

MINUTES

OF THE

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

General Assembly

OF THE

Presbyterian Church in Ireland

Held at Belfast, June, 2018

FIRST SESSION

Monday, 4th June, 2018

7.00 pm

Within Church House

The Right Rev Dr JNI McNeely, Moderator of the General Assembly, welcomed, on behalf of the Assembly, the Vice Lord Lieutenant of Belfast, representatives of sister Churches, of educational and community organisations, and other special guests present.

The Moderator led in public worship, expressing thanks for the help he had received during his year in office. After delivering an address he constituted the Assembly with prayer.

The Rev Trevor D Gribben, Clerk of Assembly, announced that the names of 571 ministers being ex officio members and 412 commissioned elders, had been entered on the Roll of the Assembly, together with 41 Assembly Elders, Conveners and nominees of the General Assembly Nominations Committee. In addition 334 people in various categories, not members of the court, have been invited to sit and deliberate, including 18 from other Churches.

The following Ministers and Ruling Elders were present at the Annual Meeting:-

[ASSEMBLY ROLL]

The Moderator asked the Assembly to proceed to the election and appointment of a successor to him in office for the ensuing year.

The Clerk submitted the nominations of Presbyteries for the Moderatorship as follows:-

The Rev Charles John Carson McMullen	9 nominations
The Rev William Brian Boyd	6 nominations
The Rev William John Henry	4 nominations

On the motion of the Rev WB Boyd, seconded by the Rev WJ Henry, the Rev Dr CJC McMullen was unanimously called to the Chair, welcomed by the retiring Moderator and commended to God in prayer.

The Right Rev Dr CJC McMullen addressed the House.

The sederunt came to a close at 8.37pm, the Moderator pronouncing the Benediction.

SECOND SESSION

Tuesday, 5th June, 2018

10.30am

The Assembly convened, the Moderator leading in prayer.

The Initial Report of the **GENERAL ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE**) (Reports pp5-15) along with resolutions 1-6 (Reports p143) was submitted by the Very Rev Dr RA Patton, together with the following Supplementary Report:

At the request of the Moderator's Advisory Committee, the General Assembly Business Committee agreed to include two additional resolutions to be considered at the end of its Initial Report on Tuesday morning. The context in which these resolutions are tabled for consideration by the Assembly can be found in part of the supplementary report of the Moderator's Advisory Committee, see S13-S15 of these Supplementary Reports.

Additional Resolutions

5.(a) That for the 2018 General Assembly, any individual who has had a matter decided by the Judicial Commission on behalf of the Assembly may not address the Assembly on that or any related matter; and that where an individual is asked to give an undertaking to abide by this decision of the Assembly, and refuses to do so, that individual will either not be issued with a Voting Card or have their Voting Card withdrawn.

5.(b) That the Judicial Commission considers the matter for subsequent General Assemblies and report, with appropriate overture(s) if necessary, to the 2019 General Assembly.

TREVOR D GRIBBEN

Church of Ireland Synod (2018)

The Very Rev Dr Frank Sellar reports:

148th General Synod meeting in Armagh (10th – 12th May 2018)

1. Attending the opening Eucharist on Ascension Day, it was a joy to appreciate the light streaming through the great East Window in Armagh Cathedral bringing to life the depictions of the ascended and reigning Lord. This and the fine sermon by The Rt Rev John McDowell, Bishop of Clogher speaking about the giving of gifts by Jesus to the Church, was like a metaphor for this year's Synod.

2. Mrs Sadie Somerville (elder from 1st Armagh) and I attended on behalf of PCI and while much of the business seems routine; dull even, like looking at a stained glass window from the outside of an ecclesiastical building in, once inside and looking out, with the benefit of the light of Christ shining through, even the routine becomes brighter.

3. Sir Paul Girvan used this analogy when commending a new beautifully produced Commentary on the Constitution of the Church of Ireland: the laws of the church, a product of disestablishment.

4. Key decisions this year included a Bill uniting in principle, the dioceses of Limerick & Killaloe with Tuam, Killala and Achonry and the introduction of a Bill which seeks to establish a proportional and representative formula for the allocation of seats in the House of Representatives and General Synod reducing its number from a current 648 to 531.

5. Following a debate on same sex marriage last year, this Synod the House of Bishops announced that there is little appetite in the church to redefine marriage and so the marriage service remains unchanged and marriage may be solemnized only between a man and a woman.

6. A new Order of Service for morning and evening prayer has been produced by the Liturgical Advisory Committee and leave was given for a Bill to be approved next year for a liturgy to be used in situations of Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Neonatal deaths.

7. A very warm welcome was given by Synod to Dr Eamon Martin, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh who along with Dr Richard Clarke launched a pilot project designating the two Armagh cathedrals places of safety for people affected by domestic violence, which it was hoped other parishes might take up.

8. A highlight for me was the very stimulating presentation on Third Level Chaplaincy shared by Rev Barry Forde from Belfast and Rev Rob Jones from Dublin. Leading teams in both locations a fine and imaginative work is being done among ‘the lost generation’ of students.

9. It was a privilege to bring greetings to the Synod from our General Assembly and a delight to renew friendships with past acquaintances and present friends and to sense the light of the presence of the ascended and reigning Lord among His people in the Church of Ireland.

10. General Synod 2019 will take place in Millennium Forum in Derry/Londonderry, from 16th-18th May and 2020 in Croke Park Events Centre 7-9 May.

TREVOR D GRIBBEN

Moved by the very Rev Dr RA Patton, seconded by the Rev AJ Thompson and agreed:

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 for the 2018 General Assembly, any individual who has had a matter decided by the Judicial Commission on behalf of the Assembly may not address the Assembly on that or any related matter; and that where an individual is asked to give an undertaking to abide by this decision of the Assembly, and refuses to do so, that individual will either not be issued with a Voting Card or have their Voting Card withdrawn.

7. That the Judicial Commission considers the matter for subsequent General Assemblies and report, with appropriate overture(s) if necessary, to the 2019 General Assembly.

8. That the Initial Report of the General Assembly Business Committee be received.

The **REPORTS OF PRESBYTERIES** (Reports pp161-170) was submitted by the Rev TD Gribben, together with the following Supplementary Report:

ADDENDUM TO THE REPORT OF THE PRESBYTERY OF NORTH BELFAST (pages 162-163)

The Presbytery of North Belfast further report that under their care are, as Ministers without Charge, the Revs CI McKnight (retired), Samuel Newell, WA Shaw and WM Smyth (retired).

TREVOR D GRIBBEN

Moved by the Rev TD Gribben, seconded by the Rev TJ Stothers, and agreed:

1. That the Reports of Presbyteries be received.

Miss Leah McKibben, Projects Manager of the Bible Society in Northern Ireland, addressed the house and presented the Moderator with a Bible.

RECEPTION OF CORRESPONDING MEMBERS & DELEGATES

Supplementary Report:

Delete

Rt Rev Dr John McDowell – Church of Ireland

Rev Joseph Kasaab - National Evangelical Synod of Syria & Lebanon

Sheena Bell - Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Add

Ven Paul Dundas, Archdeacon of Dalriada – Church of Ireland

Brid Coady-Weekes – Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

TREVOR D GRIBBEN

The **Corresponding Members** were received from the Church of Scotland. These were the Rt Rev Susan Brown, the Rev Dr John McPake, and the Rev Dr George Whyte.

The Moderator welcomed the Corresponding Members. The Rt Rev Susan Brown replied and conveyed greetings.

The Moderator welcomed the Rev Kevin Watson of the United Reformed Church; and the Rev Brian H Jones of the Presbyterian Church of Wales. The Rev Kevin Watson replied and conveyed greetings.

The Moderator welcomed the Ven Paul Dundas and Mrs Margaret Fullerton, delegates from the Church of Ireland; the Rev Aian Ferguson and Mrs Lynda Neilands, delegates from the Methodist Church in Ireland; and the Rev Brian Anderson of the Irish Council of Churches. The Rev Brian Anderson replied and conveyed greetings.

The Moderator welcomed other delegates from –
CCAP, Synod of Livingstonia: the Rev John Gondwe –
CCAP, Synod of Zambia: the Rev Sevatt Kabaghe –
Presbyterian Church of East Africa: the Rev Alfred Mugendi Kanga –
Presbyterian Church of South Sudan: the Rev Peter Gai Lual Marrow –
Church of North India, Gujarat Diocese: the Rev Manojkumar Victorbhai Gohil –

The Rev John Gondwe replied and conveyed greetings.

Intermission

TREVOR D GRIBBEN

Members of Assembly were joined by others to participate in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, conducted by the Moderator. During worship the Memorial Roll of Ministers deceased was submitted by the Very Rev Dr WD Patton, and the Assembly paid their customary tribute.

The sederunt came to a close at 1.00pm, the Moderator leading the house in saying 'The Grace'.

THIRD SESSION

Tuesday, 5th June, 2018

2.00pm

The Assembly again convened, the Moderator leading in prayer.

The Report of the **TRUSTEES OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND** (Reports pp171-176) was submitted by the Rev WJ Orr, OBE.

Moved by the Rev WJ Orr, OBE, seconded by the Rev TD Gribben and agreed:

1. That in accordance with the Will of the late John Getty the following be constituted as the Committee for the “direction and management of the application” of the income from the Getty Bequest: Very Revs Dr David Clarke, Dr Samuel Hutchinson; Revs Dr DJ Watts, TD Gribben; Sir Bruce Robinson, Messrs Norman Bennett, Douglas Crowe, Mrs M Guiler

CONSOLIDATED RESOLUTION

2(a). That the recommendation regarding the Mrs AM Davidson Trust be adopted.

2(b). That the recommendation regarding the Sir Wm V McCleery Trust be adopted.

2(c). That the recommendation regarding the Miss Irene Scott Trust be adopted.

2(d). That the recommendation regarding the Miss Ida Mary McGeown Trust be adopted.

2(e). That the recommendation regarding the Victor Morrow Trust be adopted.

3. That the Report of the Trustees be received.

Section 1 of the Report of the **GENERAL COUNCIL** (Reports pp1-4, 15-67) along with resolutions 7-15 (Reports pp143-144) was submitted by the Very Rev Dr RL Craig, together with the following Supplementary Reports:

(A) SUPPORT SERVICES COMMITTEE

Correction to Finance Panel Report

1. Delete the current paragraph 3 on page 16 and substitute with:
 3. The Committee gave consideration to a report from the Panel on the pros and cons of a change in the Church's financial year end from 31st December to 31st August – the latter to coincide with the end of the 'church year'. Given that the considerable disruption that would result from a change, the Committee agreed with the Panel's advice that a review should be undertaken into the implications of retaining the existing year end but revising the timetables for the preparation of end year accounts and statistical returns in the light of necessary approval requirements and the filing of accounts with the Charity Commission. However, the Committee endorsed the conclusion of the Panel that a new deadline should be set for the annual statistical return (and in effect for CCNI accounts) of 30th April, with the annual return being split into a statistical part and a financial part. The statistical part would be completed in line with the present arrangements i.e. submitted to Presbytery by February/March and then reported through the current structure to the General Assembly. The financial part would come before a May meeting of Presbytery and then summaries would be presented to a new General Council meeting in June. The Minutes and Statistics Book would include the present summary tables, graphs and individual congregational details. These new arrangements should be implemented for the financial year ended 31st December 2018. Collated information on the statistical returns was not available to the Panel at its 29th March meeting, due to delays in filing reports on the part of some Presbyteries. They were presented directly to the General Council at its meeting on 10th April and summaries are included in Appendices 4 and 5.

Retirements

2. Since the last meeting of the Support Services Committee an application for leave to retire under the provisions of the Par 223(3) of the Code has been received from the Route Presbytery in relation to Rev N McClean (First Kilraughts). Mr McClean is seeking permission

to retire on or after his 64th birthday. The terms of retirement will reflect the appropriate pension scheme early retirement factors. An amended resolution 9, standardising the wording relating to another retirement which is included in the Reports, is also appended.

Presbyterian Church in Ireland Pension Scheme (2009)

3. At the time of writing the Trustees of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Pension Scheme (2009) have just received the initial results of Actuarial Valuation of the Scheme, as at 31st December 2017. There is a statutory requirement for all pension scheme to have such a valuation every three years and the results of the valuation indicates the level of funding that is required for the pension scheme over the next number of years.
4. The Support Services Committee acts as ‘the employer’ for matters relating to the PCI Pension Scheme (2009). Meetings will be held over the next number of months to consider the results of the actuarial valuation and the response that is necessary, especially with regard to funding levels. As appropriate action will be required prior to the meeting of the 2019 General Assembly (the statutory deadline for response is 31st March 2019) it is proposed that the General Council be authorised to take necessary decisions, in particular with regard to funding levels. An appropriate resolution is appended.
5. The Clerk of Assembly has requested that the Pension Trustees and Actuary seek to ensure that the next set of statutory actuarial valuation results (as at 31st December 2020) are available at an earlier date, thereby enabling the General Assembly itself to make any necessary decisions relating to those results in 2021.

Additional Resolution

- 7(a). That the General Assembly authorise the General Council to take all appropriate decisions necessitated by the current actuarial valuation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Pension Scheme (2009).

Amended Resolution

9. That under the provision of Code Par 223(3), the Rev RJA Bell (Ballyclare) be granted permission to retire on or after his 64th birthday.

Additional Resolution

9(a). That under the provision of Code Par 223(3), the Rev Noel McClean (First Kilraughts) be granted permission to retire on or after his 64th birthday.

TREVOR D GRIBBEN

(B) GUYSMERE TASK GROUP

Amendment to Resolution 12 (page 144)

12. That the General Assembly grant the Presbytery of Coleraine and Limavady permission to commission a Feasibility Study of the redevelopment of Guysmere as a world class centre for mission and ministry (incorporating a community hub and commercial facilities) and ask the Presbytery to present the results of that study to the March 2019 meeting of the General Council, for comment and transmission to the 2019 General Assembly, to enable a decision to be made regarding the sale, or otherwise, of the Guysmere site.

JAMES A McCAUGHAN

(C) MEMORIAL RECORD

The Rev William Harold Gray, BA.BD. Minister Emeritus (Released) Harmony Hill, Lambeg, died on 18th April 2018, in the ninety-second year of his age and the sixty-second year of his ministry. He was born at Belfast on 1st July 1926, the only child of William Gray, a joiner and builder, and his wife Florence, née Hanson. The family worshipped in St Enoch's congregation, Carlisle Circus, where his father was an elder and his mother a stalwart of the Women's Missionary Association (WMA). As a teenager he made a conscious commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. He served as Boys' Brigade Captain and as Sunday School Superintendent, both then very large organisations, enabling him to hone his leadership skills. Mr Gray trained as a teacher at Stranmillis College and the Queen's University, graduating BA in 1948. He returned to the Boys' Model where he taught for four years from 1948 to 1952. During this time his sense of a strong calling to the ordained ministry grew, and, on being accepted for training, he attended the Assembly's College, 1952 to 1953, New College,

Edinburgh, 1953 to 1954, and returned to Belfast to complete his training 1954 to 1955. From 1954 to 1956 he served as Assistant in Great Victoria Street congregation with the Minister, the Rev J R Boyd, who later became Professor of Practical Theology in the Assembly's College. The Presbytery of Tyrone ordained and installed him in the congregation of Newmills, near Dungannon, on 17th October 1956. A few years later Newmills was joined with Carland and Mr Gray was installed there on 1st June 1960. He married Jean Kelly, who was also brought up in St Enoch's, on 6th July 1955, and together they served Christ and His Church with enthusiasm and dedication over the years. They had three children, Peter, David, and Catherine. After thirteen years of steady ministry Mr Gray moved to the large congregation of Woodvale, Belfast, with eleven hundred families, where he was installed by the Presbytery of North Belfast on 10th September 1969. He and his family arrived there just as the 'Troubles' broke out severely impacting the local area and residents. Soldiers were a common sight on the streets, barricades were thrown up, communities bitterly divided, gun battles and bombs frequent. Homes and businesses were destroyed and church property damaged. The church halls were opened to all comers as a place of shelter and Mr Gray worked tirelessly to help those most affected by the turmoil and to create friendly relationships across the sectarian divide. In 1976 he moved to the congregation of Harmony Hill, Lambeg, and was installed there by the Presbytery of Dromore on 23rd January 1976. This was a young congregation which began as an outreach ministry of First Lisburn at Lambeg and was erected a congregation in its own right in February 1968 with Rev D.H.A. Watson as Minister. By the nineteen-seventies it was a thriving congregation with a large number of young families who settled in the new builds in the surrounding area. Mr Gray excelled as a pastor who loved his people and ministered to their needs in all the varied circumstances of life. He was assiduous in his pulpit preparation and delivery of the Good News of the Gospel. In the wider community he became a member of Wallace High School Board of Governors, then Chairman for some years and also a trustee. His experience of, and interest in, education, was utilised as a member of the South Eastern Education and Library Board, of which he became Chairman. His interest in the welfare of young people involved him in the structures of the central Church as Director of the Youth Education Committee, in which capacity he attended the World Council of Christian Education in Jamaica and in Lima, Peru. He served as Convener of the National and International Problems Committee, 1987 to 1993, and was also a member of the Board of Publications and Aids to Worship, and the Historical Society Committee. He was Moderator of the Synod of Antrim

and Down in 1989. Mr Gray retired on 31st October 1991 and he and Mrs Gray enjoyed many happy years together until Mrs Gray's death on 17th October 2015. We share with Mr Gray's family in their loss as we give thanks to God for the good and faithful service of our brother.

The Rev James Stanley McIvor, BA, BD, Ph.D, Professor Emeritus (Released) the Union Theological College, Belfast, died on 23rd May 2018, in the ninetieth year of his age and the sixty-fourth year of his ministry. He was born on 26th November 1928 at Derryalskea, County Tyrone, an only son and third of four children, to James McIvor, Farmer, Soldier and Civil Servant, and his wife, Florence, née Clayton. The family worshipped then in the congregation of Castlecaulfield where he learned to love the Saviour who first loved him and gave himself for him. He attended Kilnaslee National School and then the Royal School, Dungannon. A good scholar with a taste for study, he went to the Magee University College, Londonderry, and Trinity College, Dublin, graduating BA in 1949. With a growing sense of call he went on to New College, Edinburgh, from which he graduated BD in 1952. His academic ability won him a scholarship enabling him to study Linguistics at Tubingen University, Germany, also taking the opportunity to learn German which would facilitate his Biblical studies. On his return home, he attended the Assembly's College, Belfast, 1953 to 1954, to complete his qualifying course of study for the Church. Professor McIvor served an assistantship in the large and busy congregation of Great Victoria Street, Belfast, where the Rev James R Boyd was Minister. He became convinced of a call from God to Army Chaplaincy, and was licensed and ordained, or, in Forces terms, commissioned, on 4th June 1954, by the Presbytery of Tyrone in Dungannon congregation to which his family had moved some years previously. It was during this time that he met and married Ruth Patricia Greer on 21st January 1956 and over the next number of years they were blessed with the birth of four children. Army life took them on tours of duty around the world, and, at one period, Professor McIvor served as Deputy Warden at the Royal Army's Department Depot, Bagshot Park, Surrey, where his work as Assistant Trainer of new Chaplains was greatly valued and respected. He and his family returned to Northern Ireland in 1964 to Londonderry on his appointment as Principal of Magee Theological College, and Professor of Hebrew, New Testament Interpretation and Biblical Literature. During the ensuing years he studied for a Ph.D. which he was awarded in 1977 from the University of Edinburgh. When Magee became part of the University of Ulster in 1978,

the Faculty was amalgamated with the Assembly's College and took the name Union College, it is believed at the suggestion of Professor McIvor, and he and R F G Holmes moved to Belfast where they took up professorships in Hebrew and Church History respectively. Professor McIvor acted as Secretary to Union College Faculty for sixteen years writing meticulous minutes of the meetings. His particular academic interest was in Aramaic and he contributed to volume nineteen of *The Aramaic Bible*, writing on 'The Targum of Chronicles: Translated with Introduction, Apparatus and Notes' (Liturgical Press, 1994). During his thirty years of lecturing several hundreds of theological students came under his influence and owe to him a great debt for his part in equipping them for the ordained ministry. As someone who exercised good self-discipline he expected the same attitude in his students and would brook neither carelessness nor indolence. Yet, he recognised that not every student was a natural Hebraist and he sought to give as much help and encouragement as he could. Even so, it was a daunting experience to sit in his lectures during translation work and suddenly to hear your name called with the command, 'Parse!' Professor McIvor retired on 30th September 1994, and we give thanks for a dedicated servant of God who loved the Scriptures and the Lord of the Scriptures and who demonstrated a life of grace and faith. To his wife, Pat, children, Morag, Colin, Ian, and Louise, their children and the wider family circle, (his sisters pre-deceased him) we extend our prayerful sympathy in their loss.

TREVOR D GRIBBEN

Moved by the Very Rev Dr RL Craig, seconded by Mr John Hunter, CB, and agreed:

9. 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.

10. That the General Assembly authorise the General Council to take all appropriate decisions necessitated by the current actuarial valuation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Pension Scheme (2009).

11. That the 2018 budgeted expenditure of the Incidental Fund be as set out in Support Services Appendix 2.

12. That under the provision of Code Par 223(3), the Rev RJA Bell (Ballyclare) be granted permission to retire on or after his 64th birthday.

13. That under the provision of Code Par 223(3), the Rev Noel McClean (First Kilraughts) be granted permission to retire on or after his 64th birthday.

14. That the United Appeal for 2019 be as set out on the Schedules to the report of the United Appeal Committee.

15. 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.

Moved by the Very Rev Dr RL Craig, seconded by Mr John Hunter, CB:

16. That the General Assembly agree that the Guysmere Centre be sold at the appropriate time.

Moved as an amendment by the Rev JA McCaughan, seconded by the Rev SA McCracken, and agreed:

16. That the General Assembly grant the Presbytery of Coleraine and Limavady permission to commission a Feasibility Study of the redevelopment of Guysmere as a world class centre for mission and ministry (incorporating a community hub and commercial facilities) and ask the Presbytery to present the results of that study to the March 2019 meeting of the General Council, for comment and transmission to the 2019 General Assembly, to enable a decision to be made regarding the sale, or otherwise, of the Guysmere site.

On being put to the House, the substantive motion was declared passed.

With the leave of the House **Resolutions 13 and 14** (as in the reports p114) were withdrawn

Moved by the Very Rev Dr RL Craig, seconded by Mr John Hunter, CB, and agreed:

17. That Section 1 of the Report of the General Council (with the exception of the General Assembly Business Committee) be received.

Intermission

The Report of the **COUNCIL FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS** (Reports pp177-195) was submitted by the Very Rev Dr TN Hamilton, OBE, together with the following Supplementary Report:

DEALING WITH THE PAST

1. On Friday 11th May 2018 the Northern Ireland Office published a consultation paper: ‘Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland’s Past’. The public consultation seeks views on the UK Government’s proposal to legislate to establish the institutions set out in a draft Northern Ireland (Stormont House Agreement) Bill. These institutions include:

- The Historical Investigations Unit – to take forward outstanding investigations into Troubles-related deaths.
- The Independent Commission on Information Retrieval – to enable family members to seek and privately receive information about the Troubles-related deaths of their relatives.
- The Oral History Archive – an archive that enables people to share experiences and narratives related to the Troubles.
- The Implementation and Reconciliation Group – an institution to promote reconciliation and anti-sectarianism and to review and assess the implementation of the other legacy institutions proposed under the Stormont House Agreement.
- The proposals will have a direct impact on many people within our congregations and represent one of the most important developments in recent years in terms of addressing the legacy of the past. It is therefore crucial that the PCI submit a considered response by the closing date on 10th September 2018.

2. It is proposed that a Task Group be set up by the General Assembly to report and make recommendations to a special meeting of the Council for Public Affairs, with the Council for Public Affairs authorised to act on behalf of the Assembly.

EIGHTH AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION OF IRELAND

3. On Friday 25th May 2018 citizens in the Republic of Ireland voted by a large margin to repeal the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution of Ireland, which upheld the equal right to life of the mother and the unborn child. The statement released by the Church following the referendum result is included at Appendix A.

4. It is expected that the Government will now introduce legislation allowing unrestricted access to abortion up to 12 weeks of pregnancy and on health grounds after 12 weeks, and that this will pass through the Oireachtas swiftly and easily. Indeed, some members who spoke passionately about retaining the Eighth Amendment have now indicated they will either support the legislation or abstain in light of the referendum result.

5. The PCI must play its part in encouraging longer-term, life-affirming cultural change that enhances support for women in crisis and addresses the societal issues that contribute to abortion. This will involve further conversations with the Government, members of the Oireachtas and others in wider society about how to provide world-leading, compassionate care across Ireland for women, children and families facing pregnancy crisis.

6. As Government officials begin to meet with medical bodies to discuss the implementation of new legislation, it is important that the concerns of medical professionals who cannot, in conscience, participate in abortion provision are taken seriously and properly addressed. This includes those who have a conscientious objection to referring patients seeking an abortion, who should be supported and accommodated within any new system.

Appendix A

Statement issued on 26 May 2018 on the outcome of the referendum on the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution

‘Profound sadness’ at referendum result

The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Rt. Rev. Dr. Noble McNeely, along with former Moderator and minister emeritus of Lucan Presbyterian Church, Dr. Trevor Morrow, and the Clerk of the denomination’s General Assembly, Rev. Trevor Gribben have expressed their ‘profound sense of sadness’ regarding today’s Eighth Amendment referendum result.

In their statement they said:

We acknowledge the outcome of yesterday’s referendum with a profound sense of sadness. The country is evidently living through a defining moment in which the inherent value placed on human life is at stake. Today is not a day for celebration, but for quiet reflection.

We would strongly urge the Government and the Oireachtas, as they legislate, to keep the promise they have made to the electorate to make

abortions ‘rare’ in Ireland, and to ensure that the unborn with disabilities, like Down’s syndrome, will not have their lives terminated. The result of this referendum hasn’t changed the fact that human life is still just as sacred and special as it was before Friday’s vote. There should be no place for unrestricted abortion in a society that claims to cherish human life. We would encourage both the Government and wider society to place a greater focus on the provision of world-leading, compassionate care for women, children and families, including comprehensive support in the perinatal period for those facing pregnancy crisis

Additional Resolutions:

- 1.(a) That the General Assembly appoint a Task Group under the Council for Public Affairs, consisting of the Moderator and Clerk of the General Assembly, Convener of the Council for Public Affairs, Public Affairs Officer, the Rev Tony Davidson, Mr Edgar Jardine (with the power to co-opt up to 3 others) with the following remit:
 - To draw up a report and recommendations concerning the Northern Ireland Office consultation paper: ‘Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland’s Past’, to be presented to the Council for Public Affairs for consideration, with the Council then authorised to submit an appropriate response to the public consultation on behalf of the General Assembly.
- 3.(a) That the General Assembly:
 - (i) express their sadness regarding the outcome of the referendum on the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution of Ireland;
 - (ii) urge the Government and the Oireachtas to keep to the promises made to the electorate that abortions will be ‘rare’ in Ireland and that unborn children with disabilities will not have their lives terminated;
 - (iii) repeat their call for the best possible life-affirming care and support to be made available to women facing pregnancy crisis.

NORMAN HAMILTON

Licensed Amendment to ADDITIONAL Resolution 3.(a)

3.(a) That the General Assembly:

- (i) express their sadness regarding the outcome of the referendum on the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution of Ireland;
- (ii) urge the Government and the Oireachtas to keep to the promises made to the electorate that abortions will be 'rare' in Ireland and that unborn children with disabilities will not have their lives terminated;
- (iii) repeat their call for the best possible life-affirming care and support to be made available to women facing pregnancy crisis, repeat their call for the best possible life-affirming care and support to be made available to women facing pregnancy crisis, and commend the services of foster care & adoption among members of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland who feel led to such ministry and service.

STEPHEN McNIE

Moved by the Very Rev Dr TN Hamilton, OBE, seconded by the Very Rev Dr Trevor Morrow, and agreed:

1. That the General Assembly express deep concern and frustration about the prolonged absence of an Executive in Northern Ireland, the resulting stagnation in public policy and the negative effects on the most vulnerable in society, and repeat their call for all involved in the political process to find a resolution that establishes good and stable government based on good working relationships.

2. That the General Assembly appoint a Task Group under the Council for Public Affairs, consisting of the Moderator and Clerk of the General Assembly, Convener of the Council for Public Affairs, Public Affairs Officer, the Rev Tony Davidson, Mr Edgar Jardine (with the power to co-opt up to 3 others) with the following remit:

- To draw up a report and recommendations concerning the Northern Ireland Office consultation paper: 'Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland's Past', to be presented to the Council for Public Affairs for consideration, with the Council then authorised to submit an appropriate response to the public consultation on behalf of the General Assembly.

3. That the General Assembly note with concern the sense of disillusionment and low morale amongst governors, principals and teachers, caused by the financial situation in schools and the uncertainty for the future of education in Northern Ireland, and therefore call upon politicians if necessary to set aside their differences to enable an Executive to be formed to bring about both democratic accountability and strong leadership that will provide the clarity so urgently needed on an agreed way forward for the education system in the province.

4. That the General Assembly believe that Religious Education has a very important role to play in the spiritual, moral and intellectual development of children and young people, and therefore affirm the place of RE within school curricula and encourage time-tabling and resourcing of RE which reflect its fundamental value to school life.

Moved by the Very Rev Dr TN Hamilton, OBE, seconded by the Very Rev Dr Trevor Morrow:

5. That the General Assembly:
- (i) express their sadness regarding the outcome of the referendum on the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution of Ireland;
 - (ii) urge the Government and the Oireachtas to keep to the promises made to the electorate that abortions will be 'rare' in Ireland and that unborn children with disabilities will not have their lives terminated;
 - (iii) repeat their call for the best possible life-affirming care and support to be made available to women facing pregnancy crisis.

Moved as an amendment by the Rev Stephen McNie:

5. That the General Assembly:
- (i) express their sadness regarding the outcome of the referendum on the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution of Ireland;
 - (ii) urge the Government and the Oireachtas to keep to the promises made to the electorate that abortions will be 'rare' in Ireland and that unborn children with disabilities will not have their lives terminated;
 - (iii) repeat their call for the best possible life-affirming care and support to be made available to women facing pregnancy

crisis, and commend the services of foster care & adoption among members of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland who feel led to such ministry and service.

The Proposer and Seconder accepted the amendment.

On being put to the House, the substantive motion was declared passed.

Moved by the Very Rev Dr TN Hamilton, OBE, seconded by the Very Rev Dr Trevor Morrow, and agreed:

6. That the General Assembly:
 - (a) strongly oppose any legislation which allows assisted suicide and/or euthanasia; and
 - (b) strongly commend palliative care, calling on the governments in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to ensure the adequate resourcing of both research and delivery in this important area.
7. That the Report of the Council for Public Affairs be received.

The sederunt came to a close at 5.39pm, the Moderator leading in prayer.

ADDITIONAL BUSINESS LICENCED

ITEM 14: GENERAL COUNCIL, Section 3 (Wednesday 4.30pm)

Amendment to Resolution 28 (page 145):

That Section 3 of the Report of the General Council be received, with the exception of Appendix 2 of the Doctrine Committee Report, pages 84-89.

CHERYL A MEBAN