

GENERAL COUNCIL

SECTION 5

Friday (approx. 10.00am)

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

1. The nominations Committee has met twice since the last General Assembly.

Refreshing the Pool

2. The Committee conducted an online survey with those who had submitted their names to the nominations 'pool' in 2014 and had not yet been used. A spreadsheet has been compiled from the replies which will enable much easier identification of those with particular interests or skills relevant to each council or committee to be quickly identified. A number of people have indicated that they no longer wish to be considered for service on councils or committees.
3. It is becoming more difficult to find suitable people in the 'pool' for the various councils and committees who have not already been serving in some capacity. In the summer it will be four years since the pool was created. There may be people who would now be suitable of whom Committee is not aware. In addition, it is impossible to know how many of those serving presently will want to go for a second four-year term at the 2019 General Assembly.
4. While it had been previously anticipated that the pool would not be refreshed until 2023, the option was left open of refreshing it earlier, if the number of those available for nomination should diminish. Experience in using an online resource ('Survey Monkey') has enabled the Committee to gather much more relevant information on members of the pool than was available using a one-page paper form in 2014. At the same time the Committee is conscious that ministers and presbyteries must have 'ownership' of the names put forward. Accordingly, at the request of the Committee, the General Council has agreed:
 - (a) That the pool be replenished before the end of 2018.
 - (b) That it be advertised (via *Presbyterian Herald*, PCI website, presbytery, email to all ministers and specifically target PCI UTC students (not just ministerial), licentiates, deaconesses, youth and family workers etc.) and that ministers be asked to make it an agenda item for kirk session.

- (c) That an electronic nomination facility be made available along the lines of the previous Survey Monkey, with similar information being obtained via a paper form.
- (d) That kirk session and presbytery ownership be secured by referring all nominations to ministers and clerks of presbytery for approval before inclusion in the pool.

End of First 4-year terms

- 5. The first four-year term of council and committee members will come to an end in 2019. The General Secretary's Department will enquire whether those appointed are willing to serve for a further four years.

Nominations

- 6. Nominations to convenerships are contained in an appended resolution while nominations to membership of councils etc. are contained in the Nominations Booklet.

JONATHAN CURRY, Convener

2017 SPECIAL ASSEMBLY TASK GROUP

A. REVIEW OF THE 2017 SPECIAL ASSEMBLY

- 1. Following the 2017 Special Assembly, 'Everyday Disciples', the Special Assembly Task Group met to review the Assembly and to consider both format and frequency of future Special Assemblies. Much of the following arises out of feedback gleaned from the follow-up survey which 182 of the 600 delegates (30.3%) completed.

General Comments

- 2. The vast majority of responses were overwhelmingly positive with appreciation particularly expressed for the 'time out' to think about the importance of discipleship at both an individual and congregational level and the opportunity to share experiences of discipleship.
- 3. The main criticisms of the Special Assembly included (a) the predominance of male speakers at both the plenary sessions and the seminars (b) the suggestion that more could have been made of the afternoon slots (c) the use of two North American keynote speakers from the same 'theological stable' and (d) a few negative comments regarding the leading of the praise.
- 4. The Task Group was encouraged by the positive feedback and appreciation of both keynote speakers. Ray Ortlund and Randy Pope were tasked with two different remits – the former to open up God's Word to delegates, centred around the theme of 'Gospel Culture', and

the latter to share key elements of good disciple-making practice, based on his own experiences.

5. The seminar programme appears to have been particularly well received by most delegates. The Task Group is extremely grateful to all seminar facilitators and hosts who helped to deliver this programme.
6. The praise, competently and sensitively led by Jonathan Rea and members of New Irish Arts was generally appreciated. The video material and follow-up interviews helped to keep the overall theme of the Assembly in perspective, and it was good to have local voices from across the island take part. The Task Group is grateful to Rev Aaron Ditty for leading the evening plenaries and to others who helped to lead worship at various times.
7. The logistics and practical arrangements ran smoothly (on the whole), thanks to the sterling work of David Thomson, the Assembly Administrator, ably assisted by his wife Karen and daughter Claire, along with Lois Gibson and Laura Whitcroft from CCLW, who helped to oversee the registration process.
8. The Task Group appreciates the support of James McCormick and staff from the Creative Production Department for providing publicity and directional material, and the work of the Delivery Team, who assisted with stewarding and various other tasks.
9. Recordings of the plenary sessions and the seminars have been edited and are now available to download from the PCI website.

Where do we go from here?

10. It is the prayer of the Task Group that delegates left the Special Assembly inspired to live as everyday disciples in a generation and culture which is fraught with obvious challenges, but also rich in opportunities to make Christ known, both near and far.
11. It is the belief of the Task Group that the Special Assembly marked a defining moment for our church, regarding (a) our response to Jesus' call in the Great Commission to 'go and make' disciples, and (b) our vision of everyday discipleship as a crucial means of individual and congregational growth and fruitfulness – a moment which the Task Group would be sad to lose.
12. In order that we do not lose the moment, and that this 'culture' of disciple-making, disciple-maturing and disciple-equipping becomes truly ingrained in the life of our congregations, intentional and clearly defined follow-up is vital.
13. The Task Group is delighted that the 'Essentials' Discipleship resource, produced by the CCLW was launched at the Special Assembly, and is now being widely used in congregations throughout the denomination. This is an excellent 'first step' resource for congregations to help them explore the key themes and elements of everyday discipleship.

14. However, to seize the moment further, the Task Group is encouraged that Rick Hill, Discipleship Officer for CCLW, with the support of the CCLW's Discipleship Committee, is piloting a new resource, (as yet untitled), which will comprise a series of disciple-making conversations on 'relational discipleship', similar to the model profiled by Randy Pope at the Special Assembly, but tailored to an Irish Presbyterian context.
15. The format will comprise 4 series of 6-8 sessions each, with content to read, video material, a passage to unpack and questions to discuss. The series titles are:
 - (a) STORY / The Big Story of God
 - (b) RHYTHMS / Key Spiritual Discipline
 - (c) SEASONS / Following Jesus when circumstances change
 - (d) PLACE / Following Jesus in the daily places of life.
16. It is hoped that the first two of these will become available in September 2018, and it is the hope of the Task Group that this key resource will become widely used throughout the denomination in the following years.

B. FUTURE SPECIAL ASSEMBLIES

17. In the feedback, there were several appreciative comments about the relaxed atmosphere and sense of fellowship at the 2017 Special Assembly, which is difficult to capture at the more 'business-like' setting of the General Assembly. Several delegates suggested that the denomination should not wait 7 years before holding another Special Assembly and that we should allow ourselves the blessing of such a gathering more often.
18. Some notes of caution:
 - (a) There is a huge amount of work in planning a Special Assembly (a minimum of 2-3 years).
 - (b) The length of recent Special Assemblies (typically lasting over 4 days, Monday-Thursday) means that a lot of people struggle to commit to the entire duration, because of personal or work commitments.
 - (c) There were some challenging issues in 2017 with the Ulster University accommodating an event of this length during August. However, on balance, the Task Group still considers this to be the most preferable time of year to hold a 3-4 day Special Assembly. This needs to be borne in mind when considering the frequency of future similar events.
 - (d) There is a danger that if we hold a Special Assembly more often than at present, such events will not be 'special' anymore, and just become more 'routine'.

A Possible way forward for discussion.

19. The Task Group discussed the possibility of an 'Interim Assembly', to take place 2-3 years after a Special Assembly, based on the same theme, as a follow-up event. The aim of the Interim Assembly would be to keep the theme of the Special Assembly live in the denomination. It was suggested that in the longer term, there could be two Interim Assemblies between each Special Assembly.
20. Suggested features of Interim Assemblies might include:
 - (a) A two-day event – beginning at 10am on Day 1 and finishing at 5pm on Day 2.
 - (b) A hotel/conference venue that could cater for likely numbers (not necessarily at the North Coast).
 - (c) Overnight accommodation optional for one night.
 - (d) Not necessarily held during the summer months – perhaps over a Friday/Saturday in autumn/winter time.
 - (e) The use of a keynote speaker, seminar facilitators, worship leaders, prayer ministry, informal/fringe events.
21. This shorter follow-up gathering could be a great encouragement to the denomination between Special Assemblies, and keep momentum going, as the denomination explores and considers relevant issues outside the pressures of General Assembly business.
22. If there was support for an Interim Assembly arrangement in principle, consideration could be given to holding a follow-up gathering to 'Everyday Disciples' in Autumn 2020.
23. A Task Group would have to be set up to oversee the planning of an Interim Assembly in 2020, if the General Council agreed in principle to recommend such an event to the General Assembly. The finer details would need to be considered carefully, including budgetary considerations.

JOHN KIRKPATRICK and GORDON BEST, Co-Conveners

The Clerk of the General Assembly, the Rev Trevor Gribben, writes:

C. ADDITIONAL REPORT REGARDING FUTURE SPECIAL ASSEMBLIES

24. At the March 2018 meeting of the General Council, the Council received the above report of the Task Group. The Council also passed the following two resolutions:
 - (a) That further statistical data relating to the 2017 Special Assembly be provided by the Co-Conveners, including the numbers attending (broken down into ministers and others) and the number of congregations represented, to be available for consideration at the 10th April 2018 meeting of the General Council.

- (b) That the two suggestions, of further Special Assemblies every seven years and of an Interim Assembly, be given preliminary consideration by the office bearers on the Council for Congregational Life and Witness, with their initial comments to be available for consideration at the 10th April 2018 meeting of the General Council.
25. At the April 2018 meeting of the General Council, the Council received the report in the Appendix, as requested from the office bearers of the Council for Congregational Life and Witness. Following discussion the General Council resolved to accept the four proposals contained in this report and append a resolution to that effect for consideration by the General Assembly.

APPENDIX

Comments of CCLW Office Bearers on the Suggestions of the 2017 Special Assembly Task Group

Remit

1. *That the two suggestions, of Special Assemblies every seven years and of an interim Assembly, be given preliminary consideration by the office bearers of the Council for Congregational Life and Witness, with their initial comments to be available for consideration at the 10th April meeting of the General Council.*

The 2017 Special Assembly statistics

2. Having gained access to the core statistics relating to the 2017 Special Assembly and available comparative figures for the previous event in 2010, we observe:
 - (a) An overall reduction in total attendance from 750 to 591.
 - (b) A reduction in residential delegates from 195 to 162.
 - (c) A reduction in non-residential delegates attending all days from 555 to 365.
 - (d) A reduction in total number of congregations represented from 240 to 228.
3. In terms of spread of congregations attending in 2017, the general picture is that larger and medium sized congregations of a more suburban nature located in Antrim and Down, formed the significant percentage of churches represented. There was significantly less congregational representation from west of the Bann, the more southerly presbyteries of Northern Ireland and the area covered by Monaghan and the Dublin and Munster Presbyteries.

The Emerging Picture

4. The picture emerging is typical of response to events and training offered on an ongoing basis by the Council for Congregational Life and Witness across the denomination. It reflects:-
 - (a) The numerical strength of PCI being located in Counties Antrim and Down when measured by total membership;
 - (b) The congregational spread being much wider, but distributed in smaller congregations in the rest of the Island;
 - (c) A general struggle to encourage already busy core members to attend extra denominational events beyond the regular patterns of their own congregation's activities. For this reason, we anticipate that any future Special Assembly would be likely to continue to evidence decline in delegate numbers and congregations participating, especially members staying residentially and committing to attend the whole event. Moving the event from the summer months to another period of the year is unlikely to increase availability of core members, in fact it would more likely have the opposite effect.

Impressions of the impact of Special Assemblies

5. Our impression is, that while Special Assemblies have been significant in the life of the denomination in recent decades, there remains a tendency to overstate both their immediate impact and ongoing influence on the development of individual congregational life and witness. Largely, this is due to the insuperable challenge of delegates translating their enthusiasm and learning from conferences back into the congregation in ways that enable those who didn't attend to catch the vision, to grasp and develop, locally and collectively, the area of congregational life and witness highlighted by the event.
6. This is an aspect of the wider consideration of the value of the model of extracting key leaders from their congregation for envisioning and learning. Its ability to create deep impact is increasingly questionable. A more fruitful approach may be to invest in a model in which the local congregation is the space and environment in which key leaders and wider membership are exposed to new ideas together and learn how to apply them in their situation in a local, collaboratively created, owned and implemented vision.

Conclusions

7. For these reasons we conclude that the vehicle of Special Assembly continues to play a significant denominational role in helping the church capture the moment for ministry and mission in Ireland, creating conversation, providing space for fellowship, networking and general encouragement. None of this is unimportant, particularly for denominational self-understanding and identity, but the Assemblies are

not a primary, significant means of embedding congregational change. Therefore, it seems important to identify a particularly strategic moment or theme as the reason to call another Special Assembly, rather than repeat the exercise on a seven year cycle.

8. Perhaps any future Special Assembly should be shorter, for example commencing with an evening celebration, followed by one full day programme and finishing at lunchtime the following day. This may encourage greater numbers of delegates and a wider spread of congregations to participate in the whole event. Given the continuing trend in reduction in numbers of delegates, consideration of alternative venues to the University of Ulster, Coleraine, should also be possible.
9. The primary, ongoing work of envisioning, equipping and enabling support and development of congregational life and witness is better served through the annual programmes and opportunities offered by CCLW (and other councils as appropriate) and delivered at congregational, presbytery and regional levels. It is difficult to see how an Interim Assembly would enhance that work, or whether it could garner significant participation from congregations.
10. Finally, should there be a desire for interim Assemblies and a fixed seven year Assembly programme, rather than base it on the return sample from the 2017, the mind of the wider church should be tested.

Proposals

11. We would therefore make the following proposals:
 - (a) That the suggestion of an interim, follow up event to the 2017 Special Assembly should not be pursued;
 - (b) That in early 2021, a Task Group, comprised primarily of members of the Priorities Committee and the Council for Congregational Life and Witness, be formed to prayerfully discern if there is an emerging theme for a residential Special Assembly to be held in 2024;
 - (c) That should such a theme obviously present itself to the Task Group, that a recommendation be brought to the 2021 General Assembly for a Special Assembly in August 2024 and suitable arrangements for delivery of such an event be set in place;
 - (d) That if such a theme does not obviously present itself to the Task Group, that no Special Assembly be held in 2024, but that the matter of future Special Assemblies, or alternatives, be considered by the General Council.

REVIEW OF MODERATOR'S YEAR TASK GROUP

1. The Task Group, chaired by the Rev Stuart Finlay, met on three occasions, covering a range of issues and reported with a general framework and specific recommendations to the General Council, as outlined in the Appendix. The General Council, meeting in March 2018, received the report and agreed that its specific recommendations and general framework be adopted.

APPENDIX

A. GENERAL POINTS

During General Assembly Week:

1. The Moderator's role is very clear; there should always be a past Moderator 'on stand-by'; the Moderator should continue to preach at Communion;
2. As there is now no system for setting a 'theme for the week/year', on balance it is recommended that from 2019 onwards, the Moderator was given a theme (ideally after consultation if possible).

Sundays:

3. Generally the system works well. Normally if a Moderator visits a congregation one year it is recommended that their successor should not go the next year.

General Assembly Councils, Committees etc:

4. It is recommended that the Moderator should continue to chair the General Council, the General Assembly Business Committee and the Council for Public Affairs (the latter as able). Other invitations to chair should normally be graciously declined, though each Moderator should seek to visit each General Assembly Council and Commission once during their year of office.

Pastoral role – illness and difficult circumstances of Ministers, Assembly Buildings staff etc:

5. Generally this is working well. It is recommended that the Deputy Clerk continue to have responsibility to keep the Moderator informed of illnesses in the ministry and Assembly Buildings. (Clerks of Presbytery are asked to keep the Deputy Clerk up to date especially with regard to Minister Emeriti.) Presbytery tours could be used for this and particularly with reference to Ministers Emeriti.

6. It is recommended that the Moderator, or if not available a former Moderator, should ideally participate in the funeral of ministerial colleagues. This should take the form of passing on the sympathy of the General Assembly and leading the main pastoral prayer. The Moderator should not be asked to do the tribute or to preach. (It is useful if the person doing the tribute could pass a copy of their text onto the General Secretary's office for use in drawing up a Memorial Record.) While recognising that the family's wishes are paramount, colleagues organising such funerals should seek sensitively to advise on the Moderator's participation and should ensure the Moderator or his secretary are kept fully informed. It is of course important to note that the General Secretary's office should be informed as soon as possible of a minister's death. It is also pastorally useful if the office is informed of the death of a minister's spouse.

Inter-Church involvement in Ireland:

7. Generally working well, through the Church Leaders Group (Ireland), the Inter-Church Committee and the Inter-Church Meeting.

Other Church Assemblies etc:

8. System for attendance at the Church of Ireland and Methodist annual meetings is working well.
9. Decisions to be made by the General Assembly re GB Assemblies.
10. Decisions to be made by the General Assembly regarding other 'further afield' Assemblies.

State, Civic and Public Square Events and Political Interaction:

11. It is recommended that the Moderator each year should visit formally Westminster, the Oireachtas and the Northern Ireland Assembly.
12. The Moderator will normally also attend a series of other 'national events', including Garden Parties (both in London and NI), Remembrance events (in both jurisdictions) etc.
13. The Moderator will receive invitations to a significant number of civic events and well as those run by a range of organisations. It is recommended that the advice of the Clerk of Assembly should be taken as to the appropriateness of attendance and the need for a deputy if the Moderator's diary does not permit attendance.
14. The Press Officer is at the disposal of the Moderator throughout the year, and it is recommended that all statements should be issued through the Press Office. Statements will often be drawn up, and initiatives taken, in consultation with the Clerk, the Council for Public Affairs and the Press Office. It is recommended that the Moderator should meet regularly with the Clerk and Public Affairs Officer to be briefed regarding current and developing public square issues and to be given guidance regarding interaction with both government and political parties in both jurisdictions.

Practical and Financial Arrangements:

15. It is recommended that the incoming Moderator should be free from his/her duties from 1st May to allow preparation time. A holiday in late April/early May is encouraged. Whoever is taking charge of their congregation should assume the duties from the start of May. Payment for cover of an Assistant Minister is for a period of 15 months (i.e. until the end of the following July). It is suggested that the incoming Moderator should not have any preaching engagements on the Sundays prior to and the Sunday following the Assembly.
16. The Moderator's special allowance is paid out of the Incidental Fund at the rate of the Basic Ministerial Minimum as fixed from year to year. It is recommended that approximately one quarter is paid prior to taking office during May, and similar payments are made at the end of other quarters.
17. The Moderator's normal stipend from his/her congregation continues as usual but congregational expense payments will normally be retained to off-set the costs of those who are deputising during his/her absence. The special allowance is intended to cover all official expenses for the year and is taxable.
18. The Moderator is responsible for all travelling and hospitality expenses (for himself and his/her spouse) incurred within the British Isles, including attendance as a corresponding member at other churches. The Moderator however is not responsible for travel and hospitality expenses for himself/herself on his/her overseas visit, nor for those of his/her spouse if they attend. Any loss of earnings by the Moderator, e.g. Chaplaincies, Clerkships etc. are reimbursed from Central Funds.
Overseas churches and other bodies vary widely in the degree of responsibility they accept for costs incurred: sometimes an 'invitation' involves no financial commitment whatsoever. Where there is any uncertainty, it is wise to offer payment on the spot for hotel bills etc. and to retain receipts.

B. PRESBYTERY TOURS

19. Moderators of the General Assembly (often accompanied by their spouse) visit a number of presbyteries during their year of office. These presbytery tours, which are some of the key weeks of a Moderator's year, are allocated by the Clerk of Assembly on a rotational basis, though this may be altered for local reasons.
20. The purpose of the tours is threefold:
 - (a) **Experiential.** To enable the Moderator to experience life and witness of PCI in various locations throughout Ireland.
 - (b) **Pastoral.** To encourage local ministers, elders and members as the Moderator visits manses, congregations and places of work.

- (c) **Profile.** To raise the profile of PCI in a locality through engaging with the community generating interest and associated press coverage.
- 21. When well thought through a Moderator's visit can usefully raise the profile of the presbytery and the life and witness of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and can sometimes prepare the way to make it possible for local ministers to follow up or gain access to people and institutions previously inaccessible.
- 22. A presbytery tour will usually take place over eight days (Sunday to Sunday) and should ideally include one day free of engagements (often a Saturday) and part of a day mid-week.
- 23. Given the strategic nature of presbytery tours, it is recommended that the number should be increased from three per year to four per year from the 2018/19 year onwards – ideally in the first weeks of October, November, February and March.
- 24. **Initial Arrangements:** The presbytery moderator and clerk will ordinarily consult with colleagues and the GA Moderator pertaining to the engagements undertaken and will coordinate the overall timetable.
 - (a) **It is recommended that** there should be a meeting between one or more representatives of the presbytery and the GA Moderator at an early stage in the planning process. (The GA Clerk and/or his secretary may also be present at this meeting.) The initial thinking of the presbytery representatives should be discussed with the GA Moderator and possible amendments and additions agreed.
 - (b) The appropriate involvement of the Moderator's spouse during the week should be clarified.
 - (c) As plans evolve, the presbytery should ensure that the Moderator is briefed on the nature and expectations of each specific engagement. The Moderator should be accompanied by someone appropriate from the presbytery at all times and that meals should be included in the schedule. Accommodation should be arranged in consultation with the Moderator. Moderators may wish to make their own arrangements. While it may be appropriate to stay with colleagues, hotel accommodation may also be appropriate on occasions, with hotel expenses covered by the Moderator.
 - (d) **It is recommended that** the General Assembly Press Officer should be involved at an early stage, with opportunities discerned as to how to use the Moderator's visit to highlight widely the mission and ministry of PCI.
- 25. A variety of engagements will be undertaken, varying according to the nature of the Presbytery and the gifting/specific interests of the Moderator, but will include engagements such as:
 - (a) Sundays – Preaching in four different churches (two each Sunday). Careful thought should be given to the strategic choice of congregations e.g. because of their location, needs or circumstances.

- (b) Visit to a presbytery meeting including opportunity to address the presbytery and meet ministers and elders over refreshments.
- (c) Mid-week 'celebration' event(s) for the whole presbytery. These could include an interview/slot on the Moderator's life, theme or overseas visit along with preaching/epilogue.
- (d) Pastoral visits to senior ministers emeriti/spouses or to manse families as deemed appropriate. It is important that the week's programme of events leaves space for this important aspect of a Moderator's visit to a Presbytery.
- (e) Event(s) for the encouragement of ministers and other ministry staff may well be appropriate. Dependent on the local context, it may be possible to hold a specific event for ministers' spouses.
- (f) Congregational or presbytery related projects – e.g. visits to congregational outreach projects in the community; Job Clubs; Night Light/Street Pastors visit.
- (g) Community Involvement - depending on whether it is an urban or rural context, visits to a variety of community contexts may be appropriate. The following are descriptive rather than prescriptive suggestions:
 - Seats of local government (normally national and devolved institutions are visited on other occasions).
 - Prison/Young Offenders institutions in company with the Chaplain to meet the Governor, staff and inmates.
 - University (perhaps invited to give a lecture)
 - Visit to university chaplaincy/Christian Union committee
 - Schools – primary and secondary, often speaking at Assembly or RE class
 - Special Schools
 - Nursing Homes
 - Hospitals
 - Hospice visit
 - Sheltered Housing project
 - Emergency Services: Fire, Ambulance, River or Sea rescue
 - Armed Forces visit
 - PSNI/Garda Siochana
 - Farm/fishery visits
 - Farmers market
 - International outreach contexts
 - Sporting clubs/matches

- Factory, manufacturing or local enterprise visits
- Cross Community projects
- Visits to people and places which have experienced recent tragedy/need eg location of flooding
- Radio/Newspaper/TV interviews

Other points of note:

26. The agendas of the General Assembly's Councils should by and large not be to the fore during a presbytery tour. The focus is on the ministry and mission of the presbytery and its congregations and the events and meetings organized should be locally focused. It may however be appropriate to visit specific PCI projects – seeking to acknowledge and enhance local involvement with such projects.
27. Programmes should be full enough to ensure the potential of a Moderator's visit is maximized, but not too full to mean that the Moderator does not have sufficient time to relate to people in the informal time before and after events. Likewise, space should be made for the important pastoral aspects of a Moderator's visit to a presbytery.
28. Ideally a 'debrief/feedback' meeting should be held shortly after a Moderator's tour has been completed. This should involve the GA Moderator along with a few representatives of presbytery and reflections of both the positive aspects of the tour, as well as those aspects with room for improvement, should be noted. (Again, the GA Clerk and/or his secretary may also be present at this meeting.)

C. PCI PROJECTS IN IRELAND

29. There are some 20 PCI projects in Ireland, the majority under the care of Council for Social Witness, and others under the care of Council for Mission in Ireland (see Table 1). In recent years the pattern of involvement for the Moderator with these projects has varied:
 - (a) Participating in a special event eg opening, anniversary.
 - (b) Visiting during a presbytery tour.
 - (c) Visiting after conducting a service in nearby congregation.
 - (d) 100th birthday visit.
 - (e) 2- 3 day tour of various projects to understand breadth of work.
30. The benefits of this engagement are:
 - (a) The Moderator gets first-hand experience of significant areas of mission and ministry of PCI.
 - (b) The Moderator can disseminate news of the projects throughout the Church.
 - (c) There is opportunity to encourage staff in their work situation.

- (d) There is opportunity to meet with volunteers and express appreciation for their work.
 - (e) There is opportunity to meet with residents/service users and to share in ministry.
 - (f) There is opportunity to meet with relatives.
 - (g) The Press and Media interest in the Moderator gives a profile to the projects.
 - (h) The Moderator will be equipped to address pertinent issues in 'The Public Square'.
31. It is clear that a more structured approach with these projects would ensure each Moderator has as broad an experience as possible. Councils could ensure that all projects are covered by rota over a determined period of time - not every project needs to be visited every year. **Therefore it is recommended that:**
- (a) The Clerk should assist the Moderator by co-ordinating a programme of visits in consultation with the Secretaries of the Council for Social Witness and Council for Mission in Ireland. Not every project should be visited every year and projects which will be visited during a presbytery tour in a particular year should not be visited at other times in that same year. Both presbytery clerks and local ministers should be informed of and involved in these visits.
 - (b) Up to five days should be allocated for a focussed visit to these projects, with this best split into a three and a two day block. These blocks should come as early as possible in the Moderator's year so that the experiences can be shared with the wider Church, with ideally with one block during the summer.
 - (c) This should not preclude other engagements as noted in point 1 above.

Table 1 – PCI Projects in Ireland

Project	Work	Council	Presbytery
Sunnyside House	Residential Home	CSW	Ards
Corkey House	Residential Home	CSW	Belfast North
Carlisle House	Substance Misuse Centre	CSW	Belfast North
Gray's Court	Supported Housing	CSW	Belfast North
Thompson House	Offenders Hostel	CSW	Belfast North
Kinghan Church	Disability Service for Hearing Impaired	CSW	Belfast South

Project	Work	Council	Presbytery
Adelaide House	Residential Home	CSW	Belfast South
International Meeting Point	Ministry to migrant community	CMI	Belfast South
Derryvolgie Hall	Student Accommodation	CMI	Belfast South
Friendship House	Community Engagement	CMI	Belfast South
Aaron House	Respite and Day Care for adults with severe Learning Disability	CSW	Belfast East
Nightlight	“On-street” ministry	CMI	Various Belfast
Topley Court	Supported living for people with physical disability	CSW	Coleraine and Limavady
Willow Brook	Supported living for people with learning disability	CSW	Coleraine and Limavady
Trinity House	Residential Home	CSW	Coleraine and Limavady
Tritonville Close	Sheltered Housing	CSW	Dublin and Munster
Lawnfield	Residential respite care for adults with physical disability	CSW	Iveagh
River House	Residential Home	CSW	Iveagh
Harold McCauley	Nursing Home	CSW	Omagh
St Andrew’s Bungalows	Sheltered Housing	CSW	Templepatrick

D. CHAPLAINS – HEALTHCARE, EDUCATION, PRISONS AND FORCES

32. Following discussion of a paper on the above it was agreed to recommend to the Council:
- (a) The Moderator should seek to visit on a rota basis full-time (and ideally significant part-time) chaplains working in Healthcare, University and College and Prison settings. This should be included as part of presbytery visits when appropriate, with the rota taking account of this.
 - (b) Additional to this, the Moderator should visit some significant Healthcare, University and College and Prison institutions on a rota basis each year. These visits may or may not be with the visits outlined in point 1 above and again should be included as part of presbytery visits when appropriate, with the rota taking account of this.
 - (c) The Moderator should ideally each year visit a forces chaplain on assignment (either in GB or overseas) and in addition make a formal visit to the UK and Republic of Ireland Armed Forces as appropriate. (On occasions a visit to a chaplain may be combined with a formal visit to Armed Forces.)
 - (d) The Secretary of the Council for Mission in Ireland, along with the relevant Assembly Committee Conveners, shall liaise with the Clerk of Assembly in drawing up the rotas referred to above.

E. GLOBAL MISSION VISITS

33. The Task Group considered a detailed paper and after discussion present the following to the Council:
- (a) **Purpose:** In normal circumstances, the Council for Global Mission, through the Global Mission Secretary, organises one overseas visit for the Moderator during the year and it is recommended that this continue.
 - The primary purpose is to contribute to the developing and strengthening of relationships with global mission partner churches/organisations and to convey a positive message to partners that they are important to PCI.
 - The visit may also contribute to the Global Mission Council's provision of pastoral support for PCI's global mission workers.
 - There is also the potential of stimulating the Moderator's interest in global mission and that of the congregation to which the Moderator returns after their year in office.
 - (b) **Destination:** Normally any location around the world where PCI is involved in a global mission partnership is considered, even where there may be no PCI global mission workers involved. The destination would be decided based on the following, the first of which is especially important:

- An invitation being received from one or more partner churches
- Suggestions by the Global Mission Secretary/Global Mission Partnership Panel
- The views and interests of the Moderator

By way of variation, on at least two occasions Moderators have made the World Development Appeal focused visits facilitated by Tearfund or Christian Aid.

Visits to strengthen historic relationships in the Western world eg USA, Australia, and/or to attend global inter-church conferences or events are usually viewed as being additional and not normally organised by the Global Mission Council.

- (c) **Accompaniment:** Occasionally a Moderator will travel alone but normally Moderators who are married are accompanied by their spouse. On rare occasions, at the Moderator's request, a Moderator's chaplain or an additional family member has been included, usually an older child – this should not be seen as the norm. It is not possible, however, to extend to congregational or team participation. Any accompaniment should not blur or detract from it being the Moderator's visit. It may be necessary for a member of the Global Mission Council, staff team, or former Global Mission Worker to accompany the Moderator in order to facilitate the smooth running of the visit.
- (d) **Timing and Duration:** There is a clear preference to have visits (one to three weeks in duration) taking place in the first half of the Moderator's year although some of the most promising invitations to the Moderator come at short notice and may be timed towards the end of the Moderator's year.
- (e) **Preparation:** The Moderator is required to have a health check, vaccinations, and security training, leading to one or two meetings for orientation to the country, partners and Global Mission Workers.
- (f) **Returning home:** As far as possible, the Moderator will write a blog during the visit and make a short DVD recording. On return there will be a debriefing with the Global Mission Secretary, opportunity to feed back to the Global Mission Council and write for PCI's publications. It is important to remember to promote the United Appeal and to reflect the overseas experience during the remainder of the year of office and beyond.
- (g) **Costs:** Up to now the Incidental Fund has covered the core costs of the Moderator, but moving forward it is recommended that the spouse's core costs be covered as well.

TREVOR D GRIBBEN, Convener

REFORMATION CELEBRATION TASK GROUP

1. The Reformation Celebration Task Group was appointed by the 2016 General Assembly to plan and deliver a celebratory event to mark the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation.
2. The group adopted the title 'Faith at the Crossroads – Rediscovering the Reformation' and planned for three events on consecutive evenings in Abbey Church, Dublin, the Waterside Theatre, Londonderry and Assembly Buildings, Belfast. Dr. Conrad Mbewe, our keynote speaker, from Kabwata Baptist Church in Lusaka brought an international flavour to the event and was living proof of the impact of the Reformation outside of the continent of Europe. He spoke from Romans Ch.3:21-26 from which he drew out the five solas of the Reformation.
3. Each evening included a 'table talk' discussion offering some reflections on the significance of the Reformation for today. The panels included former Moderators, Dr. Trevor Morrow in Dublin, Dr. Rob Craig in Londonderry and Dr. Frank Sellar in Belfast. They were joined by Heather Humphreys TD in Dublin, Noreen Erskine in Londonderry and Belfast, and Dr. Martyn Cowan from Union College who was present on all three evenings.
3. Each celebration was led by Rev. Chris Kennedy, minister of Dun Laoghaire, and the praise was enhanced by Jonathan Rea and members of New Irish Arts. Members of local churches contributed readings and prayers. Jonathan Rea and Chris Kennedy also collaborated on a new hymn for the occasion entitled 'Stand Still'. The words and music were printed in the programme to encourage its use in congregational singing.
4. We were also delighted to have the Moderator of the General Assembly present at all three venues.
5. The first evening on Tuesday, 17 October in Dublin was the day after Storm Ophelia had swept through Ireland closing Dublin airport for a time and shutting down much of the city's public transport system. It was encouraging, therefore, to have 120-140 who braved the elements to be part of the celebration in Abbey Church. These included several public and political representatives. The Waterside Theatre in Londonderry almost reached its capacity with 390 present for the second evening. This was due in no small measure to the work on the ground by the Derry and Donegal Presbytery who actively promoted the event throughout the Northwest. The ground floor of the Assembly Hall in Belfast was full for the final evening with 450-500 in attendance. This means that just under 1000 people participated in the celebration.
6. Each attendee received a souvenir brochure designed by the Creative Production Department and sponsored by Arthur J Gallagher. The brochure included background articles on Martin Luther and some activities for families and children based on 'Luther's Pouches' of faith and love.

7. The Task Group is grateful to all who supported ‘Faith at the Crossroads’. We trust that for all who were present it was a fitting way in which to mark a very significant anniversary and, in the words of the celebratory hymn, to affirm confidently:

Here we stand, here we’ll stay,

Christ is enough now and always.

DAVID JOHNSTON, Convener

HISTORIAL ARCHIVING TASK GROUP

1. The Historical Archiving Task Group has met once since the last General Assembly – a further meeting was arranged, but due to weather conditions, did not reach a quorum.
2. **Strong Room.** Most of the material in the Strong Room which is appropriate to transfer to the care of the Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland (PHSI) has been so transferred.
3. **Board and Committee records:** Space has been made in one of the store rooms on the first floor near the Minor Hall to allow the various departments in Assembly Buildings to deposit material under three headings:
 - (a) Minutes and other official documentation which it is necessary to preserve.
 - (b) Documentation and artefacts which may be of interest to the PHSI, which will be given the option of receiving them.
 - (c) Items for disposal.
4. A start has been made with material held by the Congregational Life and Witness and the General Secretary’s Departments. It is evident that, in the absence of someone specifically appointed to the task, it will be a lengthy time-consuming exercise fitted in round the normal duties of staff.
5. **GDPR:** The Task Group is aware of the work of the GDPR Task Group and that some of that will involve the formulation of a retention policy for personal data. This will likely impact the work of this Task Group and may turn out to subsume a major part of it.

JIM STOTHERS, Convener

GENERAL COUNCIL

AD-HOC BUSINESS

1. The General Council, in line with its remit to co-ordinate and facilitate the general work of the Church, and on occasions to act on behalf of the General Assembly, transacted a number of items of business during the past year.

Issuing of calls under Par 272(9) of the Code (for details see the report of the Council for Mission in Ireland)

2. Since the last meeting of the General Assembly, the Council facilitated the work of the Council for Mission in Ireland by issuing calls to Prison, Forces and University Chaplains.

Healthcare Chaplaincy (for details see the report of the Council for Mission in Ireland)

3. At the request of the Council for Mission in Ireland, and acting on behalf of the General Assembly under Par 272(3) of the Code, the Council affirmed the submission of the Healthcare, Prisons and Forces Chaplaincy Committee as being the position of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, by passing the following resolution:

That the General Council expresses its concern to the Northern Health and Social Care Trust at the proposed formalising of a generic model of chaplaincy across the Trust's sites, and affirms the detailed consultation submission of the Healthcare, Prisons and Forces Chaplaincy Committee to the Trust, outlining the general and specific concerns, as the position of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland on this matter.

Transfer of Peacehaven Trust to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (for details see the report of the Council for Social Witness)

4. The General Council noted that the previously agreed business and assets transfer of the Peacehaven company was not possible. Therefore, at the request of the Council for Social Witness, and noting the approval in principle of the General Assembly Trustees, the General Council acted on behalf of the General Assembly under Par 272(3) of the Code and agreed the following two resolutions:
 - (a) That the General Council authorise the takeover of Peacehaven Trust Ltd, with the General Assembly Trustees becoming the sole member, as outlined in the report, subject to the conditions set by the Trustees and any other legal requirements as advised by the General Assembly Solicitor.
 - (b) That the Business and Finance Panel of the Council for Social Witness, in consultation with the Clerk of the General Assembly and the General Assembly Solicitor, be authorised to take the steps necessary to allow the takeover to proceed.

Republic of Ireland Referendum on the 8th Amendment (for details see the report of the Council for Public Affairs)

5. At the request of the Council for Public Affairs, the General Council acted on behalf of the General Assembly under Par 272(3) of the Code, to agree that the Presbyterian Church in Ireland support the retention of the Eighth Amendment in the referendum debate. The Council further agreed the recommendation that a Task Group be established by the most appropriate Council of the Church to review and develop our pastoral care for women and families affected by pregnancy crisis, pregnancy loss, the diagnosis of a life-limiting condition and other related circumstances. This should include support for those caring for children and young people with disabilities.

Congregational Contacts used by the General Assembly and its Councils

6. At the time of restructuring the Structures Panel recommended that the number of congregational contacts used by the General Assembly and its Councils be minimised. This was largely because of the proliferation of ‘agents’ that congregations were being asked to appoint and the near impossibility of keeping such contact lists up to date.
7. It was envisaged that in addition to the Minister, Clerk of Session, Treasurer and Designated Person, each congregation would have one ‘Main Contact Person’. It would be the duty of that person to forward on all of the e-mails from the General Assembly’s Councils to the relevant person or persons in their congregation. As a result the up to date knowledge about the current leaders of different areas of a congregation’s life would be held at congregational level and therefore always be accurate. It was envisaged that, with the exception of communications specifically for the office-bearers named above, all communications would be sent electronically to the ‘Main Contact Person’ in each congregation, who would need to be efficient both in the use of e-mail and in administration. This person could of course be the Clerk of Session, or in extremis the Minister, but it would probably be preferable that it was a different person with this dedicated role.
8. Recognising the important work of the GDPR Task Group, and the need to minimise data held centrally by PCI, the General Council set up a small Task Group to carry forward this, as yet unimplemented, recommendation of the Structures Panel. The Task Group was given authority to make any necessary minor amendments to the proposals outlined above, following consultations with Council Secretaries and any other relevant office-bearers. However, the Council agreed that it was important that the number of categories of congregational contacts did not proliferate, meaning a return to the current problems. The Task Group was also be asked to oversee any other necessary streamlining of the PCI Central Database, including the updating of all information held, particularly with regard to the requirements of GDPR.

New Structure of the Council for Congregational Life and Witness

9. In its report to the 2017 General Assembly, the Council for Congregational Life and Witness (CCLW) outlined the difficulties emerging from the complex structure of Committees, Panels, Task Groups and Organising Groups involved in delivering its remit. A resolution agreed by the 2017 Assembly authorised the Council to engage with the General Council to reflect on a structure which best ensures both appropriate accountability and ability to deliver its remit.
10. During the past year CCLW engaged external input to shape organisational design, carefully considered the views of Council members, discussed proposals with present Committee Conveners and staff, and engaged with the General Council. As a result the new structures, as outlined in the Appendix, were given overwhelming support by CCLW and the General Council in response passed the following two resolutions:
 - (a) That the General Council support the proposed Committee streamlining for the Council for Congregational Life and Witness, agreeing that it will better facilitate both the delivery of the General Assembly's remit to that Council and also the necessary oversight of that delivery;
 - (b) That the General Council transmit the report to the 2018 General Assembly, with the recommendation that the new structures for the Council for Congregational Life and Witness become operative from the 2019 General Assembly.

PROPOSED COMMITTEE STREAMLINING COUNCIL FOR CONGREGATIONAL LIFE AND WITNESS

Background**Presenting issue**

1. The Council for Congregational Life and Witness has a wide remit. Its formation has helpfully consolidated overall resourcing of the primary areas of congregational ministry and mission. However, the multiplicity of committees is creating an overall output that is swamping congregations with too many messages and resources. The present committee structure does not lend itself to streamlining outputs, or facilitate the kind of coordination, collaboration and prioritisation that will enable strategic development to coalesce around the Council's central theme of Fruitful Congregations.

Response: Resolution passed by the General Assembly 2017

2. That the General Assembly encourage the Council for Congregational Life and Witness to engage with the General Council to:
 - (a) reflect on the structure of Committees, Panels, Task Groups and Organising Groups that best ensures appropriate accountability and ability to deliver its remit to envision, equip and enable congregations for their life and witness.

Proposal: Streamlining of committee structure**3. What remains the same?**

- (a) Commitment to the principles of accountability, communication and engagement
- (b) The Council's remit and commitment to ensure adequate resourcing in all areas for which it is responsible
- (c) Specific input to ensure the continuing integration of Children, Youth and Family, and Women's ministries into the overall agenda of congregational life and witness
- (d) Delivery mechanisms in which Task Groups remain responsible for delivery of major pieces of work and Organising Groups for the delivery of key Council events. Both groups reporting directly to the Council or relevant Committee
- (e) The numbers of Council members and breakdown of Presbytery Direct Nominees and Nominations Committee Nominees
- (f) Council staffing.

4. What are the proposed changes to Committee structure?

- (a) That the present six thematic General Assembly Committees (Leadership, Discipleship, Worship, Pastoral Care, Outreach and Global Mission Involvement) are reduced to two - 'Congregational Life' (with a remit for development of Leadership, Discipleship, Worship, and Pastoral Care, with the addition of congregational prayer) and 'Congregational Witness' (with a remit for development of Evangelism, Community Witness, Global Mission Involvement and also incorporating Good Relations)
- (b) That the existing General Assembly Committees for Youth, Children's and Family Strategy and Coordination and Women's Ministry Strategy and Coordination be re-designated as Panels, but retain their existing remit
- (c) That a Programme, Finance and Coordination Committee be formed as a crucial element of the structure to prepare and provide Council with options from which to devise a more streamlined, medium term, strategy and framework for delivery of envisioning, equipping and enabling for the life and witness of congregations.

Designated roles and responsibilities of various bodies within the proposed structure

5. **Two Thematic Committees – Congregational Life Committee and Congregational Witness Committee with the roles of:**
 - (a) receiving and interpreting feedback from congregations and presbyteries to feed it forward into draft strategy agendas;
 - (b) making recommendations to the Programme, Finance and Coordination Committee for medium term Council Programme setting out proposals for a framework of priorities, strategy and output in the areas of their remits;
 - (c) overseeing delivery of strategy and output by Task and Organising Groups.
6. **Programme, Finance and Coordination Committee with the roles of:**
 - (a) receiving recommendations from the two Thematic Committees for the formation of an overall Council Programme;
 - (b) receiving specific input from Women's Ministry and Children's, Youth and Family Panels;
 - (c) overseeing and preparing recommendations for Council which ensure balanced output across all areas of the Council's remit;
 - (d) overseeing and preparing recommendations for Council which streamline and create convergence between outputs to ensure Council is working within what it can deliver and what congregations are reasonably able to receive and absorb in any given period;
 - (e) compiling and tabling recommendations for an overall priorities and strategy paper for Council consideration (may include options);
 - (f) overseeing expenditure of United Appeal allocation;
 - (g) taking limited routine decisions where necessary between Council meetings and transacting any business specifically delegated to it, including allocating remits given by the General Assembly.
7. **Women's Ministry Panel and Children's, Youth and Family Panel with the following roles:**
 - (a) Women's Ministry Panel:
 - (i) overseeing and giving approval to items relating to Presbyterian Women;
 - (ii) providing input to the three Council Committees on priorities, strategy and output relating to women's ministry and integrating their specialism into the Council agenda where appropriate.

- (b) Children's, Youth and Family Panel:
 - (i) providing input to the three Council Committees on priorities, strategy and output relating to children's, youth and family ministry and integrating their specialism into the Council agenda where appropriate.
- (c) The Council, fulfilling the following remit:
 - (i) receiving recommendations and/or options from the Programme, Finance and Coordination Committee for overall three year Council programme;
 - (ii) debating, deciding and recommending Council priorities, strategy and programme to the General Assembly;
 - (iii) overseeing other items of Council business and monitoring overall delivery of Council programme.
- 8. **A series of Task and Organising Groups as required with the roles of:**
 - (a) assuming direct responsibility for delivery of the Council Programme;
 - (b) reporting on delivery to the appropriate body from which their work originated.

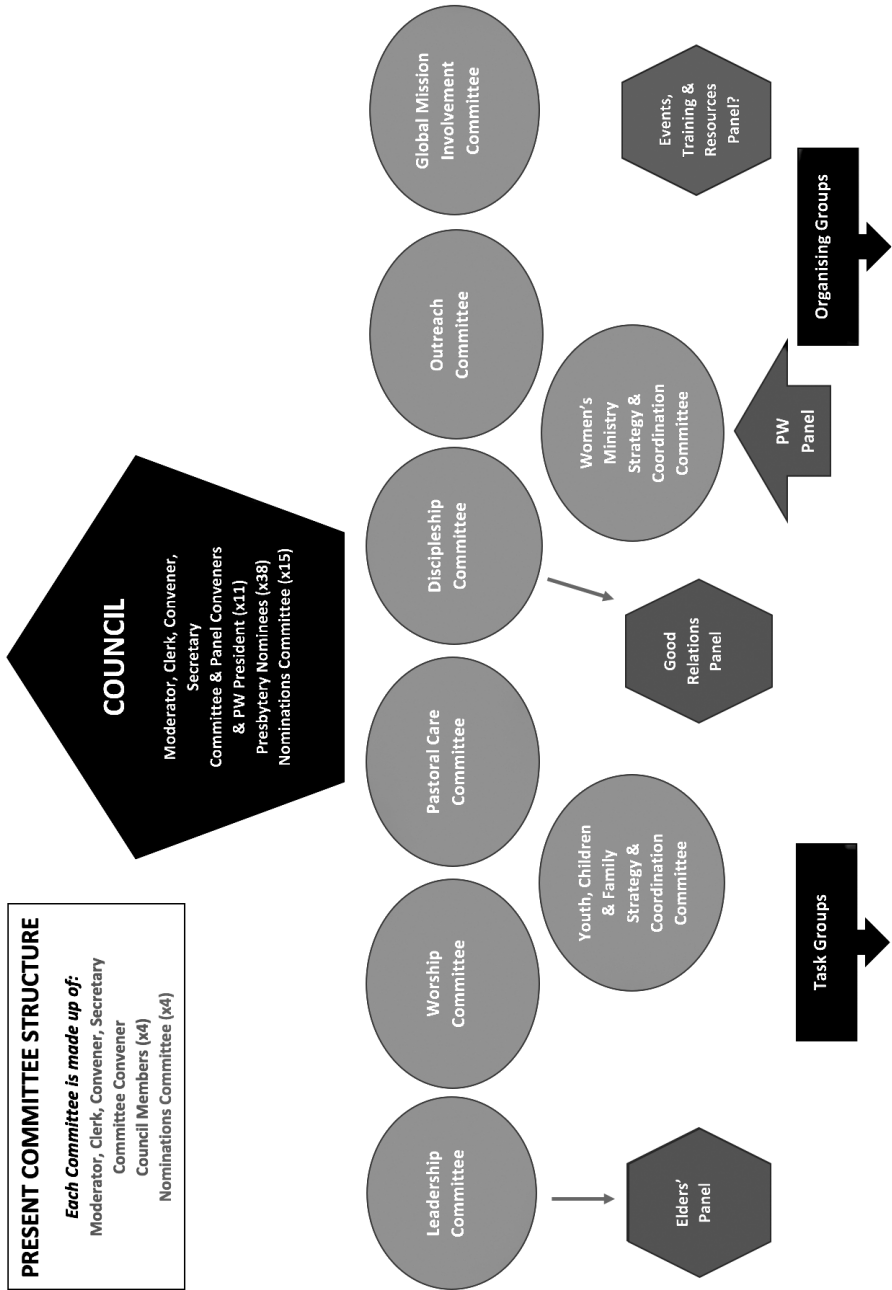
Pruning for greater fruitfulness

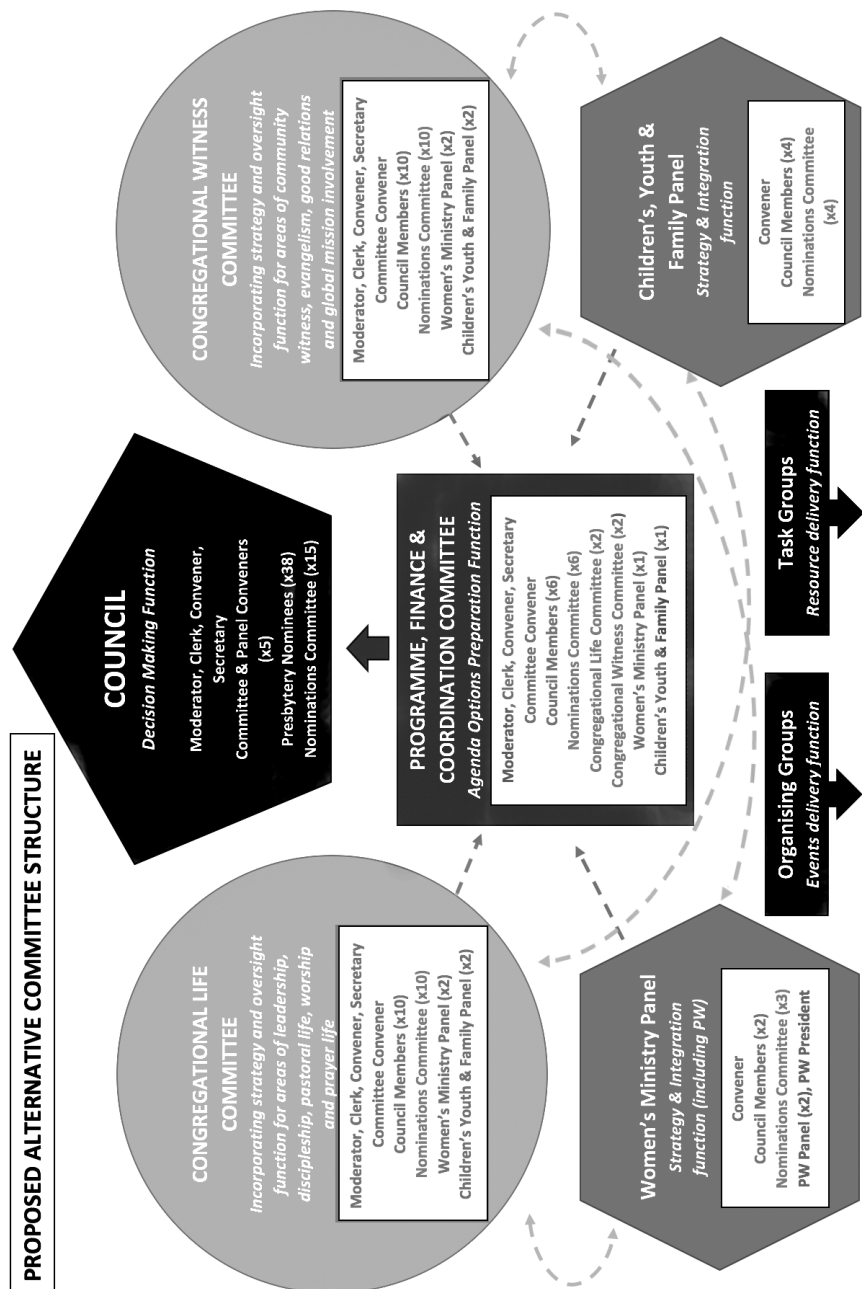
"Every branch that does bear fruit he prunes that it will be even more fruitful" John 15:2.

- 9. The aim of the proposed alternative is to ensure increasing fruitfulness in the Council's ministry in support of the life and witness of congregations.
- 10. The present committee structure ensures 'a place for everything'. It has been effective in enabling the transition of the various elements which were distributed widely in the previous Board structure into one Council aimed at resourcing congregational life and witness. However, by putting 'everything in its own place' it perpetuates silos, impedes coordination and results in unnecessary duplication of key messages to congregations.
- 11. The alternative proposal aims to enable the striking of a crucial balance. Over any medium term period, it will ensure availability of core resourcing across all areas of the Council's responsibility. It will also enable development and delivery of output around the Fruitful Congregations theme in a more coordinated way, better streamline messages and tailor outputs to respond to the emerging needs of congregations in ways which correspond to the realities of the capacities, pace and rhythms of church life.

Resolution passed by the Council for Congregational Life and Witness at its meeting on 27th February 2018:

That the Council for Congregational Life and Witness support the proposed Committee streamlining to better facilitate both the delivery of the General Assembly's remit to the Council and also the necessary oversight of that delivery.





RESOLUTIONS

Resolutions – General Assembly Business Committee (Initial Section)

10.30am Tuesday morning:

1. That the Draft Order of Business for the 2018 General Assembly be approved.
2. That the ‘Guide to Assembly Procedure’ (yellow pages) be approved with the appropriate General Assembly Standing Orders suspended, when necessary, to facilitate alternative presentations etc.
3. That at the 2018 General Assembly, permission be granted, where appropriate, to consolidate resolutions relating to Overtures; and that if a written request from ten or more members of Assembly is lodged with the Clerk before the time scheduled for debate on the consolidated resolution(s) relating to Overtures, then the item(s) specified in the written request will be removed from the consolidated resolution(s) and considered as separate resolution(s).
4. That a grant of £20,000 be made from the Incidental Fund to the Arrangements Panel of the General Assembly Business Committee.
5. That the Right Rev Dr Charles Mr McMullen and his wife be appointed to attend the Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Wales in July 2018.
6. That the Initial Report of the General Assembly Business Committee be received.

Resolutions - General Council

(Section 1 – 2.30pm Tuesday afternoon)

7. That for 2018, the Assessment Rates, along with the related allocation of funds, be as set out in Support Services Appendix 1 and that the rate of assessment for the Pension Fund be set at 24% of stipend paid in the year.
8. That the 2018 budgeted expenditure of the Incidental Fund be as set out in Support Services Appendix 2.
9. That under Par 223(3) of the Code, leave is given to the pre-65 retirement of the Rev Robert Bell (Ballyclare).
10. That the United Appeal for 2019 be as set out on the Schedules to the report of the United Appeal Committee.
11. That the General Assembly encourage all Congregations to make use of the available United Appeal for Mission promotional materials and to mark the first Sunday in March (or other suitable Sunday) as United Appeal for Mission Sunday.

12. That the General Assembly agree that the Guysmere Centre be sold at the appropriate time.
13. That General Assembly direct that, once all financial liabilities are settled, steps be taken to establish a 'Guysmere Fund' under the control of the Council for Congregational Life and Witness, to support ministry, mission and outreach with an emphasis where possible on residential ministry amongst young people and young adults.
14. That the General Council be authorised to oversee the sale of the Guysmere Centre and the drawing up of the terms of the "Guysmere Fund", in consultation with the Council for Congregational Life and Witness.
15. That Section 1 of the Report of the General Council (with the exception of the General Assembly Business Committee) be received.

Resolutions - General Council

(Section 2 – 3.30pm Wednesday afternoon)

16. That, under Par 226(a) of the Code, the Rev Alexander Shaw Thompson be enrolled as Minister Emeritus of the congregation of First Dromara.
17. That, under Par 226(a) of the Code, the Rev Robert James McCullough be enrolled as Minister Emeritus of the congregations of Woodburn and Loughmorne.
18. That the General Assembly agree that Licentiates should be permitted to be called to a part-time ministry and instruct the Linkage Commission to change its guidelines accordingly.
19. That Section 2 of the Report of the General Council be received.

Resolutions - General Council

(Section 3 – 4.30pm Wednesday afternoon)

20. That appropriate training be offered to Kirk Sessions on the theology and practice of the Church's understanding of 'a credible profession of faith' and the pastoral guidelines on homosexuality.
21. That in light of the rapid change in society, both north and south of the border, the following statement be issued by the Press Officer on behalf of the General Council at appropriate times relating to civic events in either jurisdiction:
 - (a) The Presbyterian Church in Ireland, as a witness to Christ, affirms the God-given dignity of all people, from all faiths and none, on account of their bearing God's image. Furthermore, we affirm our solidarity with all our neighbours in our common life together. However, as a Church committed to the Lordship of Christ, we

decline to participate in interfaith worship or to acknowledge the ultimate claim of any state to control religious worship.

- (b) The Presbyterian Church in Ireland recognises that her leaders and members will consider participation in sequential multi-faith civic events where there may be opportunities to read the Bible, speak about God's grace in Christ or pray for people in need. However, out of concern for God's glory and the good of our neighbour, we decline to participate in non-trinitarian interfaith worship.
22. That the Council for Public Affairs be encouraged to develop a formal relationship with Evangelical Alliance NI, possibly in a similar manner to the formal relationship that once existed between the former Board of Mission in Ireland and Evangelical Alliance (NI).
 23. That the Church Relations Committee be asked to keep the issue of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's possible membership of World Reformed Fellowship on its agenda.
 24. That during the ensuing year the Church Relations Committee consider further the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's continued membership of the Council of European Churches and the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe, having received reports from PCI delegates to both General Assemblies, and report with recommendations to the 2019 General Assembly.
 25. That the Presbyterian Church in Ireland [**one option to be selected**]:
 - (a) should no longer accept invitations to the Moderator of the General Assembly, or any other formal delegation, to attend the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland and the United Reformed Church and no longer issue invitations to those two denominations to attend the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.
 - (b) should resume accepting invitations for the Moderator of the General Assembly to attend the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and should continue to accept such invitations from the United Reformed Church.
 26. That where there are areas in which the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Church of Scotland could collaborate together for the mutual benefit of both (through their respective Councils, Committees and Departments), then such collaboration should continue or could be considered.
 27. That future natural areas of collaboration with the United Reformed Church (through respective Councils, Committees and Departments), which would be for the mutual benefit of both denominations, could be considered.
 28. That Section 3 of the Report of the General Council be received.

Resolutions - General Council**(Section 4 – 8.00pm Thursday evening)**

29. That the General Assembly authorise the General Council to bring in any necessary guidelines and interim regulations (prior to changes to the Code at a subsequent Assembly) relating to the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation at congregational, presbytery and General Assembly level.
30. That all presbyteries and General Assembly councils should note and act upon the following decisions of the General Council in relation to engagement:
 - (a) That each council should offer an orientation meeting with representatives from Presbytery.
 - (b) That once a year Clerks of Presbytery should meet together with the Clerk and Deputy Clerk of Assembly and with council convenors and secretaries to hear from each other and discuss possible priorities and events for the year(s) ahead.
 - (c) That presbyteries should seek every opportunity to work with councils in organising training and other events.
 - (d) That presbyteries should seek to organise their business in such a way as to allow SPACE for the five elements specified in the report of the Engagement and Consultations Task Group (see pages 104-107) and that one presbytery be chosen by the Task Group to pilot this framework over the next year.
 - (e) That presbyteries should endeavour to be more proactive in their engagement with the Linkage Commission prior to and during vacancies.
31. That the General Assembly instruct all presbyteries to consider the proposal to merge the 19 Presbytery Education Boards and form one, or if necessary two, holding trustee bodies for those congregations in the General Assembly not wishing to appoint three or more individual voting members as named trustees to receive and hold their property, and report to the Convener of the Holding Trustee Task Group by 30th November 2018.
32. That Section 4 of the Report of the General Council be received.

Resolutions - General Council**(Section 5 – Friday morning, approx. 10.00am)**

33. That the following resignations be accepted (or noted) and appointments made:
 - (a) the resignation of the Rev WJ Henry as Convener of the Linkage Commission, that he be thanked for his services, and that Mr James Livingstone be appointed in his place.

- (b) the resignation of the Very Rev Dr HA Dunlop as Convener of the Union Theological College Management Committee, that he be thanked for his services, and that the Very Rev Dr IJ Patterson be appointed in his place.
 - (c) the resignation of the Rev CW Megaw as Convener of the Specialist Services Committee, that he be thanked for his services, and that the Rev JP Stanbridge be appointed in his place.
 - (d) the resignation of the Rev Dr KP Meyer as Convener of the World Development Committee, that she be thanked for her services, and that the Rev FMA Forbes be appointed in her place.
 - (e) the resignation of the Very Rev Dr RL Craig as Convener of the General Council, that he be thanked for his services, and that the Very Rev Dr JNI McNeely be appointed in his place.
 - (f) the resignation of Mr John Hunter, CB, as Convener of the Support Services Committee, that he be thanked for his services, and that Mr David Thomson be appointed in his place.
 - (g) the resignation of the Rev DJ Irvine as Convener of the United Appeal Committee on 2nd February 2018 be noted, that he be thanked for his services, and that the Rev MR Catney be appointed in his place.
 - (h) the resignation of the Rev JN Seawright as Convener of the Older People's Services Committee, that he be thanked for his services, and that the Rev JNE Reid be appointed in his place.
34. That the nominations to the General Assembly Commissions, Councils and Committees (as tabled by the Nominations Committee) be approved.
35. That the General Assembly to approve that the term of service for Council and Committee members be four years from the Assembly of appointment, rather than for the remainder of a general four year term.
36. That in connection with Special Assemblies:
- (a) That the suggestion of an interim, follow up event to the 2017 Special Assembly should not be pursued.
 - (b) That in early 2021, a Task Group, comprised primarily of members of the Priorities Committee and the Council for Congregational Life and Witness, be formed to prayerfully discern if there is an emerging theme for a residential Special Assembly to be held in 2024.
 - (c) That should such a theme obviously present itself to the Task Group, that a recommendation be brought to the 2021 General Assembly for a Special Assembly in August 2024 and suitable arrangements for delivery of such an event be set in place.
 - (d) That if such a theme does not obviously present itself to the Task Group, that no Special Assembly be held in 2024, but that the matter of future Special Assemblies, or alternatives, be considered by the General Council.

37. That the General Assembly agree that the new structures for the Council for Congregational Life and Witness (see pages 136-142) become operative from the 2019 General Assembly.
38. That Section 5 of the Report of the General Council be received.

Resolutions – General Assembly Business Committee (Final Report) – approx. 1.00pm on Friday

To be tabled during the General Assembly.