

GENERAL COUNCIL

SECTION 2

Wednesday – 3.30pm

MODERATOR'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE

1. The Moderator's Advisory Committee met on three occasions throughout the year to transact a significant variety of business. Throughout the year a number of Moderator's Advisory Assessors were appointed to assist presbyteries in their work.
2. The Committee received a letter from the Dialogue and Resources Task Group. This concerned the matter of advice for kirk sessions where someone in a same-sex marriage wishes to be received onto the Communion Roll on presentation of a Disjunction Certificate or on profession of faith – which matter had been raised on the floor of the Assembly. It also referred to questions from the Task Group concerning gender reassignment and the Christian faith. It asked the Committee to consider how best to form a response which will be pastorally helpful. Following discussion, both in the meeting and subsequently, it was agreed to refer the issue concerning same-sex marriage and reception onto a Communion Roll etc to the Doctrine Committee. It was further agreed that the Clerk should consult and bring names to the Council for a Task Group to look at issues concerning human identity, the Task Group to include people with medical and teaching and/or youth-work backgrounds.

Charity Trustee requirements for members of Presbytery

3. Two issues were dealt with relating to Charity Trustee requirements for members of Presbytery:
 - (a) Regarding Army and other Service Chaplains and Global Mission Workers, who by nature of their sphere of service were usually unable to attend presbytery meetings, it was agreed: *that the General Assembly Solicitor be asked to prepare Overtures to allow ministers in these positions to continue to be full members of presbytery, but not charity trustees.*
 - (b) Regarding minimum acceptable attendance by ministers at presbytery, it was agreed that the Clerk advise that retired ministers ought to attend Presbytery at least once a year to retain membership; and that he also advise that presbyteries have a responsibility to deal with active ministers who do not attend under existing rules of discipline in respect to ordination and installation vows.

Ministers and ‘public appointments’

4. The Committee considered the matter of Ministers and ‘public appointments’ (Code Par 73(d)).

The particular point at issue is that the Linkage Commission requires the reporting to it of only those paid public appointments which are over 6 hours per week. The Code however, requires the presbytery to ensure that a minister does not undertake any paid public appointment without the consent of the presbytery and the Linkage Commission. While the Linkage Commission in a sense gives automatic consent for an appointment that involves 6 hours or fewer per week, there is still a requirement for presbytery to consent. It was agreed that the Clerk, through the Linkage Commission, should draw the attention of the Church to the need for presbytery consent for any paid public appointment, no matter what the hours involved.

Minister Emeritus status for those resigning their charge

5. The Clerk tabled a paper on this matter (see Appendix 1). He noted recent examples of where ministers in their sixties had resigned for health reasons and whose Presbyteries are likely to propose that the coming General Assembly grant Minister Emeritus status for them. This is likely to be straightforward. There are, however, particular questions to be resolved over whether any younger minister who has to resign their charge for health reasons should be able to become a Minister Emeritus, and concerning situations where a minister resigns due to a breakdown of relationships with the congregation. Following detailed discussion the Committee agreed to recommend the following to the General Council:

That normally a proposal to grant Minister Emeritus status under Code Par 226(a) will only be considered at the General Assembly that takes place after the minister concerned reaches the age of 60.

This recommendation was subsequently approved by the General Council at its meeting in March 2018.

6. Two presbyteries have subsequently submitted separate requests to have a minister enrolled as Minister Emeritus under these guidelines. In each case the Committee is supportive of the request and appropriate resolutions are appended.
7. On a related matter, the Clerk and Deputy Clerk agreed to give consideration as to how the Code (in particular relating to Par 226(a)) could be altered to allow for a minister near to retirement who is loosed from his/her charge, where there is no fault (e.g. under Code Par 318(3) (c)), to be made Minister Emeritus.

Ministers without Charge serving as a Clerk of Presbytery

8. The Clerk tabled a paper on this matter of a Presbytery desiring a minister to remain as a Presbytery Clerk after being released from their charge (see Appendix 2). He noted that he was aware that a

presbytery may wish to have its clerk continue in post subsequent to his resignation from his charge on health grounds, as medical opinion indicated that he would be able to fulfil the duties of Presbytery Clerk. Following discussion, the contents of the paper noted with approval by the Committee.

9. Subsequent to this decision, the Presbytery of Tyrone submitted a Memorial for consideration of the General Assembly relating to their current clerk, the Rev Tom Conway (see page 158). The Committee, having considered the prayer of the Memorial, would be supportive.

Charity Trustees

10. The Clerk noted that the law of the church is not always being fulfilled in regard to updating kirk session membership. While new members of kirk session sign the necessary Declaration, in some cases their membership is not being transmitted to the Charity Commissioner through its website. Further, in some cases when an elder comes off the kirk session, for example, through retirement or death, this is not always transmitted to the Charity Commission. The Clerk also noted that it has been reported to him by some Clerks of Presbytery that some congregational ministers do not attend presbytery. He observed that attendance at presbytery is an obligation that is placed on ministers in the vows they take at their ordination and/or installation by that presbytery. He asked for advice.
11. Following discussion on both of these matters, it was agreed:
 - (a) That the Clerk write to Presbytery Clerks reminding them of the need for kirk sessions to report to the Charity Commission all changes in membership very soon after they take place.
 - (b) That it may be appropriate to include an item in connection with changes in kirk session membership in the annual return of presbyteries to the Clerk's office so that Clerks of Presbytery have a reminder that this information needs to be kept current.
 - (c) That it be recommended to the General Council that Clerks be required to present annually to their presbytery a record of the attendance of the full roll of members, for inclusion in the minutes. This recommendation was subsequently approved by the General Council.

Calls to Part-Time Ministry Charges

12. The Clerk outlined the current position regarding calls to part-time ministry. In the Linkage Commission Guidelines (reported to the 2016 General Assembly and noted) it states:

“Once a charge has been given leave to call for Part-Time Ministry, any qualified ordained Minister of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, who has not retired from the ministry, shall be eligible to apply for such a Part-Time charge (although in exceptional circumstances a Licentiate

may be declared eligible by the Linkage Commission when Presbytery requests it, and in Home Mission situations where the CMI agrees it.) A Minister called to such a charge shall be a full member of the courts of the Church.”

13. The Clerk indicated that he had received several queries as to why it is that a Licentiate cannot normally be eligible for a part-time charge. There is an opinion that ordination to a first charge should be to a full-time charge. Following a period of discussion, it was agreed that it be recommended to the General Council that a representative Task Group be established to consider the matter.
14. The General Council subsequently established this Task Group and its report is included in Appendix 3, with a resolution to test the mind of the Assembly appended.

Confidential matters

15. The Committee during the year considered a number of items in private session, namely the following three matters:
 - (a) Following discussion of a particular case, advice was drawn up for the Linkage Commission regarding application of the General Assembly's Protracted Illness Guidelines in a manner that would facilitate, as far as possible, acceptance into the General Assembly's Prolonged Disability Scheme.
 - (b) Following discussion of a particular case, it was agreed that only service within PCI should count towards the calculation of Appropriate Ministerial Minimum and that this be noted as the policy for the future.
 - (c) Following discussion of a particular case, and having heard from the Clerk, the General Assembly Solicitor's firm and the views of Counsel, the Committee gave authorisation for PCI robustly to defend a particular legal action taken against it.

Proposed visit of Pope Francis to Ireland

16. The Committee discussed the proposed visit of Pope Francis to Ireland in August 2018. Following a preliminary report to the March 2018 meeting of the General Council, the Committee reported in a fuller fashion to the April 2018 meeting of the General Council. At that time the indication was that Pope Francis would not visit Northern Ireland, but would spend two days in Dublin at events focussed on the World Meeting of Families – one day based around a sacramental celebration and one day based around a festival of families in Phoenix Park.
17. It was recognised that it would not be appropriate for the Moderator or any other formal representative of PCI to be present at any event focussed around sacramental worship, but that a meeting or attendance at a suitable non-sacramental event may be appropriate. It was also

noted that the timing of any invitation would most likely require a response prior to the General Assembly. Following detailed discussion, the following resolution was agreed by the Committee:

That in the light of the confirmed visit of Pope Francis to Ireland in August 2018, and recognising that an invitation is likely to be issued to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Moderator's Advisory Committee recommends to the General Council that the Committee be authorised to agree a response on behalf of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Such response may include the acceptance of any invitation for the Moderator or others to meet with Pope Francis or to attend an appropriate non-sacramental event.

18. Following discussion the General Council at its April 2018 meeting, the following resolution was agreed:

That in the light of the confirmed visit of Pope Francis to Ireland in August 2018, and recognising that an invitation is likely to be issued to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, that the General Council meet to agree a response on behalf of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Such response may include the acceptance of any invitation for the Moderator or others to meet with Pope Francis or to attend an appropriate non-sacramental event.

Calls on behalf of the General Council

19. It was noted that since the restructuring of the General Assembly Boards into Councils, it was now the responsibility of the General Council to issue formally calls on behalf of other Councils of the Assembly, with the exception of Global Mission Workers and Home and Urban Mission Ministers. This covers, amongst others, Healthcare, University, Prison and Forces Chaplains. The Committee acted on behalf of the Council in issuing some calls since the last meeting of the General Council. The Committee recommended, and the General Council agreed, that the Moderator's Advisory Committee shall act on behalf of the Council in the issuing of such calls between meetings of the Council.

MODERATOR'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE

APPENDIX 1

REQUEST TO BE ENROLLED AS A MINISTER EMERITUS OF A CONGREGATION

1. Relevant section of the Code:

Code Par 226 (a): When a minister, instead of retiring in the usual way, on account of old age, infirmity, sickness or other cause recognised as adequate by the Presbytery, voluntarily resigns the pastoral charge of his congregation and the resignation has been accepted by Presbytery, he may, if the Presbytery so propose and the Assembly decide, have his name enrolled as Minister-Emeritus of the congregation; and shall in virtue of such enrolment be a member of the superior courts of the Church. As such he shall continue under the jurisdiction of Presbytery and shall be subject to the provisions of these rules regarding the acceptance of paid appointments applying to ministers in active duty or ministers without charge.

2. Steps to be followed:

- 2.1 The minister concerned requests that the presbytery proposes that the General Assembly have his name enrolled as Minister Emeritus of the congregation concerned. (Note – if enrolled as a Minister Emeritus the minister concerned will no longer be eligible to receive a call to any congregation.)
- 2.2 Presbytery agrees to propose that the General Assembly enrolls the minister concerned as Minister Emeritus of the congregation concerned. (Note – it is best to consult the kirk session concerned.)
- 2.3 The resolution of presbytery is forwarded to the Clerk of Assembly, who will arrange to have it included in the General Assembly Reports. (Note – this should ideally be done immediately after the March Presbytery at the latest.)
- 2.4 The Moderator's Advisory Committee considers any comment and/or recommendation it may wish to make to the General Assembly regarding the proposal of the presbytery.
- 2.5 The General Assembly make a decision regarding the presbytery proposal. (Note – two members of presbytery must be present in the House to formally propose and second the relevant resolution.)

MODERATOR'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE

APPENDIX 2

CONTINUING AS CLERK OF PRESBYTERY FOLLOWING RESIGNATION FROM A CHARGE

1. Relevant sections of the Code:

Par 61 The Presbytery shall consist of:

.....

- (j) such other ministers or ruling elders as the Assembly may from time to time determine.

Par 97 The General Assembly shall consist of:

.....

- (h) ministers or ruling elders who are ex-officio members of the General Assembly in virtue of their appointment as:

.....

- (ii) Clerks of Presbytery.

2. Content of a possible Memorial:

2.1 If a Memorial is brought by presbytery it should:

- (a) State that when the minister concerned becomes a minister without charge, it is the presbytery's desire that he remains Clerk of Presbytery, at the pleasure of the presbytery.
- (b) Ask the General Assembly to facilitate this by determining that the minister concerned, on their resignation from his charge, shall continue as a member of the presbytery under Code Par 61(j), so long as they remain in post as Clerk of Presbytery.

2.2 It should be noted that this would not change the status of the minister concerned as a minister without charge, but it would make him ex officio a member of the General Assembly under Code Par 97(h)(ii).

MODERATOR’S ADVISORY COMMITTEE

APPENDIX 3

Calls to Part-Time Ministry Charges

1. Following a report from the Moderator’s Advisory Committee, the General Council at its March 2018 meeting set up a Task Group “to consider the issue of whether Licentiates should be eligible for call to a part-time Charge”. In reporting back to the April 2018 meeting of the Council, the Task Group, convened by the Deputy Clerk, noted:
 - (a) In 2010 the General Board proposed the introduction of part-time ministries, and in its report to the General Assembly (210 Reports pages 93f) stated:

“It should be clearly understood that any provision of posts in PCI which were deemed to be part-time Ministry of Word and Sacrament would be open only to those who *are already ordained as Ministers of Word and Sacrament.*” (Italics as per original).
 - (b) The following resolution was passed (2010 Minutes page 71 Resolution 35):

“That the General Assembly adopt the Scheme for Part-Time Ministry.”
 - (c) On the basis of this, the Union Commission brought Guidelines to the 2011 General Assembly which included this wording concerning Part-Time Ministries (2011 Reports pages 90ff):

“Such charges are not normally open to licentiates but only to those who are already ordained as Ministers of Word and Sacrament.”
 - (d) A revised set of Guidelines was brought by the Linkage Commission to the General Assembly and noted in 2016. The wording concerning Licentiates was identical (2016 Reports page 167).
 - (e) It should be noted that, where a Part-Time charge is linked to something else such as a hospital chaplaincy, then that is counted as a full time ministry and Licentiates may be called to such.
2. The following historical background was taken into consideration:
 - (a) Whereas previously Licentiates were ordained as Assistant Ministers on the call of a Kirk Session after six months’ service, this was changed. The change was such that Licentiates now serve two years and two months before being eligible for a call by a congregation (or congregations) at which point they are ordained. The reasoning for this change was that ordination ought to be to the fullest measure of ministry of word and sacrament, and the call be by a congregation.

- (b) To some extent the part-time ministry scheme replaced the old 'Restricted List' which enabled those whose life-circumstances made ministry in a larger congregation difficult to be called to a 'light-duty' charge. Only ordained ministers could apply to go on the restricted list, and these were generally over 55 years old. It was noted that all those who have been called to part-time ministry so far have been of more mature years.
 - (c) It was also noted that no one, whether licentiate or ordained minister, can be called to a part-time hospital or university chaplaincy.
3. In discussion it was noted that generally in Christ's church ordination to part-time ministry is available, particularly to tent-making ministries. It was agreed that there did not appear to be any reason in Presbyterian polity to prevent it.
 4. Some practical issues on connection with part time ministries were discussed, including:
 - (a) If a first charge, how long will someone stay if what they really want is a full-time ministry?
 - (b) Is the motivation for seeking a part-time call simply that they cannot get a call elsewhere?
 - (c) If they are younger/married with family, how will they afford this option?
 - (d) There is the danger of them being pressurised into doing full-time ministry for part-time pay (or of them being carried by their own enthusiasm into such a situation).
 - (e) Some part-time charges are 'lost causes' and will lead to the disillusionment of those younger ministers ordained there.

It was considered that many of the above could either apply equally to previously ordained ministers, or are for the licentiate themselves to consider before accepting a call.

5. Consideration was given to whether the Linkage Commission be given latitude to decide whether calls to part-time ministries should be open to Licentiates on a case by case basis, but was this not considered helpful.
6. The Task Group recommended, and the General Council agreed, that a resolution permitting Licentiates to be called to a part-time ministry be presented to test the mind of the General Assembly.

TREVOR D GRIBBEN, Convener

DIALOGUE AND RESOURCES TASK GROUP

1. Established in 2015, the Dialogue and Resources Task Group (DRTG) has been given the brief to provide pastoral assistance for individuals, and families seeking to relate their Christian faith to LGBT matters.
2. Following on the series of workshops held for Ministers in 2016-17 the DRTG provided a similar series of workshops for ruling elders in 2017-18. These were held on a regional basis, bringing elders from a cluster of presbyteries together. Mr Rob Wood from the True Freedom Trust was the invited facilitator at each of these; and whilst the attendance was somewhat varied and uneven, all present did engage in the conversation together.
3. The DRTG has sought and been granted permission from the General Council to extend its working life for one further year. Having sought to begin a conversation and provide resources from Ministers and ruling elders the Task Group is currently considering how it might provide further resources at a congregational level; in the coming year the Task Group will be engaged on this business.

ROB CRAIG, Convener

HUMAN IDENTITY TASK GROUP

1. In the autumn of 2017 the General Council established the Task Group as a means of seeking a Biblical and pastoral response to the complex and often difficult issues facing PCI members, families, ministers, congregations and wider society in respect of gender identity. The Group consists of the Rev Prof Bill Addley (Convener); Mr Gavin Norris (Secretary); the Moderator and Clerk of the General Assembly; Rev Prof Michael McClenahan; the Rev Daniel Kane and others from medical, educational, youth work and public policy backgrounds.
2. At the time of writing, the Task Group has met on three occasions to date: 12th December 2017, 1st February 2018 and 27th February 2018.
3. The Task Group is planning to produce and organise resources that provide Biblical, theological and pastoral guidance, and to help the PCI to engage with the wider cultural issues at play in the current debates about gender identity.
4. The Task Group is conscious of the urgent need to get good, accessible material from a Biblical standpoint into the hands of PCI members, as some have already requested guidance in this area. Members of the Task Group read together Vaughan Roberts' short book *Talking Points: Transgender* and agreed that this is an excellent resource the group can recommend to the wider Church. To maximise our members' confidence in this resource it would be beneficial to produce

a customised version with a 'PCI Introduction' at the beginning with endorsements from people within the denomination. The Task Group has contacted the book's publishers and they are willing to facilitate this. On the Task Group's recommendation, the General Council agreed that that 3,000 customised copies of *Talking Points: Transgender* with a PCI introduction at the beginning be printed and circulated to each Minister and congregation.

WILLIAM ADDLEY, Convener