way for Northern Ireland to transition from decades of armed conflict to more peaceful times. At its heart was a focus on relationships, internally between local political parties, and looking further out between political leaders and institutions not only in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and but also across these islands, East and West. The Agreement recognised that we live together on this island in two jurisdictions with multiple political and cultural identities.

13. On the other hand, aspects of what was included as part of the Agreement were difficult for many who had experienced injury, loss and trauma as a result of the Troubles. The prisoner release scheme was particularly painful, and the continued wrangling over legacy only serves to re-open old wounds. For many of those who had dedicated a life of service to the RUC, changes to policing in NI were also challenging to accept**.**

14. Recognising this diversity of views within PCI, congregations were encouraged to take time on Sunday 16th April 2023 to reflect on the events of 25 years ago using the Vision for Society Statement, received by the General Assembly in 2016. This was an opportunity to remember and give thanks for the achievements of the Agreement, but also to acknowledge the pain which has accompanied this for many. Congregations were encouraged to actively consider how they, as God’s people, might in the words of the Vision for Society Statement ‘*seek a more reconciled community at peace with each other, where friend and foe, working together for the common good, can experience healing and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ’.*

15. Given the febrile political situation in NI, establishing a new framework for dealing with the legacy of the Troubles is a complex and difficult task which makes it all the more important that the government gets it right. The latest attempt by the Westminster Government at solving this through the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill, currently progressing through Parliament, is deemed by many to be a high-risk strategy. PCI, in line with all other churches, victims’ groups and political parties, felt that this was the wrong step. Even with recent proposed amendments this remains PCI’s position.

16. PCI continues to support the existence of functioning devolved government in Northern Ireland and regrets that the circumstances have yet to be reached whereby all parties can find themselves in a position to re-form the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive. It is recognised that restoration of devolution is not a panacea which will resolve all of society’s ills and challenges, particularly around budgetary deficits. However, as time moves on significant short and medium-term structural and financial issues remain, which require not only the necessary fiscal supports but also the input, engagement and decision-making of local Executive ministers, in consultation with other relevant bodies. The restoration of devolved government, with the necessary short and medium-term financial underwriting, is a priority.

**Public Affairs Additional Resolutions** (pages 406-407):

1(a) That the General Assembly reaffirm its commitment to Christian peacebuilding as part of Christian discipleship, and to the Church’s calling to pursue a peaceful and just society in our day; and call on all involved parties to continue efforts to seek a resolution to the current political impasse in order to address the many significant challenges faced by many including economic inequality and injustice, in a way that builds peace and promotes reconciliation.

3(d) That the General Assembly, deeply regret and express their grave concern at the Secretary of State’s patronising imposition of a series of measures (based on the findings of the flawed 2018 CEDAW Report) most recently in the area of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in post-primary schools, with little or no consideration of the wishes of the people of Northern Ireland; and call on the Department of Education as it develops guidance on the teaching of RSE in post-primary schools to ensure that such teaching can be supported and shaped by a strong, clear and coherent moral framework, as set out in a school’s ethos and implemented across the school community.

4(a) That the General Assembly continue to affirm the value and dignity of human life from before birth to its very end, and therefore regret attempts to further expand abortion legislation in the Republic of Ireland, and moves which would legalise assisted suicide in that jurisdiction; and call again on the Irish Government to:

(i) place a greater focus on the provision of world-leading and compassionate care for women, children and families, especially those experiencing a pregnancy crisis; and

(ii) prioritise and resource the provision of excellent palliative care across the Republic of Ireland for those who are at the end of their life.

DANIEL J KANE

**Item 8 – GENERAL COUNCIL (SECTION 2)**

 **Supplementary Report (Thursday afternoon)**

**Licensed Amendment to Resolution 11, General Council (Section 2) page 402:**

11. That the General Assembly adopt the affirmations contained in paragraph 4 of the report of the Decision Making and Dissent Task Group (pp47-50) as the Church's position, with exception of the affirmation outlined in paragraph 4.3(iv) on page 48, which it refers back to the General Council for further consideration, with a report and recommendations coming to the 2024 General Assembly.

MARK NEILLY

**Item 10 – GENERAL COUNCIL (SECTION 3)**

 **Supplementary Report (Friday Morning)**

**Licensed Amendment to Resolution 13, General Council (Section 3) page 402:**

13. That the General Assembly adopt the principles outlined in paragraph 6(b)i of the 2023 Report of the Membership and People with Intellectual Disabilities Task Group (pp. 58-59) and refer paragraphs 6(b)ii and iii to the Doctrine Committee for report to the 2024 Assembly and that resolution 14 remain on the books for a year.

JONATHAN BOYD

**Item 13 – LINKAGE COMMISSION**

 **Supplementary Report (Friday afternoon)**

On 3rd May 2023, the Convener of the Linkage Commission received an email from Rev J Flaherty, Clerk of the Ards Presbytery, informing him that at the meeting of the Presbytery of Ards on Tuesday 2nd May 2023, Presbytery resolved that the congregations of Kirkcubbin and Glastry be merged at this year’s General Assembly.

As a result of this, a deputation from the Linkage Commission met with representatives of the Presbytery of Ards on Tuesday 16th May 2023 to discuss this further. This was followed by separate meetings on the same evening with the Kirk Session of Glastry and the Kirk Session of Kirkcubbin. Glastry were most enthusiastic about welcoming Kirkcubbin into their fellowship. Kirkcubbin realised that due to being a small aging congregation, they had no option but to merge with Glastry. Each Kirk Session had passed a resolution to this effect.

The Linkage Commission at its meeting on Tuesday 23rd May 2023 received a report and resolved that the following resolution be tabled at the General Assembly in Supplementary Reports:

**Linkage Commission Additional Resolution, page 408:**

4(a) That the congregation of Kirkcubbin be merged into the congregation of Glastry on 31st December 2023, or on other suitable date on terms set by the Linkage Commission.

**Item 15 – JUDICIAL COMMISSION - Code Republishing Panel**

 **Supplementary Report (Friday afternoon)**

**Further issues requiring guidance or direction from the General Assembly.**

The panel has now completed consideration of the Presbytery responses and once again reiterates its thanks for the very thorough way that Presbyteries approached this task. While not every concern is reported here, they have all been considered by the panel and some discussed with the Judicial Commission. In addition to the issues raised in its report to the General Assembly (Annual Reports, p.371-2), the panel seeks guidance on the following:

**RC Par 26.1.** Some Presbyteries suggest that the word “services” should revert back to “ordinances”. It is the panel’s view that “regular attendance at the services - -.” is clear, while “ordinances” is a word which not everyone will understand in the same way. This change has also been made in other paragraphs.

**RC Par 62.** Some Presbyteries have questioned: a) why the Kirk Session is now given the power to co-opt, where previously that was within the remit of the Committee itself;

b) why the possibility to co-opt has been widened beyond the filling of a vacancy. The panel considers that as the Committee is responsible to the Kirk Session, with members of the Kirk Session being the charity trustees of the congregation, the power to co-opt should be a Kirk Session responsibility. The suggestion to allow co-option where *“the Congregational Committee considers it desirable to do so for the better discharge of its duties”,* is because in practice the current limitation does not always promote good governance, nor does it allow the availability of appropriate expertise to be utilised.

**RC Par 262.** Questions have been raised about the hearing of candidates by a Hearing Committee. The panel have carefully considered all the points raised and have reworded this paragraph to read:

*262. The hearing of candidates by a Hearing Committee may take place if the Kirk Session does not consider that it is expedient for the candidates to be heard directly by the* ***congregation*** *and the Kirk Session convenes a meeting of the* ***congregation*** *to:*

 *262.1 hear the reasons why the Kirk Session does not consider it expedient for the candidates to be heard directly by the* ***congregation****;*

 *262.2 decide whether, in the light of such reasons, the* ***congregation*** *sees fit to appoint a Hearing Committee to hear the candidates on the* ***List****;*

 *262.2.1 such Hearing Committee shall be selected by secret ballot;*

 *262.3 if so appointed, decide whether to direct the Hearing Committee to seek to identify a sole nominee to be heard directly by the* ***congregation*** *before a* ***Call*** *is decided on.*

**RC Par 266.1.** There is a slight amendment recommended to the wording of Par 266.1 as printed in the Annual Reports (p.371). This is because when the hearing is by Hearing Committee the congregation will only know the name brought to it by the Hearing Committee. It will not have been told other names on the List for Hearing.

*266. If a decision is taken to proceed to a vote the following shall apply:*

 *266.1 The minister chairing the meeting shall invite the* ***Qualified Voters*** *to propose and second as follows:*

 *266.1.1 where the* ***congregation*** *has heard the* ***List*** *for Hearing directly, one or more candidates whose names are on the* ***List*** *for Hearing; or*

 *266.1.2 where the* ***congregation*** *has heard through a Hearing Committee, the candidate recommended by the Hearing Committee, and that person only.*

**RC Par 283.2.** Having done some research and at the request of the Dublin and Munster Presbytery, it is recommended that Par 283.2 be omitted as no longer necessary and other appropriate amendments made to Par. 283.

**RC Pars 287, 291, 297, 301.** The panel took the decision that Presbytery Services were best published in a separate booklet, with the status of Regulations, but with the requirement to sign the Westminster Confession, when appropriate, retained in the Code. A number of Presbyteries have reservations about this; some wanting the questions asked to be in the Code, others would also include the prayer following. A specific resolution is appended to allow the Assembly to express a view.

**RC Par 344.** Not all Presbyteries realised that the inclusion of Par 344 was on the instruction of the General Assembly (Annual Reports, 2021, p.123; Minutes, 2021, p. 37). The panel has, however, deleted from the earlier wording the words*: “without equivocation and without exception”.*

In reviewing this paragraph, the panel became aware that there was no guidance as to how Regulations and Guidelines may be amended. As these have been given considerable authority, in the case of Regulations equivalent to the Code, it seems essential that the Code should provide for them to be changed. The panel has therefore re-written Par 344 as follows:

*344. The provisions of this Code represent the law of the* ***Church*** *and, as such are binding upon all members of the* ***Church****,* ***congregations****, courts of the* ***Church****, commissions and committees of the Assembly, and all other agencies of the* ***Church*** *and must be obeyed and observed.*

*344.1 Regulations (Schedule 1) may be inserted, amended or removed only by resolution of the General Assembly and must be followed in all circumstances as if they were part of this Code.*

 *344.1.1 Proposed Regulations, and amendments to existing Regulations, shall first be considered by the Judicial Commission. If the Judicial Commission considers that any proposals relate to the constitution, doctrine or worship of the* ***Church****; the* ***Central Ministry Fund****, the* ***Retired Ministers’ Fund****, the* ***Widows of******Ministers’ Fund****; the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Pension (2009) Fund; or other significant matters, then it may recommend to the General Assembly that such proposals be accepted as Interim Regulations, to be in force for one year, and to be submitted for final determination at the next General Assembly.*

 *344.2 Guidelines (Schedule 2) may be inserted, amended or removed only by resolution of the General Assembly or by one of its Standing Commissions. Guidelines are not the law of the* ***Church****, but set out how the General Assembly considers that members of the* ***Church, congregations****, and the courts of the* ***Church*** *should proceed in the circumstances to which Guidelines apply. Accordingly, members of the* ***Church****,* ***congregations****, and the courts of the* ***Church*** *shall observe such Guidelines unless there are exceptional reasons not to, and a written record of such reasons shall be kept.*

 *344.3 Guidance is offered by the Assembly as advice to be taken into consideration by members of the* ***Church, congregations****, and the courts of the* ***Church****.*

**Appendix 1A** (Annual Reports pp. 373-374). For clarity, while the Report lists the Regulations (Schedule 1) and Guidelines (Schedule 2) their content will be circulated to Presbyteries with draft 2 of the proposed Code.

**RC Par 347.** Some Presbyteries have questioned why the membership of Councils and Committees has not been given (membership of the stated Commissions is specified). This is to allow the Assembly to be more flexible but within the parameters set out in Par 347.

**Code Republishing, Amended Resolution 3, page 409:**

3. That the General Assembly agree that the following wording be included in the Draft Republished Code (see Recommendation 5(c) in the report of the Judicial Commission, page 367):

“The minister chairing the meeting shall invite the **Qualified Voters** to propose and second as follows:

 • where the congregation has heard the **List** for Hearing directly, one or more ministers whose names are on the **List** for Hearing; or

 • where the **congregation** has heard through a Hearing Committee, *the candidate recommended by the Hearing Committee,* and that person only.”

**Code Republishing, Additional Resolutions, page 409-410:**

3(a) That the General Assembly agree that it is no longer necessary to make separate provision for congregations of the former Munster Presbytery.

3(b) That the General Assembly agree that the outline of Presbytery Services should be in Regulations.

3(c) That the General Assembly agree to the draft content of Par 344, relating to Regulations, Guidelines and Guidance.

3(d) That the General Assembly accept the other changes recommended in the supplementary report.

DONALD J WATTS

**Item 17 – GENERAL COUNCIL (SECTION 5)**

 **Supplementary Report (Friday Evening)**

**1st Licensed Amendment to Resolution 19, General Council (Section 5) page 403:**

19. That the Green Paper report of the Reconfiguration of Ministry Task Group be sent for consultation with the Church, with Presbyteries following the procedure and timeline outlined in the accompanying note (see p.127), with the exception that when the Reconfiguration of Ministry Task Group report to the 2024 General Assembly, its report and recommendations may be dealt with at that Assembly or may be sent down to Presbyteries for further consideration and comment before a final report is brought to the 2025 Assembly.

DAVID JOHNSTON

**2nd Licensed Amendment to Resolution 19, General Council (Section 5) page 403:**

19. That the green paper report of the reconfiguration of Ministry Task Group be sent for consultation with the Church, with presbyteries following the procedure outlined in the accompanying note (see page 127), and that the Doctrine Committee be instructed to produce a report on the principles behind the ordained ministry of Word and Sacrament in the Reformed tradition of the PCI to enable the Church to radically evaluate its current practice and future needs, for the 2024 General Assembly. The report should address what is distinctive about the role of the ordained minister which is ordinarily essential for the healthy ministry and mission of a congregation.

ALAN DICKEY

**Item 20 – GENERAL COUNCIL (SECTION 6)**

 **Supplementary Report (Saturday Morning)**

**SUPPORT SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**Retirements**

**Addition to Resolution 26, General Council (Section 6) page 404:**

* Rev Dr SDH Williamson, Ballywillan, on or after 31 August 2023

DAVID W THOMSON

**Minister Emeritus Status**

**Additional Resolution 26a, General Council (Section 6):**

That, under Par 226(a) of the Code, the Rev Samuel Newell be enrolled as Minister Emeritus of the congregation of Alexandra, North Belfast.

TREVOR D GRIBBEN

**REPORT OF INITIAL PCI PENSION SCHEME REVIEW PANEL**

**Correction**

On page 183 of the Panel’s report (Appendix 2) under Defined Contribution Schemes Cons it refers to “The investment risk rests with the scheme **employer**”. This should read “The investment risk rests with the scheme **member**”.

**FINANCIAL SECRETARY APPOINTMENT**

Towards the end of 2022, Mr Clive Knox indicated that he desired to retire from his role as PCI’s Financial Secretary, most likely towards the middle of 2023. This early notification given by Mr Knox enabled the General Council to examine the role, including the job description and personnel specification, and the overall make-up of the Financial Secretary’s Department.

At a special meeting of the General Council, held on 5th December 2022, the Financial Secretary’s Appointment Panel was appointed *“to take forward the recruitment process, on the basis of the agreed Job Description and Personnel Specification, bringing a nomination to the General Council for formal appointment.”*

Due to challenges in the recruitment and appointment process, Mr Knox agreed to delay his retirement until 31st December 2023. This generous offer has not only created time for the recruitment process to be completed, but has also enabled a very important ‘overlap period’ to be factored in.

At a special meeting of the General Council, held on 12th June 2023, a report and nomination were brought by the Appointment Panel for consideration. In response, the Council unanimously passed the following resolution:

*That Mr Ken Swarbrick be appointed as Financial Secretary Designate, taking up post on an agreed date in September 2023 and then taking on the role of Financial Secretary from 1st January 2024.*

TREVOR D GRIBBEN

**Item 21 –COUNCIL FOR TRAINING IN MINISTRY**

 **Supplementary Report (Saturday Afternoon)**

**CORRECTIONS**

On page 387 of the report, paragraph 11 should read:

*11. The Assignments Panel does a critical work in carefully placing students in assistantship placements. This year the panel has been augmented by the addition of Revs Corrina Herron and Damien Burke.*

On page 388 of the report, paragraph 15 should read:

*15. Five licentiates are due to become eligible by the end of 2023.*

T DAVID ALLEN

**Item 22 – GENERAL COUNCIL (SECTION 7)**

 **Supplementary Report (Saturday Afternoon)**

**CHURCH RELATIONS**

As reported on page 207, paragraph 16 of the Reports, the Clerk of Assembly has renewed conversations with his opposite number in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (USA). On Wednesday 14th June, a further online meeting took place involving senior representatives of PCI and EPC(USA). Those present were:

**EPC (USA) Representatives**

* Rev Joe Kim, (Incoming Moderator)
* Rev Alan Trafford, (Chair of the EPC’s Fraternal Relations Committee)
* Rev Andrew Smith, (Director of the Resound Project, Central EPC in New York City and a former Minister of PCI)
* Rev Dr Dean Weaver, (Stated Clerk/President EPC)

**(**RevRosemary Lukens, outgoing Moderator, new Chair of the National Leadership Team was unable to be present due to a last-minute commitment.)

**PCI Representatives**

* Rt Rev Dr John Kirkpatrick (Moderator 2022/23)
* Rev Dr Sam Mawhinney (Moderator Designate 2023/24)
* Very Rev Dr David Bruce (former Moderator and incoming General Council Convener)
* Rev Helen Freeburn (Convener Church Relations Committee/Panel)
* Rev Trevor Gribben (Clerk of the General Assembly & General Secretary)

This was a very positive meeting, in which each set of representatives spoke of the distinctives, ethos and ministry and mission priorities of their denomination. It was agreed by all present that further dialogue and engagement would be very valuable and it was envisaged that this could lead to the two denominations cooperating together in mutually beneficial ways.

**Additional Resolution 36(a):**

36(a) That in the ensuing year further engagement take place between representatives of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and representatives of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (USA) and that the General Council bring a full report, with recommendations, to the 2024 General Assembly regarding the way forward in future relationships.

TREVOR D GRIBBEN

**ADDITIONAL MEMORIAL OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE PRESBYTERIAN RELIEF FUND** (Business to be taken after South Belfast Presbytery, Memorial 2)

**Memorial Transmitted**

To the Venerable the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to meet in Belfast on 21 June, 2023.

At the 2014 General Assembly a Memorial was presented regarding the Old Age, Presbyterian Women’s and Indigent Ladies Funds and its prayer was granted. The Memorial recorded that the Directors of the Old Age, Presbyterian Women’s and Indigent Ladies Funds, having reviewed the Fund’s governance arrangements, had agreed that it was appropriate to combine the three Funds into one Fund which they planned to name the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Relief Fund. A new constitution for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Relief Fund was approved. It was the intention of the Trustees to seek the approval of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland to register the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Relief Fund as a charity and thereafter to transfer the funds of the Old Age, Presbyterian Women’s and Indigent Ladies Funds into that Fund.

The Old Age, Presbyterian Women’s and Indigent Ladies Funds helped those in financial need who were connected with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Applications for assistance were through the minister of the congregation and help provided through modest quarterly or one-off exceptional needs grants.

In 2019, the General Assembly approved an alteration to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Relief Fund to include a condition that “no amendment may be made to the Constitution that would have the effect of causing the charity to cease to be a charity at law.” This was required to facilitate registration with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

An application to register the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Relief Fund was approved by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland and it was registered on 15 February 2021. Following other necessary approvals, The Old Age, Presbyterian Women’s and Indigent Ladies Funds were dissolved on 31 December 2022 and their assets transferred to the Relief Fund. The Relief Fund commenced its charitable activities on 1 January 2023.

Although the Relief Fund is not under the direct control of the General Assembly no changes to its constitution can be made without the approval of the General Assembly.

The Fund Trustees now considered that it would be more appropriate for the Fund to be called the “The Presbyterian Relief Fund” rather than “The Presbyterian Church in Ireland Relief Fund”. This is consistent with other church related agencies such as the Presbyterian Historical Society Ireland and the Presbyterian Children’s Society and helps to distinguish the Fund from other Funds of the Church which are under the General Assembly’s direct control.

At an Annual Meeting of the Trustees of the Presbyterian Relief Fund on 4 April 2023 the change of name was approved.

Memorialists, therefore, pray your Venerable Assembly consider approving the change to the name of the Fund as recorded in its constitution.

And Memorialists, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Adopted by the Trustees at their Annual Meeting on 6 June 2023

Rev J. Seawright (Trustee and President)

Rev P. Erskine (Trustee)

**Resolution:**

That the Memorial be received and its prayer granted.

JOHN SEAWRIGHT