

GENERAL BOARD

Convener: THE CLERK

1. This year has been another extremely busy year for the General Board with several important Panels undertaking specific work, as well as the on-going work of the permanent Committees. This could not be achieved without the dedicated commitment of Conveners and Committee members who give generously of their time and experience. The Church must be grateful for the enormous number of volunteer hours devoted to discerning direction and giving leadership to all the Boards of this General Assembly.

2. A new initiative this year was for the Board to hold a **Conference in January**. There were two main themes. In the morning the Conference looked at the support and encouragement given to ministers and others working in the Church setting by a) Kirk Session b) Presbytery c) General Assembly. This was to build on the important work of the Panels on **Pastoral Care of Manse Families and Conciliation**. It is recognised that many ministers and other leaders at times feel under stress and isolated. The question is whether the “Courts” of the Church are organised in such a way as to offer support, or indeed whether at times they may add to the pressure. It is intended to include a fuller report of the Conference with the Supplementary Reports and to recommend that the General Board continues to consider ways in which the Church Courts, including Boards and Committees of the General Assembly, may evolve to be more effective in the support they offer. While this is not their only responsibility it is important to their work.

3. In the afternoon the Conference looked at issues around resourcing the Church for ministry and mission. This theme is being actively considered by a number of groups, including the Union Commission, Pensions and Assessments Panel and United Appeal Board. Further comment will be made in the report of the Conference.

4. In the light of the **Financial Crisis**, the General Board appointed a Panel in 2009 which has been guiding the response of the Church in these very difficult circumstances especially in relation to the Presbyterian Mutual Society. A substantive report was given to a Special Assembly on 13 April, 2010 and a follow-up report will be brought in the Supplementary Reports. A further Panel investigating the spiritual and ethical issues which emerge for our Church has begun its work, but does not intend to report until 2011.

5. One of the major pieces of work undertaken by the General Board this year, which has wide implications for our Church, is the review of **Pensions and Assessments**. The Panel has thoroughly undertaken this work and given many hours to the detailed analysis of the options. It brings its report to this Assembly (p 67). The **Panel on Ministries** also brings a major report (p 93).

6. As reported last year the General Board has appointed a Panel to consider the **Future of Peacemaking** in our denomination, now that the 3 year Peacemaking Programme has come to an end. It is recognised that society is changing rapidly in Ireland, both North and South, and clear thought needs to be

given as to how the Church may give leadership in working for a stable and cohesive society. A report and recommendations are brought to this Assembly for discussion (p 101).

7. At the last Assembly two Panels were formed to respond to the **Memorials of the Tyrone Presbytery** on (a) the relationships of Church Courts, especially when there are differing authoritative interpretations of Scripture and the Subordinate Standards held on a matter within the wider Church (Minutes 2009, pp 91-92); (b) provision for inquiry into or review of Judicial Commission practices and procedures (Minutes 2009, p 92). The Panels bring their reports and recommendations to this Assembly (pp 63, 66).

8. This year's **SPUD Youth Assembly** looked at a range of issues, under the themes of 'Young People and the Church'; 'Engaging local congregations in Social Witness', and 'Missional Church'. Something of which the delegates became aware was that there is significant overlap in certain areas of the different Boards' work, particularly in the area of mission and community engagement. While they were extremely encouraged to see that the work of the various Boards compliment one another, they were also concerned that perhaps they were working in similar areas without great communication. The young people felt strongly that greater co-operation between the Mission Boards would be beneficial, and were keen to maintain a voice in the ongoing conversations surrounding holistic mission and community engagement. It is realised that this is not an original thought, that the Boards have the desire to work together and that the Mission Co-ordination Panel does exist. However with all of this in mind, SPUD proposes a resolution to encourage greater co-operation between the Mission Boards, in which young people may play a meaningful part.

9. The Board has been following up remits given to it by the General Assembly. A Panel has been looking at the Memorial **from Saintfield Road Kirk Session** and brings its recommendations (p 103). The Clerk is discussing with the General Assembly's Solicitor proposed changes to The Code and possibly the Union Theological College of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Act 1978, to give permanent effect to the agreed changes in the **Management Structures for Union Theological College** (Minutes 2009, p 85). The relevant Overtures will be published in the Supplementary Reports. A Panel was set up by the Board to report on the **wider role of Faculty** at Union Theological College and is continuing its work. Recently, a question was asked of the Clerk concerning the **eligibility of a paid employee of a Congregation to become an elder** in that Congregation. The General Assembly's Solicitor has advised that: "Trustees can only be employees if authorised by the constitution of the charity. Although The Code permits payments to be made to a Minister there is no express provision to allow payment to Elders. I am advised that Elders and indeed Committee members would be treated as though they were trustees." In consultation with the General Assembly's Solicitor appropriate Overtures will be published in the Supplementary Reports.

10. The major Committees of the Board continue their work. One of the Tyrone Memorials referred to the **Doctrine Committee** significant doctrinal and pastoral issues on marriage. It brings a substantive report this year (p 23). The **Moderator's Advisory Committee** continues to consider ways to encourage conciliation throughout the Church (p 22) and the **Priorities Committee** reports

on its modus operandi (p 16). As always, the **Church and Society Committee** has been giving a lead on issues which affect the well-being of society (p 45). There are significant developments reported in the **Church Relations Committee** report, both globally in the merger of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council and locally in new staffing developments at the Irish Council of Churches.

11. The work of the General Board depends on the enthusiasm and hard work of its Committee Conveners, all of whom have an extensive remit. This year three of the Conveners are retiring. *The Rev Charles McMullen* has led the work of **Global Concerns** during an important period of transition. This is a difficult Committee to convene as it depends largely on the input of three Panels – Environment, Peace and Peacemaking, and Race Relations – but the breadth of Charles’ interests have helped him to hold the many facets of this work together. The Lifestyle report of 2008 is a testament to the thorough approach he brought to this work. *The Rev Dr Allen Sleith* is also resigning from the convenership of the **Church Relations Committee** due to understandable family and congregational commitments. During his convenership Allen showed clear insight in dealing with the difficult issues which are inevitably on the agenda of this Committee.

12. Changes in the intention of the Board of Christian Training to appoint a Principal of Union Theological College are reported in that Board’s report (p 242). *The Rev Prof Laurence Kirkpatrick* resigned as Principal on 31 March 2010 and by convention also as Convener of the Doctrine Committee. In the short time of his appointment Laurence brought to the position clarity of thought and a desire to work constructively for the good of all connected with the College. His resignation was accepted with regret and at the time of writing an interview is arranged in order to bring a nomination as Principal to the Assembly.

13. One important task requiring careful research and sensitivity is keeping the Memorial Roll and Record. This has been undertaken with great diligence by the Rev Dr Jack Richardson and the Board records its grateful thanks.

PRIORITIES COMMITTEE

Priorities in Funding and Resource Allocation

1. It is now generally accepted that the Priorities Committee must have the key role in ensuring that resources are allocated according to identified and agreed priorities. For this to be effective the following procedure was agreed:

- (a) The first step will be for the Priorities Committee to report each year, through the General Board to the General Assembly, its proposed areas of priority for the next 3 years e.g. the Assembly of 2010 will agree priority areas for 2011-13.
- (b) In preparing their on-going and future programmes of work, the Boards will then be aware of the general priority areas which have been identified and agreed by the General Assembly. In the light of

this, the Boards will be asked to report to the Priorities Committee in January each year on:

- (i) Work in which they are presently engaged and which they believe should be continued
 - (ii) Work which they no longer intend to continue or which is to be scaled down.
 - (iii) New work which the Board would hope to begin.
- (c) On the basis of the Board submissions and on-going discussions, the Priorities Committee will report to the General Board in March and then to the General Assembly in June on the agreed priorities for both on-going and proposed new work of the Boards. It will no longer be possible for Boards to initiate new work, or greatly expand existing work, by separate resolution at the General Assembly. Instead the report of the Priorities Committee will comment on and prioritise the work proposed by the Boards and a composite resolution will be brought to the Assembly which can, of course, be amended.
- (d) Following the March meeting of the General Board, and informed by the agreed priority areas of work, the United Appeal Board will consider the Board Budgets for the subsequent year and report to the General Assembly for confirmation. In some cases a budget item may be held as a contingency for the General Assembly to decide whether or not it should be included.
- (e) While the Finance and Personnel and General Boards do not directly receive United Appeal funding, their work priorities will similarly be examined and reported on by the Priorities Committee. This will inform the budgeting of the Incidental Fund.

Aspirations for our Church

2. A previous report identified the following aspirations for our Church to be:

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

The prophetic voice offers a critique of life today and comments on where life appears to be going. It is a reflective voice which invites a response, an alternative voice which is critical of the status quo and a stimulating voice which challenges complacency. It is also an authentic voice where word is reflected in lifestyle.

In the history of the Church there are many examples of prophetic voices where individuals or the Church as a body have brought 'a word in season'. Sometimes the voice has been accompanied by action and other times the action has embodied the word.

Having a voice is essentially about communication. There is a need for a co-ordinated strategy in which the Church is prepared to set the agenda rather than respond to it. Church leadership must also be prepared to listen to and be challenged by a prophetic critique of what is being offered to the world.

However important it is to speak with a prophetic voice at a denominational level, it is equally important that the prophetic voice be heard at the local level.

This has important implications for the training of students for the ministry and for the ongoing equipping of ministers and others who declare God's Word.

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

It is recognised that congregations of the PCI are not always as welcoming and caring as they should be. This is especially relevant at a time when visitors and strangers both from within Irish culture and beyond are coming to live and worship here. There is a need to re-examine the ways in which congregations include outsiders and become enriched by them.

In the congregational family, while the role of the minister is pivotal, pastoral care should not be seen to be the responsibility of one person alone. The leadership should be jointly responsible not least for their own fellowship and support. Pastoral care teams need to be developed, recognising the varied gifting of Church members who need to be trained and recognised.

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

In previous generations, in many localities, the Church was embedded in the community and acted as a Community Centre. Ministers had a high profile in the community. Attending Church was a norm that required no justification. Today the local Church is largely marginalised and is widely considered to be, at best, an irrelevance and, at worst, a negative influence, keeping alive old enmities, highlighting division and contributing to community strife. This intensifies the temptation for the local Church to become primarily a place of shelter for the faithful, an oasis of comforting certainties and fellowship. Yielding to this temptation will inevitably lead to the local Church's demise and death, since its membership will grow older, dwindle and depart.

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

If congregations are going to be places of transformation they must provide training, support and encouragement for members to make a difference in society. The challenge is not only to bring people to faith but to disciple them for work and service in today's world. Too many congregations adopt a "convert and retain" policy rather than a "train and release" policy.

For this attitude to change, new thinking needs to take place on the role and leadership function of Kirk Session. This may involve issues such as the length of service of elders and their pastoral/district responsibilities. The role and training of those involved in Sunday Schools and Christian Education also needs to be re-examined.

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

Much has been said in recent years about globalisation and living in a Global Village. There is now much greater ease in communication. Not only can

those in the West travel the world, but there is also much greater migration from less developed countries. There is a global community and it is no longer necessary to leave the shores of Ireland to engage with a broad range of people from different cultural backgrounds.

Living in an increasingly multicultural community, means that as far as mission is concerned, 'geography is history'. The emphasis on a home and overseas distinction is diminishing, and instead of talking of mission as being local or global a new word has crept into mission vocabulary, glocal. The implications of this for future inter-board discussions and for structural adjustment needs to be recognised.

Concern for global issues must result in engagement, not only in terms of stewardship but of mission in the broadest sense. The economic, social, and political must be balanced with the spiritual and environmental, taking a holistic approach. There must be emphasis on the need for the gospel to be lived out relationally and incarnationally in the world today, both at home and overseas. The Church must become a community which is globally engaged.

Priority Areas (2011-2013)

3. From these more general aspirations five priority areas had been identified to encourage new work and thinking throughout the Church. These were assessed as follows:

(i) Developing centres of pastoral care and fellowship –

Congregations need to be aware of their existence as open and welcoming communities of faith where genuine care is offered and fellowship enjoyed. Pastoral care must be seen as a responsibility of all, led by the Kirk Session. Particular attention needs to be given to the care of manse families both by the Kirk Session and Presbytery.

The good work of the Pastoral Care Panel, convened by the Rev Gabrielle Farquhar, was recognised and the introduction of "Care-Call". The Committee agreed that it is important also to look at the role of the Kirk Session, Presbytery and General Assembly in supporting ministers and their families. Sometimes the very bodies which should be giving care and encouragement can be themselves the source of additional stress. This became one of the main topics of the General Board Conference in January (see separate report). The Board of Christian Training is developing a new framework for pastoral care in congregations and a training resource.

(ii) Discipling and Training for all-member ministry –

The development of the gifts of all believers must be a vital element of congregational life. This may mean centrally the recognition of new types of ministry, both full-time and part-time. It will also mean continuing ministerial development and the development of leadership in all aspects of congregational life. A co-ordinated approach to training and ministry is essential.

The development of new types of ministry, both full-time and part-time, has been spearheaded by the Ministries Panel and taken up by the Board of Christian Training. Continuing ministerial development is being co-ordinated by

the Director of Ministerial Studies and in the early years is now compulsory. While the Board of Christian Training has indicated that its Christian Training programme will concentrate on “generic” training which is of wide relevance to the Church in developing its leadership, the question remains as to how the Boards may provide “specialist” training in their own fields and to what extent this needs to be co-ordinated.

(iii) Encouraging prophetic community involvement –

Congregations must be encouraged to engage realistically and prophetically with the communities in which they are set. The gospel must be lived incarnationally, outside the confines of the Congregation. The Church should not only act prophetically but also speak to challenge society in ways which will be heard and understood.

This is an objective on which there have been less obvious signs of progress. The Communications strategy of the Church has been reviewed, but it is still proving difficult for the Church to have its agenda heard. It may be because a clear agenda for speaking prophetically in the world has yet to be developed. The changing nature of our community since the peace process, and with a vulnerable cohort of migrant workers, needs to be recognised.

On the other hand, at the local level some useful work is being done in congregations to relate to the community in which they are set, including migrants. Some ministers working in loyalist areas have been meeting to share experience and the Board of Mission in Ireland has been considering the particular challenge of urban mission. The Future of Peacemaking, on which a Panel has been meeting and the Church and Society Committee’s work on sectarianism is relevant and being developed.

(iv) Recognising global engagement –

In mission the distinction between “home” and “overseas” is becoming increasingly irrelevant. The Church must act and think both locally and globally, learning from our partnerships with those of different cultures and traditions while offering expertise when it is requested. Issues of the global economy must be allowed to challenge our lifestyles.

A Mission Co-ordination Panel is in place but needs to progress its work. Perhaps the Church needs to make more use of our global partner contacts, both individually and through e.g. WARC. It has to be questioned if the big global issues for the Church are really on our agenda.

(v) Renewing the servant-courts of the Church –

Thought needs to be given as to how the courts of the Church may more adequately service the needs of congregations in mission. The leadership role of the courts should be recognised, while acknowledging also the important fellowship and support roles which they should fulfil.

This topic was recently opened up from a pastoral point of view at the General Board Conference. A report of the Conference should include some practical suggestions for carrying this work forward.

4. It was agreed that these five should remain as priority areas to stimulate new work, but it was also recognised that for any new initiatives to take place there needs to be a renewed emphasis on resourcing ministry and mission. This was therefore added as a sixth priority for new initiatives in the Church during 2011-2013.

(vi) Resourcing ministry and mission –

If the ministry and mission of our Church is to be effective it will need to be adequately resourced, both in terms of commitment and finance. In the present financial climate and with smaller groups of committed people in congregations, this may become increasingly difficult but it is surely not enough to manage decline.

Remit and Membership

5. When the Priorities Committee was introduced as a Committee of the General Board in 2004 it was reported –

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

Remit

While the above statement was adopted in principle by the 2004 General Assembly it has never been formally incorporated into the Code, although the co-ordinating function of the General Board is already in the Code. As the Priorities Committee is now fairly well established and carrying out its prioritising function it may be useful to add an additional sub paragraph to the Code Par 272(4). An appropriate Overture is appended.

Membership

It is important that the Priorities Committee has a proper balance between those most closely involved in the work of the other Boards and those who represent Presbytery on the General Board membership. It is also important that the Committee is no larger than it has to be. A slightly amended membership would be:

- (a) Moderator, Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Board Secretaries (9)
- (b) Conveners of: Union Commission, Boards of Communications, Mission Overseas, Mission in Ireland, Social Witness, Youth and Children’s Ministry, Christian Training, Finance and Personnel, United Appeal (9)
- (c) Presbytery membership on General Board (9)

DONALD WATTS, Convener

MODERATOR'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE

1. The Moderator's Advisory Committee met to confirm assessors in a matter of difficulty in a Presbytery. The main item of business, however, was to consider the development of conciliation in the Church.

2. *The Rev Doug Baker, Co-ordinator of the Conciliation Panel*, reports as follows:

During 2009 conciliators worked on five cases, by February 2010 four new cases had been referred.

Thoughts on Conciliation and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

- (i) While a good conciliation service needs to continue to be offered, even higher priority should be on preventative training on dealing constructively with difference and disagreement; facilitating good decision-making processes; and the imperative and responsibility to seek to live peacefully with each other in the fellowship of the Church.
 - Two separate days of training do take place with Licentiatees
 - Occasionally Kirk Sessions have opted for this training
- (ii) Recurring issues in cases which have been referred for conciliation need to be addressed, in particular:
 - (a) Some strong theological work needs to be done on the balance between seeking unity and purity in the Church.
 - (b) Work also needs to be done around introducing change and bringing the vast majority of existing members along with those who wish to introduce change more rapidly.
 - (c) Clarity needs to be given about what is meant when The Code says that the content of worship is the prerogative of the Minister and what, if any, role Kirk Session has in determining the style of worship.
 - (d) Serious thought needs to be given to introducing terms on Kirk Session for Elders, so that Elders who behave in ways which are detrimental to the peace and unity of a congregation can simply not be voted on again rather than having to be judicially removed or retained at great price to Ministers and others.
 - (e) Clarity needs to be given about what is and isn't appropriate to ask of those seeking baptism and admission to the Lord's Table, and what guidance there is on marriage to non-believers; co-habiting couples, inter-church marriages.
- (iii) Further training needs to be done with all Clerks of Presbytery so that they understand what conciliation is and is not, know when and how to refer cases, and know what they can do and what they should refrain from doing in order to help conciliation work.
 - A half-day session was held with Clerks of Presbytery.
 - A sheet should be given to all Clerks of Presbytery describing when mediation might be appropriate and when it is not.
 - Parties should be asked at the outset whether or not they wish to seek reconciliation. If that is not their intention, conciliation is usually the wrong process and time and effort should not go into it. If they do, then a judicial process should be avoided and conciliation attempted first.

(iv) At least half a dozen new conciliators need to be trained.

3. In considering the report the Committee concurred with the issues raised as important if the Church is to become a more accepting place.

Discussion concentrated on:

- (a) Acknowledging the distinction between a conciliation route and a judicial route and the importance of training to recognise when conciliation is possible. This will most often be a decision for Presbytery, so the training of Presbytery Clerks is important.
- (b) Exploring the possibility of elders serving on Kirk Session for set terms while remaining as elders within the Congregation. It was recognised that this may be good for other reasons also and so a resolution should be brought to the General Assembly to explore this further.
- (c) A difficulty which sometimes emerges early in a ministry can have its origin during a previous ministry or vacancy. It is important that Presbytery is satisfied all outstanding issues have been dealt with before an installation takes place. This should be incorporated in a revised vacancy procedures booklet. Presbyteries should also be encouraged to have an “exit interview” with a minister who is moving or retiring from a congregation to identify any potential problems. In cases where there are clear difficulties thought might be given to appointing a full-time “interim” for a number of years, but further thought needs to be given as to how this might work in practice.

DONALD WATTS, Convener

DOCTRINE COMMITTEE

Introduction

The terms of the 2009 General Assembly remit to the Doctrine Committee were as follows: ‘That the Westminster Confession, chapter 24, paragraph 3, states: “It is lawful for all sorts of people to marry who are able with judgement to give their consent: yet it is the duty of Christians to marry only in the Lord”. Within the Church, there is a variety of interpretations held concerning what is meant by “to marry only in the Lord”. Such confusion arising from a variety of interpretations is unhelpful and is giving rise to pastoral difficulties and clarification is therefore required’.

The Doctrine Committee met seven times to discuss this remit and formulate a report (on 3 July, 21 October and 27 November 2009 and 14 January, 26 February, 5 and 12 March 2010). The Committee is unanimous in its view that clarity in the interpretation of biblical texts is desirable in the Church and that the pastoral issues at stake are also of the utmost importance. It has sought to fulfil its remit by (a) commenting on the Confessional teaching, (b) interpreting the relevant Scriptures and (c) examining some of the attendant pastoral issues. Obviously, in beginning with the Confession, the Committee is not giving it precedence over Scripture. The report is organised in accordance with the terms of the remit.

(a) **The Teaching of the Confession**

For many readers, the natural interpretation of the Confessional statement; 'it is the duty of Christians to marry only in the Lord' (24.3) is that Christians are to marry only other Christians. Without detailed research into the theology and practice of marriage in the seventeenth century, no one can reach a secure conclusion on the exact meaning and scope of these words in the Confession but the Committee makes the following observations, aware that the Westminster Confession is a 17th century document, speaking to a 17th century context.

1. **The Confession.** 24.3 alludes to those 'such as profess the true reformed religion', that is, those within the visible Church who may marry. At this point, there is apparently no distinction between nominal and true believers in the 'Reformed' Churches. What it says applies to all who profess the true reformed religion. It is obviously expected that those who do so should possess a genuine and lively faith, but only in the sense that we today are to expect that of all Church members. However, from a Confessional standpoint, a marriage between two who professed the true reformed religion, would be a marriage in the Lord.

2. This reading is apparently supported by the specific Confessional reference to two excluded categories. One is defined according to doctrine; hence, marriage with 'infidels, Papists, or other idolaters' or anyone 'maintain[ing] damnable heresies' is proscribed. The other is defined according to conduct: even a Christian professing the reformed religion who was 'notoriously wicked in life' should not be a partner in Christian marriage. These two kinds of marriage would not be 'marriage in the Lord' as stipulated in the Confession.

3. As a matter of principle, it is important to notice the distinction between idolatry and heresy, for, even if Roman Catholicism was to be judged heretical rather than idolatrous, that would still exclude marriage to Roman Catholics in the terms of the Confession. If, however, Roman Catholics are not judged to be either idolatrous or guilty of heresies sufficient for damnation, it is not clear that marriage between someone professing the reformed religion and a Roman Catholic would violate the principle of marriage in the Lord as it is advanced in the Confession.

4. Consistent adherence to the Confession would apparently prohibit marriage between professors of the true reformed religion and credo-baptists or any who denied paedobaptism. According to 28.5, it is 'a great sin to contemn or neglect this ordinance', i.e. the ordinance of baptism, which is applicable to infants and not just to those who profess faith. In Confessional terms, deniers of paedobaptism could be presumed guilty of great sin and are presumably amongst those who entertain 'damnable heresy'. The Reformers themselves believed in the validity of infant baptism in the Roman Catholic Church; in that respect, Catholicism compares favourably with credo-baptist congregations. As far as the text of the Confession goes, it is unlikely that marriage to a credo-baptist who, by profession, condemned the baptism of infants, would be regarded as marriage in the Lord.

5. The Committee is aware of the different views maintained in PCI regarding Roman Catholicism, but it presumes that there are few, if any, who would categorically deny that Presbyterians ever ought to marry Baptists.

Certainly, the Committee is not of that view. Care must be exercised when using a 17th century document that assumptions are not made about how that document was read and understood in the mid-17th century. Adherence to our Confessional standards in this matter must therefore give way to considerations more satisfactorily rooted in Scripture.

6. We need to consider how ‘the duty of Christians to marry only in Lord’ ties in with the three purposes for marriage stated by the Confession. These are: (a) ‘for the mutual help of husband and wife’; (b) ‘for the increase of mankind with a legitimate issue, and of the Church with an holy seed’; (c) ‘for the preventing of uncleanness’. (24.2). Thus, marriage is a creation ordinance, necessary for the preservation of both the world and the Church. Does it inevitably follow that people who ‘do not profess the true reformed religion’ are incapable of fulfilling these purposes? A non-believer of integrity or someone of uncertain belief who was supportive of the convictions of the person he or she proposed to marry could still offer ‘mutual help’, ‘legitimate issue’, and the prevention ‘of uncleanness’. Since infant baptism is to be administered to the child of one believing parent (28.4) it could be argued that such a person would also provide ‘holy seed’ in the Church.

7. At this stage in the report the Committee has been teasing out what the Confession teaches without making a judgement on the remit given to it. The fact that the Confession is an historical document adds further complications to the task of interpreting its teaching for our own time. Clearly it was compiled within a significantly different socio-religious situation from the one in which we find ourselves which also obscures what does or does not violate its principle of marriage only in the Lord. The Committee has been given the remit of clarifying what the Confession teaches but it is also our task to point out that, for the issues we are dealing with, a clear application to the third millennium is simply not available. Thus it is important to move on to a discussion of the various scriptural passages that form the foundation of what the Confession has to say.

(b) The Relevant Scriptures

8. Several passages from Paul’s Corinthian correspondence are relevant to the Doctrine Committee’s remit. Before we can relate teaching from these ancient letters to our contemporary situation, we must first of all strive to grasp what Paul was telling his readers in their original context.

2 Corinthians 6.14 – 7.1

9. 2 Corinthians, in part at least, represents Paul’s spirited defence against his detractors and opponents in Corinth, where his apostleship is belittled and contested by some, and his robust response helps account for the uncompromising tone of the present passage. Some Bible interpreters, finding 2 Cor 6.14 – 7.1 to be harsher than the surrounding co-text, suggest that it originated in another part of Paul’s overall correspondence with Corinth (in his “painful letter”, only part of which we now possess), eventually being inserted here; this is a weak argument, however, since controversy is present virtually throughout 2 Cor as it now stands. Others wonder if part of this text – 2 Cor

6.14-18 – may even be from another hand than Paul’s; this is a view, however, that may be neither proven nor falsified.

10. To understand 2 Cor as a whole, we have to take account of its combination of polemics with pastoral encouragement, for Paul is much gentler with his faithful converts (whom he seeks to edify) than with his opponents (whom he confronts). Thus in the immediate exegetical context, both the verses which immediately precede (in 2 Cor 6.3-13) and those that follow (in 2 Cor 7.2-4) express Paul’s open-hearted affection for those who have come to Christ through his Gospel in pagan Corinth, and who *do* acknowledge him as their apostle. Paul’s overall ethical strategy, reflected in both of the Corinthian letters we possess, is for their up-building – an outcome summed up, in the climax to our passage, as “perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor 7.1).

11. 2 Cor 6.14 speaks of the pairing up of mismatched yokefellows: Paul’s words therefore seem to be in similar vein to Lev 22.10, which forbids double-yoking to a plough of incompatible animals, such as an ox and a donkey. Readers of 2 Cor 6.14 have commonly understood the unequal yoke and yokefellows (or “mismatching” – NIV) as referring to marriage between a believer and an unbeliever. Whilst marriage is a legitimate example of what is involved, the passage itself is unspecific because – as John Calvin acknowledged – here Paul is setting out a general principle. He warns against *any* incongruous yoking (or unholy alliance) whereby a Christian might be improperly harnessed to a pagan and drawn into sinful behaviour or, as Calvin says, “participation in works in which Christians cannot lawfully have fellowship.”

12. When Paul tells his readers *not* to keep on partnering or teaming up with pagans, what might such improper yoking involve? If, as seems clear, an unequal yoke does not bar the believer from ordinary everyday contact with pagans, the question is, what would compromising involvement with them – off limits, for Christian disciples – actually involve? While Paul does not say, it must surely include the kind of impure and idolatrous practices listed (and outlawed) by him in 1 Cor 6.9-11 or 2 Cor 12.20-21. The first passage makes clear that belonging to Christ means breaking with practices which typify the pagan world; fornication, adultery, prostitution, sodomy, idolatry, theft, greed, drunkenness, and revelry are all listed. In 2 Cor 12, meanwhile, Paul worries that believers may be unrepentantly engaged in quarrelling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, conceit and disorder, together with impurity, sexual immorality and licentiousness. Whenever a brother or sister in Christ lapses into such idolatrous or immoral behaviour, this gives grounds for breaking all ties with them (1 Cor 5.9); the reason is that, if those who are “sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy” (1 Cor 1.2) were to exchange godliness and purity for pagan ways from their pagan past, this would be a denial of their faith and an abandonment of Christ.

13. Here in 2 Cor 6.14-16 Paul asks a series of rhetorical questions, with cumulative effect. All five questions imply the same negative answer (i.e., “none” or “nothing”):-

- What partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness?
- What fellowship is there between light and dark?

- What agreement does Christ have with Satan?
- What does a believer share with an unbeliever?
- What agreement has the temple of God with idols?

14. In all five cases partnering, sharing, or agreeing is impossible, since incompatible parties when yoked together will engage in idolatrous and immoral behaviour inconsistent with faith in Christ. Arguing against such unequal yoking, Paul therefore exhorts believers to separate (2 Cor 6.17-18) from “unbelievers” (2 Cor 6.14-15); here he is re-using language from Isaiah 52.11, and several parts of Ezek 20, concerning refraining from the worship of idols or from touching the unclean.

15. Over against the *negative* aspect of an unequal yoke or mismatch, however, Paul also seems to have in mind simultaneously something correspondingly *positive* – namely, faithful covenant. 2 Cor 6.16 quotes Lev 26.12 (*God covenants to walk with and be with his people*), while 2 Cor 6.18 refers to God acting as a Father to his people. The positive and the negative belong together, since the restoration of Israel’s covenant with YHWH yokes his people exclusively to him (positively), but also requires his people to put aside all idols (negatively); by their very nature, believers’ covenant obligations to God exclude any and every rival bond as being idolatrous.

16. What does Paul mean by “unbelievers” (2 Cor 6.14-15)? Throughout 2 Cor 4 (and especially v.1-3), Paul specifically has in mind his opponents; engaged in underhand and shameful activities (4.2), they have been accusing him of preaching a Gospel that is veiled and ineffectual (4.3). If in the present instance Paul is still thinking of these people, then for the Corinthians to persist in heeding such false teachers or their doctrine – instead of following (or returning to) their true apostle – would be to enter upon an unequal and inappropriate yoke. Taking “unbelievers” to refer to Paul’s opponents is an interpretation difficult to rule out, given the polemical context of the letter overall. Therefore 2 Cor 6.14 may well be addressing, first and foremost, the prospect that the Corinthians might abandon Paul’s Gospel (and so, forsake Christ as Lord) in favour of renewed immorality and involvement in idolatry.

17. However, in more general terms 2 Cor 4.4-6 has previously dubbed “unbelievers” those who are blinded to the light of the Gospel, in contrast to believers (who are in an enlightened state). Indeed, the rhetorical questions pick up on this fundamental contrast (e.g., light versus dark). Whatever may be said *specifically* (as above) about false teachers – whom Paul may be likening, by implication, to idolaters! – both the *general* Corinthian context and the *particular* OT texts to which Paul is appealing do suggest that, for the apostle, “unbelievers” may refer primarily to pagan idolaters blinded and enslaved by their idolatry. Some confirmation of this is provided by 2 Cor 7.1 where, in exhorting the Corinthians to cleanse themselves from “defilement”, Paul uses a word [molusmos] which applies (in its verbal form) to eating defiling meat offered to idols. For some believers, to eat such meat would contaminate them (1 Cor 8.7) because their weak conscience could not live with it. For Paul, as for anyone possessing a strong conscience (1 Cor 8.4-6; 10.25-27; cf. Romans 14.7,17), this is ordinarily a matter of indifference. However, Paul draws a line at eating such meat in a pagan cultic setting (1 Cor 10.17-21), since that would involve open involvement with idolatry: In such cases every believer must

abstain, for there can be no sharing the table of the Lord *and* sitting at table with demons!

18. The Corinthians know that, as members of a believing people wholly set apart for God, they constitute “the Temple of the living God” (2 Cor 6.16). They also know that their own body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and that God, by his Spirit, dwells in them (1 Cor 6.19). Accordingly, uniting their body to that of a cult prostitute would mean establishing a “one-flesh” relation incompatible with being united to Christ (1 Cor 6.15*ff*) and, as such, offers an especially clear example of an incompatible yoke. But the same goes for any association which harnesses a believer into improper fellowship (sharing, agreement) with idolaters and leads both parties to plough a furrow of sinful behaviour. For the Christian believer such a relation is incompatible with being bound in faithful covenant to God in Christ, as expressed in discipleship, witness and worship.

19. As for 2 Cor 6.14 – 7.1, the text itself supplies no particular examples of such unholy yoking. Since Paul refrains from mentioning any, we may only speculate as to what particular situations he had in mind. Having opened with a general principle – *do not form sinful mismatches with unbelievers* (2 Cor 6.14) – the apostle is also content to end with a general exhortation to holiness and to the avoidance of contamination (2 Cor 7.1). It would seem that, as part of their “making room in their hearts” for their true apostle (2 Cor 7.2), the Corinthians are expected by Paul to work out how to implement all the teaching they have received from him. It is their privilege and responsibility to apply it to relevant context-specific applications, just as it falls to them to reject the false teaching his opponents have brought them. Presumably such principled action, which is devolved to them, is characteristic of both the ethical responsibility Paul has taught them and, consequently, the ethical maturity he expects of them.

20. What implications does this text have for contemporary readers who also wish to act responsibly, on the basis of Paul’s Gospel? In light of the above, 2 Cor 6.14 – 7.1 exhorts us to think carefully about what we do before we act. Paul creates space for ethically responsible people to think and then act, bounded on the one hand by a general principle (*do not get involved in being yoked with idolatry*) and on the other by an exhortation (*be holy*). For Paul, believers must work out whether, by getting involved in a particular relationship (or yoke), they might be shackling themselves to a worshipper of a false god or to a false teacher and thereby risk being implicated in idolatrous and immoral action. Responsible ethical judgment and wise discernment are involved in the decision-making process, based on the general principles enunciated both in this Scripture and in any other which is of relevance.

21. This particular text urges believers, as a principle, to think long and hard about *every* binding relationship or contract which they might consider getting involved in. They are to ask themselves whether such close partnering would constitute a faithful covenant or, on the contrary, establish a mismatch that compromises their Christian discipleship and embroils them in ungodliness or idolatry. Whilst Paul’s teaching does not mention the marriage bond here, it is legitimate to apply his principle (*think before you act*) to marriage – as one form of binding partnership among others – just as it is necessary to heed his exhortation (*be holy*) in that context, as in all relationships.

1 Corinthians 7. 12-16

22. The specific issue of marriage between a believer and an unbeliever has, in fact, already been broached by Paul in 1 Cor 7. The presenting problem, there, is what to do about a pagan marriage bond which apparently antedated the subsequent coming to faith in Christ of one of the spouses: What is the new believer to do in such circumstances? The now believing wife or husband is counselled by Paul (though not, he says, by the Lord, v 12!) *not* to divorce the unbelieving spouse, where that spouse is prepared to go on living with the believing partner (1 Cor 7.12-13); if, however, the pagan partner should initiate divorce, then the believer is to acquiesce in this (1 Cor 7.15).

23. The grounds Paul offers the believer of either gender for *not* divorcing the unbelieving spouse are no less than what he sees as the sanctifying power which the believer's influence has over both the unbelieving spouse and any children; both are made holy by the believer (1 Cor 7.14), with some prospect that "for all [they] know" their influence for good might ultimately save the unbelieving partner (1 Cor 7.16). As Calvin remarks, "the godliness of the one does more to 'sanctify' the marriage than the ungodliness of the other to make it unclean." The possibility that the non-Christian spouse, in such a situation, might ultimately be saved (1 Cor 7.16) implies his or her exposure to winsome testimony to faith in Jesus Christ by the believing spouse. This interpretation assumes that 'sanctified' here (v 14), unusually for Paul's correspondence, means something like 'under godly influence', or 'included within a proper covenantal relationship'. Alternatively, however, 'sanctified' here may simply mean 'legitimate', as it regularly did in Jewish contexts. Whether the union is being considered as 'holy' or simply 'lawful', either way the believing spouse is to persist in the marriage, with a view to winning the pagan spouse to faith in Christ.

24. An intriguing contrast arises, therefore, when we refer back to 2 Cor 6.14 – 7.1. In that text, where there is no mention of marriage as such, any unequal yoking to an unbeliever which results in idolatrous compromise is declared a non starter; in the second text, where marriage *is* explicitly at issue as an existing contract, prior to one partner hearing God's call to faith (v 17), the sanctifying influence exerted by the believer over the unbeliever is the very reason to keep going. In other words, 1 Cor 7.12-16 makes *positive* contamination of the unbeliever by the believer the basis for continuing marital association, when one spouse has come to faith in Christ as Lord; meanwhile 2 Cor 6.14 – 7.1 makes *negative* contamination of believers by unbelievers the reason for abstaining from all binding relationships liable to implicate believers in the practices of idolaters and false teachers. Here, twin thrusts of Paul's ethical teaching are in tension with one another; listening to and learning from the apostle would seem to commit us to taking both of them seriously.

1 Corinthians 7.39-40

25. But what of a widowed believer, who is free to marry again? 1 Cor 7.39-40 addresses this point. In the Pauline Church, where OT levirate marriage is seemingly no longer a constraint upon a widow, she is entirely free to marry again or, indeed, to abstain. How then should she choose? Paul's personal advice

to her is that she will be happier if she refrains from marrying (1 Cor 7.40); nonetheless, should she exercise her freedom to marry “whomever she wishes”, then her choice of a spouse should be made “only in the Lord” (1 Cor 7.39). If “only in the Lord” is what Paul’s Greek literally says, what does he mean?

26. Calvin’s Bible, which had “only in the Lord”, leaves the question open; Luther’s German translation (1545) had “only let this take place in the Lord”, but this remains rather unspecific. In opting for the literal rendering “only in the Lord” some English Bibles (e.g. AV and NKJV, RSV and NRSV) similarly leave it to their readers to determine its exact meaning. NASB and ESV do the same in the text, but offer a footnote that invites comparison with 2 Cor 6.14 and its unequal yoke; this footnote notwithstanding, all these versions leave open the question of what “only in the Lord” may mean.

27. Other English Bibles, by contrast, choose to interpret the phrase for their readers, referring it to the prospective spouse the widow will choose: Thus AB expands it as “only [provided that he too is] in the Lord.” NIV translates it as “but he must belong to the Lord”, CEV as “to a man who is a follower of the Lord”, and GNB as “only if he is a Christian”. Similarly Peterson paraphrases “she will, of course, want to marry a believer and have the blessing of the Master.” All these renderings gloss “only in the Lord” as meaning that the chosen spouse must be a Christian believer.

28. Calvin notes how, in his time, many took “only in the Lord” to be Paul’s warning to the Corinthians, in passing, not to “enter upon the yoke of marriage with unbelievers.” However, although the Reformer acknowledges that the words “only in the Lord” do have this meaning, he considers that they “go farther” by exhorting widows contemplating second marriage (here Calvin paraphrases Paul’s expression), to do so “reverently, wisely and in the fear of the Lord, which is how marriage ought to be contracted.” Or as Lightfoot puts it, “she must remember that she is a member of Christ’s body; and not forget her Christian duties and responsibilities.” Here, Calvin or Lightfoot decline to restrict the application of “only in the Lord” to the believer’s choice of whom to marry, however traditional this might be, on the grounds that Paul’s meaning has a wider interpretation and application – namely, to the wise and responsible *Christian* decision-making (undertaken “in the Lord”) of the believer who is contemplating marriage, including the choice of a spouse. This interpretation of Paul’s words takes proper account of the apostle’s aim to equip his converts, for all of life, to think and act in the Lord. Consequently, English Bibles which permit this wider meaning, rather than retaining the literal translation “only in the Lord”, are to be preferred at this point.

29. In conclusion, we may briefly weave together these threads of Paul’s ethical instruction to the Church at Corinth concerning marriage. The apostle’s overall argument, in both excerpts drawn from 1 Cor 7, rests on and defends the conviction that marriage – including a pagan marriage where one spouse now believes in Christ, and a widow’s possible second marriage after death of the first spouse – is something fundamentally good. What, then, is he telling believers in the passages in question?

30. Paul’s teaching, here and elsewhere, aims at empowering believers to think and act ethically and responsibly.

- In 1 Cor 7.12-16, to any believer already married to an unbeliever before coming to faith, he says not to underestimate the extent to which they now have a godly influence, with saving potential, over their unbelieving spouse and any children; this provides them with a positive and powerful rationale for staying married.
- And in 1 Cor 7.39-40 Paul's phrase "only in the Lord" is best understood as meaning that a widow should engage in responsible, god-fearing decision making when contemplating marriage once more and choosing the right spouse. By extension, in all responsible choices associated with entering upon (and persisting with) marriage, contemporary Christian readers are similarly empowered and impelled to exercise their own ethical judgment "in the Lord".
- As regards 2 Cor 6.14 – 7.1, two things may be concluded. First, that for Paul *looking before we leap*, when committing ourselves to any binding relationship with an unbeliever (of which marriage is one instance), is just the sort of responsible behaviour and wise discernment he would have expected from his converts at Corinth. And second, that when contemplating entering any and every form of close association (marriage included, by implication), we (like Paul's first readers) should think of ourselves as *holy* – or, put another way, as being bound by a prior relation which affects all others: being united to and indwelt by Christ as Lord, through faith.

(c) The Pastoral Issues involved in marrying 'in the Lord'

31. Celebrating a marriage is one of the best opportunities that the Church has to engage intimately with folk of all levels of faith or none. In an increasingly post-Christian society, celebrating a marriage not only has a pastoral dimension, but also offers an obvious missional opportunity. How the Church approaches this issue, both in terms of what we decide and the manner in which we implement our decisions, matters greatly. Recognising that there may be an irresolvable tension between pastoral concern and missional endeavour, we must think pastorally and missionally about how we approach and support couples (and their wider families) as we explore with them the possibility of being married in a Christian ceremony.

32. It is unwise to allow the debate over whether or not a Christian should marry a non-Christian to take place in isolation. We must see this discussion in the context of the overall teaching of young people and the pastoral care of families. Recommendations concerning last ditch situations alone would be inadequate, hence the following comments.

33. **Context:** Put very simply, we need to understand why people choose to marry. Is 'falling in love' an adequate reason? What about loneliness, insecurity, sexual desire, wanting to have children? Some might feel or be perceived by society or by the Church to be socially 'incomplete' without a partner or children. Having understood this context the Church will be better equipped to understand why young people make hasty or unwise decisions concerning partnership, cohabiting or marriage. the Committee suggests that the

Church needs a much more robust practical theology of sexuality, marriage, and singleness.

34. **Teaching:** The Church has an obligation to prepare her young people for making life decisions such as whom to marry, by proper, consistent and regular teaching, so that young people might bring biblical principles and a Christ-like mind to their decision making in this important aspect of life. From childhood, through teenage years and into adulthood, teaching on marriage and family life should never be left to the secular world, which is not shy about addressing these from its perspective, which is not always wholesome, seldom biblical, often reckless and sometimes hugely destructive. It is important that our young people should know what the Bible teaches about marrying someone who shares the Christian faith and the desire to live a life pleasing to God. The Committee suggests that the Church encourages congregations to more intentionally build appropriate teaching into their Christian Education programmes.

35. **Ethos:** The Church needs to address marriage and family matters with a joyful embracing of the subject as a wonderful mystery and a magnificent part of the heartbeat of the Church's very life, as God intended. It also ought to celebrate the call to singleness that comes to those who will not marry and to some who are widowed or divorced. Neither singleness nor marriage should be elevated above the other and sensitivity to both must be shown. The Committee suggests that the familial nature of the local congregation is more fully and inclusively celebrated.

The specific issue of a Christian/non-Christian couple requesting marriage in Church

36. Any Christian/non-Christian couple requesting marriage should be able to see that the Church's leadership is genuinely concerned for them and specifically for this aspect of their lives. Preparation for marriage should be either part of the ongoing relationship between the minister and two members of his/her congregation or an opportunity to develop a relationship with people who may be strangers to the minister and, possibly, to the Gospel. There are two detectable approaches to marriage within PCI.

A. If one half of a couple presenting themselves for marriage is a professing Christian and the other is not, some interpretations of Scripture lead to the conclusion that a Christian ceremony would not be appropriate, both for the believing party's own spiritual good and for the sake of the Church's public witness. However, in the light of the discussion both of the Confession and the Scriptural material the Committee would suggest that reaching such a decision might not be as clear cut as some people might assume, especially if the non-believing man or woman was obviously prepared to support the Christian convictions of the believing potential spouse. In any case, this situation should be handled with pastoral and missional concern and with gracious sensitivity, remembering that marriage is a creation ordinance, not a sacrament, and therefore it is to be guarded with a different set of criteria than applied to either Baptism or the Lord's Supper.

B. The other approach may be to allow the couple to make the ultimate decision to marry in Church. In that situation biblical teaching on marriage and

the possible consequences of proceeding with the marriage should be carefully explained (e.g. the potential clash of values regarding things like use of finance, bringing up children or Church attendance). Pastoral counsel and teaching should not be simply generic but should be appropriate to each case. If a non-Christian presents himself/herself as hostile to the Gospel, then pastorally the professing Christian should be clearly counselled against the marriage, but if the non-Christian expresses a willingness to align himself/herself with the People of God, and support for the believing partner in his/her Christian lifestyle and practice then this willingness should be taken into account and a marriage need not be a contradiction of Scripture.

37. If a couple is going to be disappointed in their request for marriage in Church, then some pragmatic questions need to be asked. What will happen if a wedding is disallowed? Will the couple simply accept that they are not to marry and break their relationship, will they live together while unmarried, will they be married by another minister or will they be married in a civil ceremony? What will be the pastoral response of a minister and Kirk Session to each of these situations? A major pastoral concern for the Church must be to deal with the situation in such a way as to be able to continue to minister to the two people and to the wider circle of family and friends.

38. Having done all that might reasonably be expected to dissuade the couple, should this be deemed necessary, a minister might now, as an act of grace, agree to officiate at a wedding and commit him/herself to loving pastoral care of the newly formed family. Actions springing from grace have much redemptive potential.

Broader practical points

39. All leaders are wise to appreciate the long term consequences of their actions, especially in closely knit communities. Questions of marriage are of great importance in themselves but their broader implications for the internal life and external witness of the Church must also be considered. First, we need to be careful lest we win Pyrrhic victories in which the 'letter of the law' is maintained but the spirit is broken. Allowing any situation to become a judicial issue, is to invite the prospect of having 'winners' and 'losers'; this is a great pity, but, with the exercise of Christian grace, any situation may be redeemed.

40. Second, questions such as that under consideration here do not have unambiguous practical outcomes. For example, decisions made to guard the internal integrity of the Church might have negative effects on the Church's mission and decisions taken for missional reasons might compromise the internal integrity of the Church. Further, decisions taken to guard internal integrity can result in disrupted fellowship, thereby harming one of the very things the Church hopes to maintain. Equally, decisions made from missional motives may present such a diluted picture of the claims of Christ that missional objectives are undermined by a perceived trivialising of the Gospel. This means that many decisions may be painful and will require sensitive courage.

41. Third, the Pauline injunction to treat the tender conscience gently (Rom 14) should be remembered. How will a decision, either way, be perceived by one whose faith is immature and whose conscience is very sensitive? But it is also a missional issue: what will a decision, either way, do to the reputation of

the Church and consequently, to the cause of Christ? Those who are mature should be strong enough to make decisions that encourage others towards maturity and sensitive enough to be willing to act in ways that welcome a tentative knock at the door.

42. From the perspective of pastoral and missional theology, both a blanket refusal policy and a policy of unfettered acceptance present more missional and pastoral difficulties than a case by case approach. It may convey a mixed message if one minister refuses to marry a couple while another welcomes them with open arms, but marriage is not a core issue of the Christian faith. Complete uniformity of action by ministers cannot be expected. However, guidelines produced by the General Assembly might well be helpful. At the same time, open and respectful communication between ministers who take different positions, within such limits as set by the General Assembly, is imperative.

Conclusion

43. While the ideal is that Christians should marry Christians, life is not always so straightforward. A desire for definitive adjudication in favour of one ministerial practice based upon a single specific interpretation is doomed to disappointment as there are several interfaces which, inevitably, create uncomfortable and challenging areas for us.

44. Chapter 24 of the Westminster Confession does not enable us to identify with certainty and precision those who are 'in the Lord' or what action may be or may not be in the Lord's will. The different socio-religious contexts of the 17th and 21st centuries do not permit a selective cut and paste from the Confession that would justify a definitive judgement on the spiritual status of every individual seeking marriage. The exegesis of the relevant Corinthian material is set out in some detail in this report and merits close reading. The Committee are aware that Church weddings were unknown in New Testament times but note that Paul urges his readers to exercise their own ethical judgement 'in the Lord'. A case by case approach demands a sensitive, pastoral and missional approach to counselling couples who request marriage in PCI today.

45. The conclusion is that a variety of interpretations can be held with integrity within PCI concerning what is meant by 'to marry only in the Lord'. This demands mutual respect within Presbyteries and among ministerial colleagues.

LAURENCE KIRKPATRICK, Convener

GLOBAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

1. Is there a distinctive Christian worldview? It's an intriguing question. According to the very striking paraphrase of the Message we are told that "all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe – people and things, animals and atoms – get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies, all because of his death, his blood that poured down from the Cross." Everything finds its unity

and purpose in Jesus Christ: “So spacious is he, so roomy, that everything of God finds its proper place in him without crowding.”

2. The Psalmist speaks of jubilant praise as the ends of the earth experience the coming of the Lord in salvation power. “Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy; let them sing before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity” (Psalm 98).

3. The prophet speaks of God’s justice and universal peace. It’s an idyllic picture of blissful, harmonious community: “I’ll install Peace to run your country, make Righteousness your boss. There’ll be no more stories of crime in your land, no more robberies, no more vandalism. You’ll name your main street Salvation Way, and install Praise Park at the centre of town” (Isaiah 60, The Message).

4. There is nothing parochial or narrow-minded about the Good News of Jesus Christ, which moves out from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth. It is all embracing and in its course brings care for the lonely, the outcast, the immigrant and the poor, to name but a few. Christians are called also to look after God’s creation, of which they are not the masters but stewards. Writing in “The Times” the Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks refers to the Judaeo-Christian ethic as “the greatest system ever devised for building a society on personal virtue and covenantal responsibility, on righteousness and humility, forgiveness and love.” To embrace such a vision in Christ is surely awe-inspiring. To make it a little more manageable it is necessary to be reminded of the little steps that can be taken, which have a cumulative effect and ultimately will make such a difference.

5. It could be argued that those involved in Global Concerns carry the world’s problems on their shoulders! There is literally so much that could be done. For that reason it’s probably right to concentrate on one or two issues which are admittedly vast in themselves – the environment, race relations and peacemaking. Recently the Committee has also completed a major report on lifestyle issues and are beginning to study the complexity of Christian-Muslim relations, bearing in mind that many of our missionaries overseas serve in interface areas between Christianity and Islam.

6. As I step down from the Committee, I want to express my appreciation to all our members and in particular the conveners of our three main Panels – Robert Buick, Liz Hughes and Richard Kerr. They work tremendously hard and have such a passionate interest in their subjects. At this General Assembly Liz Hughes steps down as Convener of Peace and Peacemaking. It was said of Lydia in the Acts of the Apostles that “she persuaded us”. Liz has that unique ability to bring and keep others together, inspiring and motivating them with her beautiful warm heart and tireless enthusiasm. She has served the Panel, organised conferences, chased after funding and been involved in the wider discussions about the future of peacemaking.

PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT

The Rev Dr Robert Buick reports:

7. Members of the Panel enjoyed a number of stimulating visits during the year, including one to the Dungiven area to examine the site of a former hydro-electricity generation system and a modern “wind farm”. Members were joined by Presbytery Environmental Agents for a visit to AFBI Hillsborough to view the experimental Anaerobic Digester, which provided supplies of methane gas from farm by-products. The Methane gas was used to generate hot water for general farm use. Also demonstrated were a number of bio-mass boilers.

8. The Rev CJC McMullen, Convener of Global Concerns Committee, represented PCI at a meeting with Mr John Gormley TD, the Taoiseach having invited representatives of the four main Churches to share their concerns ahead of the “Copenhagen” Conference on Climate Change in December. Mr McMullen presented Mr Gormley with a copy of the Church’s Lifestyle Report.

9. It is hoped that the Panel will shortly have sufficient information to provide an Environmental page on the PCI web site. This will include reports of visits by the Panel, advice to assist Congregations to complete questions on Environmental issues which form part of the Congregational Consultation and information on grants available to Churches considering upgrading their heating systems to more efficient and environmentally friendly systems.

10. The Panel has consulted with the Convener of the General Assembly Committee on Church Architecture requesting that guidelines to Presbyteries and Congregations be issued in respect of meeting environmental concerns in plans at the outline stage-for all new buildings. This is at an advanced stage and will be issued to Presbyteries as soon as possible.

11. Panel members continue to represent PCI on Eco-Congregation Ireland and at meetings of the European Christian Environmental Network.

12. It is hoped that the Panel will visit a number of Environmental projects throughout Ireland in the coming months including a Waste Management Disposal Unit, an Energy Conservation Community and the Loughs Agency.

13. Congregations and individual members of our Church are encouraged to act in an environmentally responsible manner both out of respect for the world which our Creator in His grace has provided for us, and in consideration of our fellow human beings in poorer parts of the world affected disproportionately by our wastefulness.

PANEL ON PEACE AND PEACEMAKING

The Rev Liz Hughes reports:

14. The Panel held a number of important events this year assisted by funding from the Community Relations Council.

15. A conference focusing on the importance of “Building Good Relations” was held on 7 November with our keynote speaker being the Rt Hon Jeffrey Donaldson MP MLA. The Church response was delivered by the Rev Dr Lesley Carroll (Co-Convener of the Church and Society Committee). Participants particularly appreciated the youth involvement this time with SPUD and Youth Link delegates taking part and taking centre stage – a vibrant drama featuring Wallie the Wall – written by Daphne Wilson and performed by the young people from Kilmakee. A Panel which included the Moderator, Jeffrey

Donaldson, Neal Wilkinson (SPUD Co-chair), Lesley Carroll, and Father Martin McAlinden hosted by Jeremy Gardner (CARE) fielded questions from the floor and many expressed their appreciation for the honesty and evident concern for building relationships demonstrated by all our speakers. Over 150 delegates from congregations all over the North of Ireland attended.

16. A follow up seminar was held in High Street Antrim looking at the practicalities of building good relations on the ground was facilitated by Doug Baker – peace agents and other interested Church members were invited to attend

17. A youth event looking at life on the interface “Up against the Wall” was held in conjunction with the Youth and Children’s Ministry Board and facilitated by John Peacock and Youth Link.

18. Given its limited funding the Panel took the decision to discontinue Peacemaking News and look to the Presbyterian Herald for a wider readership and a more in depth coverage. A series of articles has been commissioned by Stephen Lynas which have effectively highlighted Peace and Peacemaking issues and the Panel has been most encouraged by the Herald’s proactive engagement with such major issues.

19. The Panel very much appreciated the support of the Global Concerns Committee and specifically its outgoing Convener Charles McMullen. His wise advice, careful flexibility and gently directive encouragement have made this Convenership a lot less demanding than it might have been.

20. As this is my last report as well – I would like to pay tribute to a very hardworking and enjoyable Panel – special thanks to Doug Baker and John Peacock who have committed themselves so thoroughly to the detailed work of fundraising applications – now safely in the hands of the Future of Peacemaking Committee!

21. But while Conveners come and go the work continues and the next Annual Morning Conference date will be the 27 November, 2010.

PANEL ON RACE RELATIONS

The Rev Richard Kerr reports:

22. In the context of an election year and during economic recession the reality that immigrants are people, with aspirations and concerns often similar to our own, is often overlooked. In the political wrangling and media hype people become commodities or statistics rather than friends, neighbours, colleagues. Therefore when times get tough immigrants frequently find themselves isolated, exposed, vulnerable. This is especially so for those already on the margins of society.

23. The Race Relations Panel attempts to keep a watching brief on issues relating to immigration in both jurisdictions in Ireland as well as our historical connection with South Africa. It has sought to challenge the notion that people who are invisible economically or politically are less valuable. Rather it wants to emphasise the value of every human as being created in the image of God and seek to enable the people to God to respond in a way that addresses the needs of the whole person; physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually.

24. In this regard, Race Relations work closely with other Panels, Committees and Boards of the Church, recognising that immigration is frequently an issue that cuts across these demarcations. The Panel has also built up good relationships with other Christian groups working in this sector; most significantly with the Churches Asylum Network in the ROI, Embrace in NI and the All Ireland Churches' Consultative Meeting on Racism.

25. Responding to a request, the General Board approved a grant towards the support of a development worker for Embrace. It is very positive to see Christians working together on an issue which presents similar challenges and opportunities for all the main Churches.

26. Embrace's role in the resolution of the Roma families' situation in June is an example of this. Following the Roma being forced from their homes in South Belfast due to racist attacks, Embrace were invited to co-ordinate flights for those who wished to return to Romania. PCI were able to provide support financially by way of a grant; personally through a visit by the Moderator; and prayerfully, including involvement in a service hosted by Fitzroy Presbyterian Church.

27. Economic demands in both jurisdictions has put increased financial pressure on social services and on agencies seeking to address racism and improve integration. This despite the fact that there are significant numbers of immigrants homeless in our cities, and that racism and integration are pertinent issues. This in turn puts a strain on voluntary organisations, including Churches, who are attempting to fill the gaps.

28. Financial pressures appear not to be reflected in immigration enforcement and compliance of the UK Borders Agency. Additional staff have been recruited, a state of the art immigration facility has opened at Drumkeen House in South Belfast, and a short term detention centre is to be provided in Larne towards the end of 2010. A conversation regarding the possibility of the Churches providing some basic chaplaincy services to this centre is ongoing.

29. The Panel acknowledges all those congregations, groups and individuals who seek to engage with immigrants and make a difference to their lives in the name of Jesus Christ. The task of welcoming, supporting and integrating immigrants is the work of the whole Church which must seek to better understand the complexities of situations and to encourage and resource those who are seeking to ensure that each immigrant knows that they have value and purpose in God's sight.

CJC McMULLEN, Convener

CHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE

1. The Committee met twice during the year to consider the various aspects of its important remit. As part of the one Church of Jesus Christ, PCI has much to receive from and give to the wider Church, and in such mutual sharing, it is our belief and prayer that all will experience an enrichment that would not be possible if a more isolationist stance and ethos were promoted as a denomination. The Committee is grateful to those who, in this spirit, have

participated in various inter-Church activities over the past year and who have kept the Committee abreast of the important issues involved.

Irish Council of Churches (ICC)

2. The AGM was held on 25 March in Quaker House, Dublin. The keynote speaker was Bishop David Atkinson, Former Bishop of Thetford, whose theme was 'Renewing the Face of the Earth', in which he presented some theological responses to climate change. A response was given by the Very Rev Dermot Lane, President of Mater Dei Institute of Education. A short input was also given by Eco-Congregation Ireland. During the afternoon business, the Rev Tony Davidson formally handed over the ICC Presidency to Bishop Richard Clarke. The General Assembly may wish to note the high esteem in which Tony has been held throughout his two-year term of office, and thank him for his excellent contribution to church relations in Ireland and beyond over many years but especially the past two.

3. Some other noteworthy items of interest over the past year should be noted: the resignation of Michael Earle as General Secretary, and his Administrative Assistant, Jennifer Fernandez, after several years of dedicated service; the temporary employment of Karen Kelly to cover the latter post; the appointment of Robert Cochrane as interim treasurer; a request from the Reformed Catholic Church to become a member of the ICC was declined due to insufficient congregational representation on the island of Ireland; the decision to take the administrative centre at 48 Elmwood Avenue, Belfast off the property market and to review the situation after a further year; the hosting of two successful seminars on Christian Zionism organised by the Board of Overseas Affairs.

Irish Inter-Church Committee (IICC)

4. Much discussion and painful reflection centred on the recent Murphy report on clerical child abuse within the Roman Catholic Church. The members of PCI's Church Relations Committee wish to convey, first and foremost, their sense of outrage and empathy for the suffering of the innocent victims but also feel called to express this denomination's fellow-feeling for the damage done by this tragic crisis to the life and morale of the Catholic Church, its clergy and lay members. Their prayer is that God will bring healing and justice as appropriate to all those involved, and that the perennial need for human beings to constantly repent will be especially and freshly evident within the Church. It is important to look for the reformation, not the decimation of the Church. The Theology Forum has been set up with the Rev Prof Brendan Leahy (Roman Catholic) and Ms Gillian Kingston (Methodist representing ICC) as Co-Moderators. PCI has two delegates on this forum, Tony Davidson and Allen Sleith. The Church in Society Forum has also been set up chaired by Eileen Gallagher and thus far PCI has proposed Lindsay Conway and David Knox as two of its three allowed delegates. Both Fora will soon set about the task of tackling some of the major issues confronting the life and mission of the Churches in Ireland. The recent death of Cardinal Daly, the former Primate of Ireland, should be noted along

with appreciation for his wise and courageous leadership, especially during some of the darkest days of the ‘Troubles’.

Irish-Inter-Church Meeting (IICM)

5. The 23rd Irish Inter-Church Meeting took place at the Emmaus Conference Centre, Swords, Co Dublin on 19 November 2009, co-chaired by Cardinal Sean Brady and the Rev Tony Davidson. The theme was ‘Baptism in contemporary Ireland – sharing theological insights concerning the baptismal discipline and practice in our Churches’. One of the keynote addresses was given by the Rev Prof Drew Gibson of UTC and in all there were nine PCI participants at what was an excellent and well-attended day’s discussion and reflection. One particular note of practical interest was that some of those present at the conference were made aware, for the first time, that there is a Certificate of Christian Baptism which is recognised by many different Churches within Britain and Ireland. This certificate deserves to be better known within our Churches than is perhaps the case at present.

13th Assembly of the Conference of European Churches (CEC)

6. Four delegates represented PCI at this event in Lyon, France, 15-21 July 2009 for a very full and intensive programme. There was much to stimulate and enrich from the very diverse Church traditions present, not least in providing the opportunity to participate in worship led by traditions other than one’s own. It was evident that much excellent work is done by the two (now three) agencies of CEC: (1) Churches in Dialogue Commission; (2) Church and Society Commission and (3) Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe – this latter body was officially incorporated to CEC at the Assembly and now works as an instrument of it. The Assembly theme was ‘Called to One Hope in Christ’ based on Ephesians 4 and resulted in the following major statements on public issues:

- Called to value migrants (especially Roma)
- Called to promote ethical principles in financial and economic structures
- Called to strengthen religious rights and relationships
- Called to a world free of nuclear weapons

7. One item which should have been addressed more explicitly was the question of how the Churches in Europe reassess and renew their core mission to share the gospel to an increasingly secular populace on this vast continent.

World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)

8. Due to family health issues, Allen Sleith has had to withdraw from the Uniting General Council in Grand Rapids, 18-28 June 2010 at which WARC and REC will officially merge and his place has been taken by the Rev Lorraine Kennedy-Ritchie thus giving us the stipulated party of four delegates. One of our delegates, the Rev Cheryl Meban has been proposed by the British Churches as a member of what will be the newly-constituted WCRC Executive.

Any Other Business

9. For several years the Rev Alan Martin has represented PCI as an observer at the meetings of the Church of Ireland-Methodist Church in Ireland Covenant Council. Alan has intimated that he is stepping down from this role and his place has been taken by the Rev Dennis Campbell. The Rev Dr Ron Savage continues to represent PCI at meetings of the Inter-Faith Forum, under the umbrella of Belfast City Council. The Rev Dr Donald Watts and others continue to represent PCI at meetings of the 'North-West Triangle' involving Churches from Liverpool, Belfast and Glasgow.

ALLEN SLEITH, Convener

RECOGNISED MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

1. In 2007 the General Assembly accepted in principle a recommendation "*that the category of recognised minister is not necessary in the present context of the Church*" and asked for appropriate legislation to be prepared. Changes to the Code were made by overture in 2008. This meant that ministers would not be called to "*appointments lying outside the jurisdiction of the Assembly*" but may have the status of "*minister without charge*". Legislation was also passed to invite ministers without charge to sit and deliberate in Presbytery and the General Assembly.

2. At the time changes in the Code were not immediately made where Boards have the authority to call ministers, but the Committee feels there is little distinction between some of these positions and those whose appointments are "outside the jurisdiction of the Assembly". The same principle of accountability applies.

3. The relevant sections of the Code are:-

- 277(5) "call ministers appointed to work in religious broadcasting or religious journalism" (Communications)
- 280(b) "ministers appointed to positions in evangelistic work" (BMI)
- 281(3)(a) "ministers offered full-time chaplaincies in HM Forces, hospitals, hospices, prisons, universities or colleges" (BSW)
- 281(4)(b) "ministers appointed to positions in welfare work or social service to be ministers in recognised service" (BSW)
- 283(3)(b) "ministers appointed to positions in Youth Service work to be ministers in recognised service" (YACM)
- 284(3)(a) "organiser or secretary of organisations, approved by resolution to the General Assembly, which are involved in religious education or other religious work among children or young people" (Educ)
- 284(3)(b) "chaplains to universities, colleges or schools" (Educ)
- 284(3)(c) "teachers in day schools, and advisers on RE, at least 2/3 of school week engaged in specialist religious teaching." (Educ)

4. The recommendation of the Committee is that Pars 277(5); 280(5)(b); 281(4)(b); 284(3)(a) should be deleted; Par 281(3)(a) amended to include "universities, colleges or schools" and Par 283(3)(b) amended to read "positions in youth and children's work". This was agreed in principle by the General

Board and discussion is taking place with the leadership of the relevant Boards. Overtures will then be brought in the Supplementary Reports.

5. If the above is agreed all those in special work will report annually to the Board which has called them and there will be no need for a Committee on Recognised Ministries, other than to process the annual reports of Presbytery on Licentiates and Ministers without charge. It is recommended that this, and any other residual responsibility of the Recognised Ministers Committee, should pass to the Reception of Ministers and Licentiates' Committee and that Par 272(3)(d) of the Code be deleted ("*granting leave to call for ministers in recognised service to the Church*"). Overtures will also be brought to amend the wording of any consequential sections of the Code e.g. induction services or form of call.

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

<i>Presbytery</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Recommendation</i>
Ards	Rev Dr SI Dennis	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev CD Mawhinney	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev David McKee	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).
	Rev DM Spratt	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Miss Molly Deatherage	To be retained as Licentiate without Charge.
	Mrs Karen Mbayo	To be retained as Licentiate without Charge.
Ballymena	Rev JD McGaughey	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
North Belfast	Rev LH Eagleson	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev CI McKnight	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev WA Shaw	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev WM Smyth	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).
	Rev FW Vincent	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
Belfast East	Rev DR Baker	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev RA Crooks	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).
	Rev W J Harshaw	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev Dr Eliz Jamison	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).

	Rev Rex Pedlow	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).
Carrickfergus	Rev DJ Paul	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
Derry/Donegal	Rev KG Patterson	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev JC Teeney	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
Down	Rev Samuel Armstrong	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev JM Casement	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
	Rev RN Stewart	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).
	Rev GR Stockdale	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
Dromore	Rev JD Mark	To be retained as Minister without Charge.
Iveagh	Rev EG McAuley	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).
Route	Rev William Brown	To be retained as Minister without Charge (retired).
	Rev Dr Victor Dobbin	To be retained as Minister without Charge.

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

Ministers in Recognised Service

The Rev Desi Maxwell reports:

While still listed as senior teaching fellow at Belfast Bible College, Xplorations keeps me on the road not only covering Ireland but also a wide range of denominations. Helping people get more excited about the Bible and clarifying their vision by means of a Hebraic lens is most fulfilling and I sense more and more that there is a great hunger to learn. Twice a year I'm able to use Israel itself as a classroom and there is a growing number of congregations who benefit from arranging a study tour. More information about the ministry can be found at www.xplorations.org

The Rev Dr Ruth Patterson reports:

Spiritual direction, prayer ministry, welcoming people and listening to their stories still form the pattern of the day to day life at Restoration House both for myself, my colleague Rose Ozo and our volunteers. This year saw the launch of another book "Looking Back to Tomorrow: A Spirituality for Between the Times." Our monthly newsletter goes out around the world and we receive very encouraging feedback. Monthly gatherings and days of reflection are also part of the service we provide. A wide variety of groups use our conference room,

either for their own programme or to be facilitated by myself. I personally feel blessed at the steady stream of invitations to speak at conferences, retreats and Churches around the island of Ireland and beyond. None of this would be possible without our steady and faithful prayer partners and our daily prayer here in Restoration House.

The Rev Dr WJP Bailie reports:

Mission Africa (The Qua Iboe Fellowship) is one of Ireland's oldest mission agencies. It is an unambiguously evangelical mission agency, working in partnership with like-minded missions and Churches in Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Chad. Through our daughter agency, African Christian Textbooks, we have a strong representation in Kenya, which in turn reaches Ethiopia. The mission concentrates on four areas of ministry: evangelism and Church planting; the strengthening of existing Church bodies through theological education and Christian literature distribution; medical mission, with particular emphasis upon HIV/ AIDS work; and compassionate ministry amongst disadvantaged and abused children. The mission has at the time of writing 20 full time staff in the field, 4 full time staff preparing to depart for Nigeria in the summer. We would typically have 8-10 volunteer missionaries on 6 months – 1 year placement at any one time, and we operate a thriving short term team programme, typically sending 50-60 people out on teams each year.

As Chief Executive I continue to have responsibility for strategic planning, administration of personnel, finance and partner relations.

Mission Africa was founded by Irish Presbyterians, so I am especially glad to report an excellent relationship with the Board of Mission Overseas through the Mission Agencies Partnership. We have been delighted to see the number of strong partnerships develop between the Mission and several congregations, such as First Carrick, Second Donegore, Maze, Newmills and Lowe Memorial, to name but a few. In July 2009 a team from Tyrone Presbytery visited Burkina Faso under the auspices of the mission, and carried out highly successful building work and children's evangelism. We are always at the disposal of all ministers, congregations and individual members of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland who wish to deepen their engagement in mission. We appreciate deeply all those who maintain an interest in our work and remember us in prayer.

I am also grateful to be able to record that my status as a minister in recognised service permits me to play an active role within my Presbytery and beyond.

RECEPTION OF MINISTERS AND LICENTIATES COMMITTEE

1. The Committee meet on two occasions during the year and a Panel of the Committee met to interview three people.
2. The Board of Mission Overseas requested the Committee to interview the Rev Laszlo Orban, Minister of the Hungarian Reformed Church in Romania, regarding Special Ministry under paragraph 200(4) of the Code. Mr

Orban was interviewed and the Board accepted him as eligible for Special Ministry within the Presbytery of Down in the understanding that his eligibility did not extend to any other Calls or Ministries within PCI.

3. The Rev Barry Reid, a member of Letterkenny congregation and who had been ordained in the Irish Baptist Church and the Rev Chris Bower, Presbyterian Church in America, applied to the Committee and both were interviewed. The Board accepted then both in the following terms: “that they undertake both a supervised assistantship, (it is recommended that this be two years in length), and any course of study required by the Board of Christian Training and that they would only become eligible for a call to a congregation, or other service within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, when they are deemed to have satisfactorily completed both the prescribed course of study and assistantship”.

4. The Board also accepted the following recommendation from the Committee regarding its procedures, namely:

- (i) That each minister or licentiate interviewed will be subject to a psychological report, as is the case for those applying to be received as students for the ordained ministry.
- (ii) That if a medical condition is declared by a candidate, they may be required to follow the same medical procedure as that stipulated by the Board of Christian Training for those applying to be received as students for the ordained ministry.
- (iii) That normally each minister or licentiate received will be required to undertake a supervised assistantship, along with whatever study the Board of Christian Training may require, and that they will only become eligible for a call to a congregation, or other service within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, when they have satisfactorily completed both the prescribed course of study and the supervised assistantship.

IVAN J PATTERSON, Convener

CHURCH AND SOCIETY COMMITTEE

The report has been written during a period of illness of the Co-Convener, the Rev Dr Lesley Carroll, which has inevitably affected the work of the Committee. It should be seen as a summary of the great deal of work which goes on in relating to government and society.

1. As was agreed last year the Committee now operates as 2 Sub-Committees – Northern and Southern. The full Committee will meet previous to General Boards and to the General Assembly to process business, share information and deal with shared business. Office bearers are empowered to process business between meetings should that be essential and appropriate.

2. **The Northern Sub-Committee** continues its work on human rights, shared future, dealing with the past. A submission to the Secretary of State’s Consultation on the Report of the Consultative Group on the Past (See Minutes, 2009, pp 39-43) has been submitted. A sub-group is working on a position paper on a shared future.

3. Attached (see Appendix I) is a position paper on human rights which the Committee asks the General Assembly to support and adopt as a position paper for the whole Church. This paper is to inform Presbyterians who are engaged in the debate, as well as those who have found the debate difficult to approach from a Christian perspective. A response was submitted to the Consultation Paper on “A Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland : Next Steps” (see Appendix II).

4. At the September meeting of the Committee it was agreed that some thought needs to be given to issues related to Victims and Survivors, especially the definition of a victim and much-debated issue of the hierarchy of victims. The Committee is not convinced that taking a public position on either of these matters would be helpful and therefore intends to listen carefully to representatives of victims groups before coming to a decision.

5. One of the major debates of the year has been on the devolution of justice and policing powers. This was taking place at a time of increased paramilitary activity attributed to dissident republicans. While the Committee would have reservations about the way in which the devolution of policing and justice powers was achieved, it broadly welcomes the fact that justice is now a local responsibility and looks forward to discussion with the new Minister for Justice. It would hope that with this development the Executive will make renewed efforts to work towards a shared and cohesive community.

6. The Committee brought to the General Board a draft response to the Government’s consultation on Dormant Accounts which was confirmed and submitted on behalf of the Church (see Appendix III).

7. **The Southern Sub-Committee** at present exists in name only. Despite several attempts through the Presbytery Clerks to obtain names of possible Committee members, there has been no response. The Co-Convenor will make further contact with the Clerks in an attempt to move things on, but the indication so far is that apathy rules the day. However, following a request to the Dublin and Munster Presbytery that some kind of southern forum be established to encourage Presbyterians in the south to meet together annually or biannually, there may be some potential for recruitment.

8. Some time ago the Co-Convenor made a response on behalf of PCI to the National Commission on Restorative Justice. That body has now made its Final Report and the findings in summary (based on the 66 recommendations) are:

- Restorative Justice is an invaluable cost-effective option for the criminal justice system.
- Without adopting a definitive range of offences for which RJ would be applicable, serious crimes such as murder and rape would be excluded, but cases involving custodial sentences of up to three years would be targeted.
- Existing and future programmes of RJ should be given a statutory base.
- The rights and safeguards for offenders will be duly respected.
- The Probation Service should be the lead agency in implementation.

- The approach should be multi-disciplinary and include volunteers and NGO's.
- A National Restorative Justice Committee should be established to oversee.
- Three models of particular interest are: restorative conferencing, victim offender mediation and reparation Panels.
- Between 3,625 and 7,250 cases could be dealt with by RJ.

9. The Co-Convener attended the North/South Consultative Conference held in Farmleigh on 15 October, 2009. The presentations and ensuing discussions ranged widely (perhaps too widely), but the overall impression was that the business and volunteer sectors were frustrated by the political inertia. It was pointed out that progress was demanded by the current economic difficulties. The following points may be drawn from the official Minutes:

Contributions were wide ranging and diverse and included:

- A high level of awareness of the very significant impact a new and much more difficult economic environment was having on the work already being done by civil society North and South.
- Success, especially in this new environment, needing political engagement North and South.
- North/South implementation bodies being identified as key stakeholders.
- Importance of acknowledging the range of all-island work that was already ongoing including examples of the great many specific initiatives currently underway in the business, trade union, farming and community sectors.
- Recognition that in some areas there would naturally be competition between North and South but that in certain areas active co-operation would be of greater mutual benefit.
- The psychology of the border and the challenge to think on an island basis remaining one of the biggest hurdles to be overcome in the wider community.

Amongst the suggestions as to what the Conference could facilitate were:

- Helping those who wish to work together to do so including by recognising existing achievements and being realistic about what could be achieved.
- Identifying opportunities for public service provision North and South to proactively collaborate to tackle shared challenges.
- Revisiting wider EU dimension and especially the work of the EU Task Force with particular reference to the support of European funding for cross-border activities in the context of moving on from Interreg and PEACE funding and their capacity to impact on the environment, equality and social and economic development.
- Supporting the continuing effort required to ensure North/South is firmly and consciously factored into the thinking of business people and policy makers.
- Encouraging sectors that have not already done so to take the initiative to reach out to their counterparts in either the North or

the South and take practical steps to verify the potential mutual benefits of working directly with them.

- Compiling 'best practice' models where this is already occurring and especially in important arenas such as Education (eg issues around meeting face to face at a number of levels to balance negative impacts of segregation) or sport (where co-operation between sporting bodies began on a small scale and has now progressed to joint planning and coaching with input from ground level and engagement across communities).
- Using the new and rapidly developing capacity of the internet and social networking sites such as Facebook to bring together disparate groups and individuals virtually, both for its own work and to facilitate others.
- Implementing a shared vision where trust, mutual respect consensus building and adding value, are critical success factors.

Notice of a follow up meeting has just been issued for 27 April, 2010 and the Co-Convener plans to attend.

10. Questions have been raised by Congregations concerning the implications for Church finances following the review of charity legislation. The Dublin and Munster Presbytery has undertaken a watching brief on the situation and is currently reading through the relevant information before making any recommendations. Information on the legislation is available at: [www.pobail.ie/en/Charities Regulation](http://www.pobail.ie/en/Charities%20Regulation). A copy of the Act can be downloaded at this website. Furthermore an organisation called the Wheel has a helpdesk on the Act at email: charityregulation@wheel.ie.

11. The Irish economy remains under considerable strain as the major banks readjust. Bank of Scotland Ireland has moved away and Bank of Ireland has been required by Europe to transfer further shares to the government in lieu of an unacceptable financial arrangement. Unemployment is around 15%, although this disguises the massive exit of foreign nationals and young Irish emigrants. NAMA has continued to convince international banks and world leaders of Ireland's determination to tackle the underlying issues and this, along with massive public spending cuts, testifies to the serious intent to reduce national debt. The effect on people and whole regions is and will remain, considerable.

APPENDIX I

HUMAN RIGHTS POSITION PAPER – A CHURCH PERSPECTIVE

INTRODUCTION

The area of Human Rights has become contested in Northern Ireland. Although agreements were made in this area at the time of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement difference and division across the community remains. The Churches have found themselves involved in this debate, seeking to bring a Christian perspective to the issues that arise but have always faced the challenge of a highly politicized debate which sometimes fail to become realistic and

meaningful outside of the political accommodations that have to be reached. This position paper therefore seeks to draw together the thinking of PCI thereby enabling Presbyterians to engage in discussions about human rights with information to hand from the church.

Clearly, overzealous approaches to this subject can give it a “bad press”. Human rights can be (mis)represented in the media as little more than a charter for criminals, terrorists and anti-social behaviour. However events in some overseas countries show the dire consequences that may ensue for the vulnerable (including minority Christian communities) when human rights are disregarded, so the church cannot ignore the issue.

A CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO HUMAN RIGHTS

A concern for human rights is not exclusive to Christians, for they share it with people of other faiths or of no faith. Christians differ from secular people on the question of where our concern for human rights is grounded. Many secularists would simply assert, along with the American Declaration of Independence, that “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.” (An interesting use of the term “created”!) To Christians, attempts to find a purely secular basis for the worth which human beings have, and which accounts for their rights, are not convincing.

Christians share the belief that human rights are grounded in the inherent worth and dignity of every human being but locate the basis of that worth in the fact that each human being bears the image of God and is redemptively loved by God. John Stott (writing in 1984) said:

The origin of human rights is creation. Man has never “acquired” them. Nor has any government or other authority conferred them. Man has had them from the beginning. He received them with his life from the hand of his Maker. They are inherent in his creation.

(John Stott *Issues Facing Christians Today*, pp143-144).

The simple yet profound declaration of Genesis:

So God created humans to be like himself; he made men and women.

(Genesis 1:27 CEV)

- (i) means that all human beings enjoy, among other things,
- (ii) the right to life and the resources to sustain it, for life is a gift from God;
- (iii) a right to human dignity, i.e. the right to receive respect irrespective of age, gender, race or rank or any other way in which we define individual human beings;
- (iv) a responsibility to secure/protect/establish the rights of others, for God is love. Rights only exist in relationship with others, albeit coming into play most significantly when relationships break down. Christians found their belief in relationship within the Trinity believing that God has made us in the Trinitarian image, for mutual relationship. It is out of this relationship of mutuality that Christians are challenged to love God and our neighbour as ourselves;
- (v) the right to justice, for all have been created equal before God’s law.

Historically Christianity has been a major influence in developing the concept of human rights; it was within the Christian theological tradition that the

category of human rights originated. The atheist Friedrich Nietzsche, intending a criticism, said, "...the poison of the doctrine of 'equal rights for all' - it was Christianity that spread it most fundamentally."

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS INFORMING A CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The Fall

The Fall, human disobedience before God, had lasting effects. The Creator's good gifts can be spoiled by human sin and the area of human rights is no exception. The rights that God gave to all human beings equally can easily be corrupted and spoiled by the very things which a concern for human rights seeks to address, the protection of the weak, marginalised or excluded. When fed by an inflated sense of one's own weakness, or the weakness of one's group, talk of equality in rights can degenerate into arguing for "my rights" regardless of the rights of others. The rights of an individual or group are seldom absolute and must be balanced against the rights of other individuals or groups.

The language of "rights" is usually invoked when there is a breakdown in relationships. Conflict can arise between the rights of one individual or group and those of another, eg in the Northern Irish context, between organizations wanting to parade in a certain area and residents who object. There can also be a conflict between the rights of an individual and those of a corporate body, eg between the rights of an individual worker and the rights of the company that employs him or her. In such situations of competition there can be a tendency for one group to dominate another, so minorities need to be protected from the tyranny of the majority. All such conflicts over rights are a consequence of our fallenness.

Scripture

The Bible does not use the modern vocabulary of "human rights", as it usually emphasizes the responsibilities of the powerful more than the rights of the weak, but concern for human rights is implicit in Scripture. Given the difference between the Old Testament era (when "church" and "state" were co-terminous and made laws for the whole community) and the New Testament era, when Christians were a small and powerless minority, it is understandable that, generally speaking, specific provisions for particular matters are found in the Old Testament and fundamental principles in the New.

Old Testament

The Pentateuch protected the weak and the vulnerable, eg "You shall not keep back a hired man's wages till next morning. You shall not treat the deaf with contempt nor put an obstruction in the way of the blind." (Leviticus 19: 13-14). It laid down laws about the right to life (eg the homicide laws in Numbers 35: 9ff), about property, (eg the land laws in Leviticus 25:25-34), and about "the stranger within your gates". "You shall not oppress a stranger for you were strangers in Egypt" (Exodus 22:21). Concern for the poor is evident in eg Deuteronomy 15.11, "I command you to be open-handed towards your brothers

and towards the poor and needy in your land” and in the arrangement for poor gleaners at harvest time. (Leviticus 19: 9-10). The right to a fair trial was recognised. “Hear the law cases and judge righteously between every man and his brother and the stranger; you shall not respect persons in judgment but you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid of the face of man” (Deuteronomy 1:17). The Hebrew prophets too wanted a fair legal system, eg “Let justice run down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream” (Amos 5:24).

New Testament

In the New Testament Jesus taught his disciples that being citizens of the Kingdom of God required unworldly thought and action. “The kings of the pagans have power over their people ...but this is not the way it is with you” (Luke 22: 25, 26). Secular standards were reversed; instead of a self-righteous demanding of rights there was to be the giving of rights by the acceptance of responsibility for others and loving service to them. “Look out for one another’s interests, not just for your own” (Philippians 2.4). Old Testament provisions are sometimes repeated in the New, eg the command in Deuteronomy 15, 11 to be open-handed is echoed in I Timothy 6.17f “Command those who are rich in this present world... to be rich in good deeds and to be generous and willing to share.”

Duty to God

The primary motive for Christian concern for human rights is our duty to God. C S Lewis, commenting on such phrases as “What right have they...?” “You’ve no right to be here” “I know my rights” “By rights...” etc, observes that behind such phrases “...there is a tacit acknowledgement of some external standard or norm which can be a source of authority, protection or arbitration. Such a standard or norm has to be independent of the parties in the dispute for it to be worth appealing to. It has to ‘transcend’ them both.” (*Mere Christianity* Ch 1). Sometimes that authority may lie in civil law (eg on fair employment) but not always; many people using the language of “rights” might find it difficult to say precisely where they find that higher authority. Christians, however, should be in no doubt. “This transcendent norm is God Himself – his righteousness and justice” (John Stott).

The Bible indicates that our responsibility for human rights derives primarily from our responsibility to God. Though he might dispute it, Cain was answerable to God for his brother. Relevant Old Testament injunctions are often reinforced by such statements as “I [the Lord] command you...” (e. g. Deuteronomy 8:11; 10:13; 13:18; 24:18, 22; etc.) The Book of Proverbs observes “He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker” (Ch 14:31). Micah, in a much-quoted verse, indicates that it is the Lord who requires us “to do justly” etc (Ch 6:8). Nehemiah 5 takes up the cause of impoverished farmers who were being forced to mortgage their land and eventually to sell their dependents as pledges to pay off excessive interest to the rich. His appeal to their creditors goes directly to their obligation to God. He asks “Should you not walk in the fear of our God?” (Ch 5:9).

In modern society many groups are quick to fight for their own needs (though not all “needs” are necessarily “rights”) but the primary Christian motive is not self-interest. Of course there are times when the church should speak up for freedom of thought, conscience and belief; individuals, parents and religious institutions have a right to be distinct, and to promote and protect values consistent with their religious convictions. They should not be obliged by State legislation to promote views contrary to their deeply held religious beliefs (eg the traditional Christian view of marriage). The church is also justified in defending its own interests in areas like the employment of staff, claiming the right to employ only those whom it considers morally and spiritually suitable for church work, whatever the secular authorities might say. However, the church’s main motive for debating human rights is not self-interest but duty to God.

Civil Law

Given that human relationships do break down, human beings need to be protected from one another, whether as individuals or as corporate groups, and if fundamental human rights are to be enforced, those rights need to be justifiable. However Civil Law, though necessary, has its limitations, for laws may not make people good. Human Rights conventions, charters and legislation cannot achieve everything and risk spawning endless fractious litigation. “Judicial decrees may not change the heart but they can restrain the heartless” (Dr Martin Luther King). Attitudes need to change and that is a message that the Christian gospel preaches as it calls its hearers to a change of heart.

Responsibility

In line with Bible teaching modern Christians stress responsibilities as well as rights.

“We are very suspicious of reasoning which ...detaches rights from responsibilities or elevates rights above responsibilities...In Christian thinking it is sometimes better not to insist on the exercise of a perceived right in the interests of the overall wellbeing of a society...To voluntarily set aside one’s rights is not the same as having them denied.”

(PCI Church and Government submission to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, 2001).

Paul showed judgment in exercising the different rights he had. He claimed his legal rights as a Roman citizen in relation to corporal punishment (Acts 22:25) and in his appeal to Caesar (Acts 25:11), yet chose a “tent-making ministry” rather than living off the Christian community as he was entitled to do (Acts 20: 33-34).

APPLICATION OF CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES

The foregoing has practical applications in at least three areas.

In the Church

Christian communities should strive to exhibit within their own ranks that alternative society which bears the marks of the Kingdom of God. The church

will thus be a sign to the world of true human existence under the authority of Christ.

“We have to take more seriously Christ’s intention that the Christian community should set an example to other communities. ... The life of the local church ... is meant to be a sign of God’s rule. The church should be the one community in the world in which human dignity and equality are invariably recognised and human responsibility for each other accepted; the rights of others are sought and never violated, while our own are often renounced; there is no partiality, favouritism or discrimination; the poor and the weak are defended, and human beings are free to be human as God made us and meant us to be.”

(John Stott)

In wider society

Christians have responsibilities towards the wider community, sharing with secularists a genuine concern for the welfare of society. The church has the right and the duty to care about that and speak about it. The Christian gospel, with its message of compassion, requires sensitivity to victims and excluded groups, especially if others are not paying much attention to them. The weak and the vulnerable need protection and the church should say so, even if it is an unpopular cause. The struggle for human rights has given the church some of its modern martyrs, eg Janani Luwum (Anglican archbishop in Idi Amin’s Uganda), Oscar Romero (Roman Catholic Archbishop of El Salvador at a time of ruthless government repression) or Dr Martin Luther King (Baptist minister in the U S A at a time when the Afro-American community was being treated unfairly). Such Christian leaders highlighted exclusion, injustice and intolerance of difference as being among the primary causes of breaches of human rights and of conflicts between individuals and communities, and they took their stand accordingly.

For dealing with governments

Churches have a responsibility under God to address the powers that be. Churches have supported Bills of Rights in such countries as the USA, Canada, the Irish Republic, South Africa and the United Kingdom. No human government is perfect, and the Reformed tradition in particular makes provision for the right, even the duty, to resist when human governments violate the purposes for which they were appointed. If necessary the church must be willing to become an offence to the powers that be in its support of the deprived and vulnerable.

SUMMARY

John Stott provides a useful summary of the Christian position.

Here then is a Christian perspective on human rights. First, we affirm human dignity. Because human beings are created in God’s image to know him, serve one another and be stewards of the earth, therefore they must be respected. Secondly, we affirm human equality. Because human beings have all been made in the same image by the same Creator, therefore we must...behave without

partiality to all. Thirdly we affirm human responsibility because we have to accept that other people's rights are our responsibility. We are our brother's keeper because God has put us in the same human family and so made us related to, and responsible for, one another. The law and the prophets, Jesus and his apostles, all lay on us a particular duty to serve the poor and defend the powerless. As God has laid it upon us to love and serve our neighbour, we must fight for his rights, while being ready to renounce our own in order to do so.

(Issues Facing Christians Today, pp. 150-151).

APPENDIX II

A BILL OF RIGHTS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND : NEXT STEPS

Equality, representation and participation in public life

(A) Do you believe a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland should contain a statement that everyone in Northern Ireland is equal before the law and has equal rights? What might be the practical and legal implications of such a statement?

Yes. The simple statement that "everyone in Northern Ireland is equal before the law and has equal rights" is brief and general, which should be the style of a Bill of Rights.

(B) The grounds on which discrimination in Northern Ireland is currently unlawful include religious belief, political opinion, race, age, gender, gender reassignment, marital status, sexual orientation, and disability. Do you believe that any other "protected categories" particular to Northern Ireland should be added to this list? Some examples might be:

- **nationality;**
- **national origin;**
- **family or carer status;**
- **irrelevant criminal record.**

No. We do not suggest any additional categories that would be

- (i) significant;
- (ii) "particular to Northern Ireland", and
- (iii) in need of mention in a Bill of Rights.

Any attempt to compile a comprehensive list would run the risk of some important categories being overlooked, while pressure groups might lobby for the inclusion of all kinds of categories - eg the hearing impaired, asylum seekers, those who are HIV positive, etc; the list could be endless.

However we would not oppose further anti-discrimination measures being enacted for specific categories in ordinary legislation as and when deemed advisable.

(C) Public authorities also have a duty to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity.

- **between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;**
- **between men and women generally;**
- **between persons with a disability and persons without; and**

- **between persons with dependants and persons without;**

Do you believe that they should be given this duty in respect of any other groups?

No. We do not propose that other named groups that should be included here. Public authorities already have a wide-ranging duty to have due regard to promote equality of opportunity in the various groups listed. The additional resources required to discharge extra duties could be disproportionate to any further protection or benefit that might be derived. We would have further reservations if the term “public authorities” were widely interpreted to include NGOs, charities, etc who happen to undertake certain limited public functions, such as care homes for the elderly (*cf Health and Social Care Act 2008, section 145*).

Identity, culture and language

(D) Do you agree that a right freely to vote in and be elected at genuine periodic elections held by secret ballot should be included in a Bill of Rights, subject to reasonable restrictions?

Yes, if necessary. Such a provision would reflect *Protocol No 1 to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)* which already requires “free elections at reasonable intervals by secret ballot....” (*Article 3*), but it would do no harm to repeat it in a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

(E) Do you believe that the Bill of Rights should include the principle that any electoral system used in Northern Ireland should provide for both main communities to be fairly represented?

Yes. The electoral system should ensure fair representation, but we would not wish any one method (eg Proportional Representation by a single transferable vote) to be entrenched in a Bill of Rights.

(F) Do you believe that the Bill of Rights should also require that the structures of the Assembly and local government should enable proportionate and fair participation by elected representatives?

Yes. However, our comments re a wide definition of “public authorities” in (C) above are equally applicable here.

(G) Do you believe that there should be a requirement for the membership of public bodies to, as far as practicable, be representative of the community in Northern Ireland?

Yes in principle. Those appointed should be the best people for the job, though there is a danger that a rigid quota, requiring fixed proportions of male, female, Unionist, Nationalist, aged under 30, over 30, etc, could result in some very talented people being excluded simply by the mathematics of the system.

(H) Do you believe that any other provisions (whether or not discussed above) should be included in a Bill of Rights to help secure fundamental democratic rights in Northern Ireland?

No. The existing provisions are adequate.

(I) Do you agree that the right of the people of Northern Ireland to identify themselves as British or Irish or both should be included in a Bill of Rights?

Yes. A declaration on “The right of the people of Northern Ireland to identify themselves as British or Irish or both” should definitely be included. This is a clear example of an issue that really is “particular to Northern Ireland.”

(J) Do you agree that the right of the people of Northern Ireland to hold British and Irish citizenship should be included in a Bill of Rights?

Yes. This is consequential to (I) above.

(K) Is there a need for the existing obligations on public authorities in the equality field to be consolidated into a Bill of Rights?

Perhaps. We are not convinced that there is a “need” for consolidation, but we would not oppose the principle. However such a provision might be better located in a Single Equality Bill (as in Great Britain) rather than being entrenched in a Bill of Rights.

(L) Do you believe there are areas in which the identity and ethos of the two communities is not sufficiently protected by the existing equality legislation? If so, should an additional obligation be placed on public authorities in this respect?

No. The existing equality legislation is adequate.

(M) Do you believe that there is a need to extend the existing obligations on public authorities, by requiring them also to have regard to the desirability of promoting a spirit of tolerance, dialogue and mutual respect between people? What might the practical effect of such additional obligations be?

No. As in (C) above, we would not want public authorities to be too broadly defined or to be over-burdened with further obligations.

(N) Do you believe that the ECHR offers insufficient protection from the requirement to swear an oath that is contrary to an individual’s religion or belief? If so, what additional protection might be needed in a Bill of Rights? How might it be framed?

Yes. Neither Article 9 of the ECHR nor any Protocol mentions the taking of oaths, nor is it clearly implied.

We support the wording proposed in the *NIHRC Advice to the Secretary of State*. “No one may be compelled in Northern Ireland to take an oath, or to take an oath in a manner, that is contrary to their religion or belief, or that requires them to express a belief that they do not hold.” (*p 102, Recommendation 6*).

(O) Do you believe that there are additional protections in relation to Irish or Ulster Scots that should be included in a Bill of Rights? What form might such protections take?

No. The Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement recognised “...the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity, including in Northern Ireland, the Irish language, Ulster Scots...” (*The Agreement p 19, par 3*) and listed various measures for the British Government to take (*Agreement par 4*). If by “additional protections” the question means

“additional to those specified in par 4” we do not think that further additional protections are needed. We would not want public authorities spending scarce resources unnecessarily on being bilingual (or trilingual!) We have no objection to enthusiasts pursuing Irish or Ulster Scots as a cultural interest, and receiving reasonable grants from the public purse, but there are few (if any) indigenous people in Northern Ireland who cannot understand English.

Tackling segregation and sectarianism

(P) Do you agree that any Bill of Rights should include a measure aimed at combating sectarian violence or harassment? Should such a measure take the form of a duty placed on public authorities? If so, which public authorities should be included?

Yes. A measure “aimed at combating sectarian harassment or violence” is highly commendable but should be aspirational. It would be unduly onerous for “public authorities” (especially if widely defined) to be burdened with yet another legally enforceable obligation, to take “... effective measures to promote mutual respect, understanding and co-operation among all persons living in Northern Ireland, irrespective of those persons’ race, ethnicity, language, religion or political opinion.”

(Q) Do you believe that there is a need for a Bill of Rights to contain additional protections to prevent individuals from being forced out of their home by intimidation or harassment, in addition to any general measures aimed at combating sectarian violence or harassment? If so, what role might public authorities play?

Yes. We certainly agree with the principle of this suggestion re intimidation and harassment but would limit such duty to those “public authorities” who are clearly in a position to take effective measures.

Victims and the legacy of the conflict

(R) Should a provision about the ongoing process of re-examination of deaths related to the conflict be included in a Bill of Rights? If so, how should this be expressed?

No. The time is coming to draw a line under the past rather than initiating ever more numerous, lengthy and expensive enquiries.

(S) Should provision be made in a Bill of Rights relating to victims of the conflict? How should such a provision relate to the work that is currently under way around the definition and the needs of victims?

Yes – but with reservations and within limits. The term “victim” is so charged emotionally that it is unlikely that there will ever be an agreed definition; even the OFMDFM definition is disputed, so that may always be a contentious matter. It would be better to refer eg to “the injured”, “the traumatised” or “the bereaved”; reasonable people would not want medical or psychiatric help to be withheld from casualties.

Criminal Justice

(T) The Government recognises that there have, in the past, been substantial concerns about aspects of the criminal justice system including the treatment of suspects, stemming from the history of the conflict in Northern Ireland. Many legislative safeguards have already been put in place to meet these concerns, but the Government would welcome views on whether there is any further specific provision that might be made in a Bill of Rights on this issue.

No. The “many legislative safeguards” already in place to deal with aspects of the criminal justice system are reasonable. We would not oppose some further specific provisions being enacted (eg those listed in the *NIHCR Advice to the Secretary of State* pp 62-79) but a Bill of Rights is not the best place for numerous detailed provisions.

(U) Recognizing the current flexible and risk-based approach to providing support and protection to witnesses, jurors, judges and lawyers, do you believe that further measures are needed in this area which should be expressed in a Bill of Rights? If so, what additional steps do you think are necessary?

No. Further measures may well be needed, as support and protection for witnesses etc is obviously vital, but, again, we would query whether specifically detailed “further measures” are matter for a Bill of Rights. We would favour a broad statement of principle.

Implementation

(V) Do you believe that any other individuals and organisations, in addition to victims and the Human Rights Commission, should be able to start human rights cases against public authorities?

No. Giving NGOs, voluntary bodies, etc the right to start human rights cases could lead to an unwelcome increase in legal proceedings in a society which is already very litigious.

Equality considerations

(AA) Do you believe that any of the proposals outlined at Appendix 1 will have a positive impact on people within any of the section 75 categories?

Yes.

(BB) Do you believe that any of the proposals outlined at Appendix 1 will have an adverse impact on people within any of the section 75 categories?

No.

(CC) If so, are there any measures that should be implemented to mitigate against adverse impact on people in the section 75 categories?

N/A

(DD) Will any of the proposals affect the promotion of good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial groups?

Yes.

(EE) Do you have any other comments on the equality impact of these proposals?

No.

APPENDIX III

DORMANT ACCOUNTS SCHEME CONSULTATION

1. This response comes from the General Board of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The Board is representative of the church across the Island of Ireland and draws on the broad experience of ministers and elders, including rural and urban, and from congregations within different types of localities. This response therefore comes with input from a wide variety of views, opinions and experiences.

General Comment

2. While some ethical challenges may be raised to the notion of using money from dormant accounts we understand the intention behind this scheme. We would, however, want to emphasise that legislation protecting the money which belongs to account holders should be tight, carefully putting the owner of the money first. Clearly this is intended but it is important to us that this is emphasised.

Social & Environmental Purposes – areas to benefit

3. Within the broad remit of social and environmental purposes we believe there are some priorities which need to be set by government. Underpinning specific areas to which monies should be directed there are some basic standards which we believe need to be met by those seeking project funding:

- (a) There must be a commitment to making a contribution to stability and cohesion evidenced in a willingness to work alongside others, including those who are different, especially where there is similarity in what is being provided
- (b) Capacity concerns must be addressed if monies are to be distributed effectively into areas where they have not been distributed previously. The application process therefore needs to be supported and simplified as much as possible while not compromising on quality and excellence in provision and needs to be directed towards building community capacity
- (c) Consideration must be given to those who have not previously had freedom to access funding, specifically from the lottery
- (d) Areas in which there is a high level of social exclusion experienced should be considered a priority

4. With these broad underpinnings in mind it is the experience of Irish Presbyterians that there are specific areas of need in which a difference can be made when sustained programmes are delivered. These areas are a priority not only because churches have been making an impact already but because they present as areas of considerable challenge and need across society. These priority areas should, therefore, include:

- (a) Youth, particularly where there is little provision and/or considerable work needing to be done on a detached basis
- (b) The elderly whose loneliness is often unaddressed, whose experience is lost in much that is planned and whose potential contribution to building a cohesive society is not realised as it could be
- (c) Communities experiencing exclusion and social deprivation, both urban and rural, particularly as they face disenchantment and lack of purpose
- (d) Family support programmes which are addressing the rebuilding of family and the sustaining of the family unit as the primary place of learning and training for children
- (e) Faith-based groups which have shown by their sustained commitment to communities that they are dependable and credible and which have been delivering programmes which contribute to social cohesion over many years

Specific individuals or organisations to be targeted

5. We believe that organisations which have proven themselves to be in for the long haul in disadvantaged communities should be targeted for the effective channelling of funding. Those organisations which have a proven track record, an established reputation in a community and which have stayed with a community during many hard times, even when themselves experiencing trying times, have the ability to deliver what is needed with integrity and in a manner which includes a broader base of the community than might otherwise be addressed.

6. We believe that churches are well-placed to deliver programmes which address social and environmental needs and that priority should be given to churches on the basis that:

- (a) They have a long history of volunteering and the provision of services to the community through the work of dedicated volunteers
- (b) They bring a level of commitment to their work which is second to none
- (c) They are not necessarily driven by the desire to see some return for themselves but by a desire to take their place in society contributing to health and well-being of its members
- (d) They bring a passion for the work to which they address themselves
- (e) They have a settled history and cannot be accused of 'short-termism'
- (f) They have credibility among many different groups of people.

7. Churches providing regional or country-wide projects addressing the priority areas have a unique approach which is both a partnership approach and dedicated to achieving outcomes across a broader base of people. We therefore believe that these types of projects should be targeted.

Disadvantaged areas

8. The General Board believes that disadvantaged areas, as defined as the 36 Neighbourhood Renewal Areas, should be targeted but with the proviso that attention is paid to rural communities as well as to urban and suburban areas.

Ethical challenges and funding from the National Lottery

9. Under section 75 there should be no discrimination against the listed groups, including religious groups. While lottery money is not discriminatory in itself it has, in its effect, discriminated against those who are opposed to taking money raised from gambling and who are outraged by the moral corruption that gambling brings to a society. In its outworking, therefore, lottery money has ruled out those with a particular ethical viewpoint and there have been no steps taken by government to address or redress this imbalance. While PCI would prefer that other streams of funding were found for everyone we recognise that this is highly unlikely. We are prepared to bear the weight of our ethical position but in light of the contribution that churches make to society in terms of volunteering and training for volunteering, provision of youth facilities and training, provision of groups for mothers and toddlers, the elderly, the lonely and other vulnerable groups in society, etc. all without the support of outside funding we believe that this scheme should give priority to those who have carried on without the benefit of outside funding. We believe that such open funding can only enhance the contribution that some churches already make to society.

10. We are concerned that the funding stream is through the Big Lottery Fund. Given our ethical perspective it would be unethical for us to accept this money, not gained from gambling, while at the same time being required to show that funding came through the Big Lottery. At the same time we recognise that the Big Lottery have considerable experience and expertise in this area and we believe it would be unhelpful to waste money in setting up another administering authority. We therefore ask that consideration be given:

- To the application process so that there is no confusion and no impression given that those who take an ethical perspective have applied for lottery money
- To the process of receiving funding and there requirements of publically acknowledging where the funding came from so that there is no impression given that lottery money has been received

11. We would again emphasise that we do not question the competence of the Big Lottery and understand that this is possibly the only way in which funding can be delivered to those who cannot, for ethical reasons, accept lottery monies.

Delivery of funds

12. Funding offered as a result of the Dormant Accounts Scheme should be on a longer term rather than a shorter term basis. Experience shows that there are too many short term, and therefore proportionately ineffective projects which given longer term funding could have achieved considerably more.

13. The terms under which funding is given should be co-ordinated with other funders so that the industry of 'taking funding' is not further encouraged and so that unnecessary duplication and competition is avoided. The provision of funding should, ultimately, encourage the development of self-sustaining projects.

14. It has also to be recognised that self-sustaining projects are not always possible if all 'good service to the community' is to be recognised. So there needs to be some provision, in the longer term, for projects with particular targets in mind but which will not be focussed on becoming self-sustaining but rather on the purposes of the project over a particular period of time. Equally, the experience of many over the years is that funding is on a basis of changing targets. For many groups continuing delivery is itself a contribution to a better society and so the terms of funding should not seek to put good projects out of business on the basis of changes that are unhelpfully demanded.

15. Grants should be over a sufficient period of time to enable projects to fulfil targets and therefore should be longer term. This contributes to greater health rather than disillusionment and hopping from one funder to another. Grants should also be of a size which makes it possible for groups accessing the funding to draw on this one funding stream. This frees groups to deliver on their targets rather than spend countless hours seeking matching funding and worrying about where the next pot of money will come from. Such an approach encourages a culture of dependency.

16. Some short-term funding should also be made available, although this should be a smaller percentage of the total than longer term funding. This short-term funding can help to address capacity challenges and also provide quick outcomes which are an encouragement to groups to do more and to communities who need to see some visible sign of investment in their future.

17. Funding should be available both as revenue and capital to ease the burden of administration for organisations and to free them to do the job that they want to do. Equally, both capital and revenue should be directed towards the benefit of the broader community e.g. churches have a largely untapped resource in the form of buildings which could and should be made available for community use if they were developed for that purpose.

18. While disadvantaged areas and groups should always be a priority we recognise that other funders also set priorities and it is not helpful to the health of society when one funder is set against another. In targeting disadvantaged areas there should, as in all areas, be co-ordination between funders and common oversight of funding which is being delivered.

Promoting Partnership

19. As with other funding arrangements partnership should be a key aspect taken into account when awarding funding. However, this notion needs to flexible taking into consideration the capacity for building partnerships over against the capacity for delivering programmes.

20. In promoting partnership funding should be directed to assist in building partnerships rather than making partnership a requirement for funding.

Supporting these Priorities

21. The General Board believes that these priorities will enable churches, along with others, to contribute to building a strong infrastructure to society, thereby building community cohesion and stability.

22. The General Board further believes that these priorities will enable those who are already making a contribution to make an even more significant contribution to community health and well-being and to better understand the contribution they make and how it can be developed.

Conclusion

23. The Dormant Accounts Scheme helps churches who could not avail of lottery monies to give more thought to how they can better play their part in building up society and to further their commitment to building healthy, engaged communities which take every individual and group into consideration.

LE CARROLL, AJ BOAL, Co-Conveners

AD HOC COMMITTEE ON CHURCH COURTS

1. The ad-hoc Committee appointed by the General Assembly to consider the prayer of the Memorial of the Tyrone Presbytery relating to the Courts of the Church, met on three occasions to consider the issues set forth in the Memorial.

2. The substance of the Memorial read as follows:

That a superior court in its review of the decision of an inferior court can cause significant pastoral difficulties for that inferior court and consideration therefore needs to be given as to how the rights and positions of an inferior court can be affirmed and respected;

That there is confusion within the Church as to how a Church court is to come to a decision on a matter before it whenever there are differing authoritative interpretations of Scripture and the Subordinate Standards held on that matter within the wider Church.

3. The Committee in its deliberations considered three issues arising from the Memorial.

(A) (i) The first issue relates to any matter before the Judicial Commission involving an interpretation of the Church's doctrinal position where the General Assembly has not recently considered the subject. As it is the General Assembly who may "*deliberate upon and superintend matters which concern the whole Church in its doctrine ...*" (Code Par 104(2)(a)), the Doctrine Committee would either need to bring a report to the next Assembly for decision, or perhaps in certain circumstances be given power to issue. This, in turn, raises the issue of how the Judicial Commission is to decide which particular matters pertaining to doctrine are not within its remit and whether these may be determined through consultation with the Doctrine Committee or only by the General Assembly.

- (ii) The present practice is that Doctrine Committee members are invited to meet with the Judicial Commission and comment on the particular doctrinal issues. On occasion the Judicial Commission has invited the General Assembly to commission a substantive report from the Doctrine Committee on some issue, but only after the particular case before it has been decided. While this does not preclude the Assembly from taking a different view on the doctrinal issue from that of the Judicial Commission, it precipitates the very debate that has given rise to this Memorial and can have the effect of undermining the confidence of the Assembly in its own judicial process.
 - (iii) One alternative to the present practice could be that members of the Doctrine Committee become members of the Judicial Commission where matters of doctrine are involved on which the Assembly has not recently pronounced. This appears to be a simple procedure but again it raises the question as to who decides on the particular doctrinal issues for which the members of the Doctrine Committee should become members of the Judicial Commission. There are legal issues as to extending an Assembly Commission, but legal difficulties aside such a body would be large and unwieldy and may not be the most effective way to hear a particular case. A variant of this would be for the General Assembly to appoint a "Special Commission" to deal with such matters but the effect of this would be to create two judicial Commissions.
 - (iv) Another alternative to the present practice would require the Doctrine Committee to be consulted as a Committee rather than as individual members. This appears to have much to commend it. The Doctrine Committee would meet, discuss the doctrinal aspects of the matter and report as a Committee to the Judicial Commission. But simple though it sounds it is not without its difficulties. For one it may impede the judicial process given the time that may be required to write a report. For another, for any such report to be definitive it would require the sanction of the General Assembly. A variant of this would be for the General Assembly to give the Doctrine Committee the powers of a Commission but this would have the effect of removing from the Assembly as a whole the right to determine its position on matters of doctrine which affect the whole Church.
 - (v) The Committee consulted the Doctrine Committee and concluded that where a matter of doctrine is significant in deciding a judicial case, the doctrinal aspect should be referred to the Doctrine Committee who will meet to discuss it. Members of the Doctrine Committee will then be invited to the Judicial Commission to give guidance, the Convener of the Doctrine Committee outlining the main issues and ensuring that all opinions are adequately expressed.
- (B) (i) The second issue concerns how the various Courts of the Church relate to one another and whether a more relational model should be considered particularly in matters pertaining to the interpretation and application of doctrine.

- (ii) The Committee considered the approaches of other Presbyterian denominations and noted that in certain instances the Church body equivalent to the Judicial Commission was mandated by the General Assembly to exercise its powers in reviewing the decision of a lower court within a particular set of principles.

For example:-

A higher court, reviewing a lower court, should limit itself to the issues raised by the parties to the case in the original court. Moreover, the higher court should resolve such issues by applying the Constitution of the Church, *as previously established* through the constitutional process.

A higher court should ordinarily exhibit great deference to a lower court regarding those factual matters which the lower court is more competent to determine, because of its proximity to the events in question, and because of its personal knowledge and observations of the parties and witnesses involved. Therefore, a higher court should not reverse a factual finding of a lower court, *unless there is clear error on the part of the lower court.*

- (iii) There are, at present, within the legislative framework of the Code no equivalent guidelines or directives, governing the actions of a higher court in its review of the proceedings and decisions of a lower court. This may more properly be part of the remit of the other Ad Hoc Committee and, if such principles were to be adopted, it would require the General Assembly to initiate a review of the practices and procedures of the Judicial Commission. The General Assembly has asked the Judicial Commission to report separately on its practices and procedures.
- (C) (i) The third issue concerns the need to find other ways of resolving such matters through consultation and mediation rather than immediately entering into a judicial process involving an appeal to the Courts of the Church. It was recognised an attempt at conciliation should be an important first step before proceeding to a judicial process and should be included in any guide to procedures which is produced.

4. The Committee recognises that there are as many problems as there are solutions in trying to arrive at a position which allows the Judicial Commission to discharge its function without at the same time being injurious to the lower courts whose integrity needs to be respected particularly where doctrinal rather than procedural matters are involved.

5. We submit the following resolutions to test the mind of the Assembly as to whether there is a need to alter the present practice or to amend existing procedures to ensure that there is greater clarity as to the roles and responsibilities of the various courts of the Church, including the Judicial Commission.

TWD JOHNSTON, Convener

AD HOC COMMITTEE ON JUDICIAL APPEALS

1. The Committee reviewing the Judicial Appeals procedure in light of the Memorial of the Tyrone Presbytery has met three times. The substance of the Memorial read as follows:

That the law of the Church grants to the Judicial Commission Assembly powers to dispose finally of any cases of appeal or reference or any other matters which may be referred to it under or by virtue of the Code;

That, accepting that there must be a court of final decision, and without seeking to undo such final decisions, the law of the Church does not provide any mechanism for inquiry into or review of Judicial Commission practices and procedures even when they may not be in accordance with Scripture, the Subordinate Standards, the Code, or the standard practice of the Church.

2. The Committee recognised that there must be a Court of final decision, which at present is effectively the Judicial Commission (Code Par 165(5)). This is important in bringing closure to any matter. The one aspect of the present arrangements on which the Committee would have some concern is when the Judicial Commission is also the Court of first instance. Greater encouragement may be given to Presbyteries to hear a case itself, rather than passing it on to the Judicial Commission, although it is recognised that in an increasingly litigious society Presbyteries should only deal with matters on which they feel competent to act.

3. To assist Presbyteries it is recommended that a simple guide to judicial proceedings should be produced and agreed by the General Assembly. This should include a) encouragement to ask for assessors where necessary who may be appointed not only for their judicial but also their pastoral experience; b) reference to the importance of considering conciliation at an early stage where at all possible. It was noted that there is little education in the judicial process.

4. It is important that the finding of a superior court gives clear reasons for its decision, especially if overturning the decision of an inferior court and that efforts are made to ensure that the inferior court understands the issues involved.

5. Having looked at the procedures of other denominations, the Committee is considering a possibility that if $\frac{1}{3}$ of the voting members of the Judicial Commission wish to present a minority report, the decision is stayed until it is reviewed by either the General Assembly or the General Board, depending on the time-frame and urgency of the case. At the Assembly or Board two reports would be received, one from the majority and one from the minority and a vote taken without discussion. If it is decided to make this a recommendation further detail will be brought in the Supplementary Reports.

6. The Committee is still discussing whether a case may only be referred to the Judicial Commission without being heard by Presbytery – thus making the Commission a Court of first instance – if both parties waive their right of appeal.

DONALD WATTS, Convener

PANEL ON PENSIONS AND ASSESSMENTS

The Rev Dr DJ Watts reports:

1. The Pensions and Assessments Panel began its work last summer and has met regularly since then. In the Autumn the main emphasis was on the Consultation Paper which was sent to all Congregations in October. (Appendix I) Four meetings were held in Omagh, Dublin, Belfast and Coleraine to explain some of the details of the questionnaire. A paper summarising the main issues raised at these meetings is appended. (Appendix II)

2. While the consultation replies were asked for by 31 December 2009, all replies were considered up to 9 February 2010. A summary of the replies is appended. (Appendix III)

3. Conscious of the need to strike a balance between what the Church would like to do and what it can afford, the Panel reviewed all feasible options. It considered carefully the possibility of changing the scheme from the present defined benefit to a defined contribution basis for future service. This however would have shifted both the investment and longevity risks wholly to the members and created anomalies in benefit levels contrary to the collegiality which has always been a feature of PCI schemes. The Panel was also conscious that significant benefit cuts were introduced from January 2009.

4. Throughout the process the Panel has been greatly assisted by actuarial advice from the scheme's actuary Philip Murray (Kerr Henderson). This has been particularly important in considering the impact of any possible benefit change. Three possible changes have been considered following the consultation:

- (i) **Normal Retirement Age.** Recognising that this has recently been discussed at length by the General Assembly, the recommendation of the Panel is to keep in step with changes to the State pensionable age (N Ireland). It is considered that most people are unlikely to retire before then.
- (ii) **Accrual Rates.** Under a defined benefit scheme the Church, as employer, will always carry the risk of a pensions deficit. This can arise from falling equity prices; lower interest rates and government bond rates; increasing longevity; or regulatory changes forcing short-term solutions to a long-term problem. The Panel understand that the Pension Scheme Trustees, on the advice of the Scheme Actuary, wish to reduce the level of exposure to equity investments. However, that will increase the on-going contribution rate to the scheme. Recognising this, and in an effort to reduce the overall cost of the scheme, the Panel recommends a change to the accrual rate from $\frac{1}{60}$ to $\frac{1}{70}$ of pensionable income for each year of future service.
- (iii) **Salary Cap.** This idea is considered to have some merit but should only be considered when the recommendations of the Tyrone Memorial Review Panel have been decided.

5. It was agreed to recommend that the members' contribution rate should remain at 7% for the present, but the Panel recommend that all the above issues should be kept under review.

6. The Panel noted carefully the relatively few comments that were made on governance issues, particularly the Board of Trustees. The distinction between the role of the Employer and the role of the Trustees is perhaps not fully understood.

Role of the Employer

- (i) The employer is a party to the Trust Deed and Rules with the power to set the benefit levels insofar as he carries a substantial burden of the cost of the scheme.
- (ii) The employer retains certain powers especially where there is a cost element e.g. augmenting or reducing benefits or to amend the scheme in any way (e.g. change in retirement age, etc.)
- (iii) The employer has the ultimate power to discontinue the scheme.
- (iv) Where changes/amendments are proposed, the members and trustees require to be consulted.
- (v) The Employer has the right to nominate up to two-thirds of the Trustee Board.

Role of Trustees

- (i) Pension Scheme Trustees hold the pension fund assets for the benefit of the members and their first duty is to them – not to the employer, trade union or outside body.
- (ii) The Trustees ensure compliance with the law and the scheme's own trust deed and rules.
- (iii) It is the duty of Trustees to safeguard and invest the scheme monies prudently and in accordance with the Church's ethical direction.
- (iv) The Trustees prepare and monitor a statement of investment principles after consultation with the employer.
- (v) The Trustees keep member records and ensure contributions and members' benefits are paid in good time.
- (vi) The Trustees keep proper books of account.
- (vii) The Trustees commission an actuarial valuation every 3 years with written reports covering developments in each ensuing year.
- (viii) The Trustees appoint the professional advisers – scheme actuary, lawyers, custodian of assets, investment manager, scheme administrators, the scheme auditor and any other professional from whom advice is required.
- (ix) The Trustees have the ultimate responsibility for the contribution levels required, but they must take advice from the Scheme Actuary and consult the Employer.

7. One issue raised both at consultation meetings and in the responses was that of members of the scheme being involved in making decisions on behalf of the "employers" i.e. the Church. A way to avoid this potential conflict of interest, which is used in various forms in other denominations, would be for the General Assembly to appoint a "Remuneration Commission" to deal with all matters concerning stipends, salaries and pension benefits. This would be made up of experienced people who are not in any way beneficiaries. The Panel's

thinking is at an early stage, and there are legal and other questions to be considered, but it may wish to bring a fuller report in the Supplementary Reports.

8. Following the consultation, the Panel recommends that assessments move to an “unrestricted income” basis, but recognises the problem with definition. The Panel suggests that “unrestricted income” for this purpose would be specified sources, including general donations, nett property income and investment income. To make this change there will need to be transitional arrangements. There is clearly also a need for further information to be disseminated throughout the Church about assessments, the costs they meet and the rationale for them. A resolution is appended to test the mind of the Assembly in principle.

APPENDIX I

PENSIONS AND ASSESSMENT CONSULTATION PAPER

OVERVIEW

At the General Assembly in June 2008, it was agreed that “a complete review be conducted of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland’s position on pensions (including desired levels of funding, future procedures of consultation and on-going management structures) by a Panel appointed by the General Board...”. In 2009, the remit of the Panel was extended to include “an examination of all assessments”.

The Panel now wishes to consult with Presbyteries, Congregational Committees and the wider Church membership, about the provision of retirement pensions for those called to service and within the context of the overall rates of assessments, which Congregations have to pay to the various General Assembly Assessment Funds.

This paper provides a brief background to the present pension arrangements and recognising the increasing burden in terms of cost to the Church, sets out a range of alternative options if changes are considered necessary.

Details of regional events to enable those interested in making comment and seeking further explanation are included.

Comments should be made in writing to Rev Dr DJ Watts, Clerk of the General Assembly, by 31 December 2009.

The Panel plans to make a full report to the General Assembly in June 2010.

1. BACKGROUND

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland until recently had 3 main pension schemes

- (a) The Presbyterian Church in Ireland Ministers’ Pension Scheme (1978) (the “MPS”)

- (b) The Presbyterian Church in Ireland Pension and Life Assurance Scheme (the “Staff Scheme”)
- (c) The PWA/Overseas Board/Irish Mission Retirement and Death Benefit Scheme (the “PWA Scheme”)

Following preliminary reports from The Board of Finance and Personnel in 2006 and 2007, the General Assembly in June 2008 passed a resolution approving the amalgamation of the Staff Scheme and the PWA Scheme into the MPS and a revised benefit structure. The main change for former members of the Staff and PWA Schemes was that pension benefits would in future be based on revalued career average salary rather than final salary. The Ministers’ Pension Scheme pension benefit was already based on career average earnings but the basis of annual revaluation changed from the average earnings index to the retail prices index. A proposal to increase the retirement age from 65 to 67 was rejected.

On 1 January 2009, the active membership of the Staff Scheme and PWA Scheme transferred to the MPS for the accrual of pension from that date and on 31 March 2009, members’ accrued benefits were transferred. Any benefits accrued (i.e. earned) by members up to 1 January 2009 are unaffected by the change and it is only benefits which accrue from that date which are on the new scheme basis.

The MPS has been renamed the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Pension Scheme (2009) (the PCI Scheme (2009)”) and all members now accrue pension benefits on the same basis. The main scheme benefits are outlined in Appendix 1.

An actuarial valuation of the combined scheme was carried out at 31 December 2008 and this indicated that there was a deficit in the scheme of £20m. The Church and the Scheme Trustees have agreed that this deficit should be recovered over a period of 14 years and as a result, the present contribution rates to the scheme are as follows:

Church – normal contribution rate	16.50%
Church – deficit funding	10.90%
	27.40%
Members contribution rate	7.0%
Total Contribution rate	34.4%

The main reasons for the deficit are poor investment performance, increased longevity expectations and fall in government bond yields which are crucial in calculating pension liabilities.

Recognising the increasing cost of pensions to the Church the General Assembly asked the General Board in 2008 to establish a Panel to undertake “...a complete review of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland’s position on pensions (including desired levels of funding, future procedures of consultation and on-going management structures) by a panel appointed by the General Board...”. In 2009, the remit of the panel was extended to cover “an examination of all assessments”.

The membership of the Panel is as follows:

Moderator, Rev Dr DJ Watts (Clerk of General Assembly), Revs Robert Allely, Leslie Casement, David Irvine; Ms Helen Johnston; Messrs Douglas Crowe, Arthur Halligan, John Hunter, Clive Knox (Financial Secretary), George McCullagh and Robert McCullagh.

Kerr Henderson (Consultants and Actuaries) Limited are the advisers to the Scheme Trustees and they have facilitated the Panel during its discussions and have been consulted on the contents of this report.

Based on the audited accounts for the 3 pension schemes referred to above, which were presented to the General Assembly in June 2009, the following table summaries the combined scheme membership and levels of contributions:

Scheme Membership	No.
Active members (412+93+56)*	561
Deferred members (116+49+78)*	243
Pensioners (306+17+17)*	340
Total Membership	1,144
Annual Contribution Levels £	
Contributions from the Church (£2.6m+£0.4m+£0.3m)*	£3.3m
Contributions from members (£0.7m+£0.1m+£0.1m)*	£0.9m
Total Contributions	£4.2m

** taken from individual scheme accounts*

The Trustees of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Scheme (2009) are presently: Mr John Millar (Chairman), Revs Leslie Casement, Dr Roger Purce, RIA Allely, William Henry, Messrs David Dobbin, Douglas Crowe and Clive Knox. A copy of this report has been issued to them for their information.

2. CONSULTATION PROCESS

The Panel wishes to hear from Presbyteries, Congregational Committees and the wider Church membership about the provision of pensions for those who serve the Church as Ministers, Missionaries, Deaconesses, Irish Mission Workers, in an administrative capacity in Church House or elsewhere.

The Panel recognises that the issue of pensions is extremely complex and that it would not be possible within the scope of this paper to cover all relevant aspects. However, to assist in the understanding of the issues facing the Church some relevant information is included in section 3.

The Panel plans to submit a final report to the General Assembly in June 2010 and to meet the necessary deadlines for the preparation of this would like to conclude the consultation process by 31 December 2009. The Panel has

organised 4 regional events for those interested in expressing their views or seeking further explanation of the issues highlighted. The events are as follows:

Date	Time	Location
Monday 9 November 2009	7.30pm	First Omagh
Tuesday 10 November 2009	7.30pm	Rathgar, Dublin
Monday 16 November 2009	7.30pm	Church House, Belfast
Tuesday 17 November 2009	7.30pm	First Coleraine

While a note will be taken of comments made at these events, Presbyteries are encouraged to meet and discuss the matter and are asked to put comments in writing to Rev Dr D Watts by 31 December 2009.

Representatives from Kerr Henderson (Consultants and Actuaries) Limited will attend the regional events.

3. RELEVANT INFORMATION ABOUT PENSION SCHEMES

(i) Types of Pension Scheme

There are two main types of pension scheme

- (a) Defined Benefit Schemes and
- (b) Defined Contribution Schemes (also called Money Purchase Schemes)

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland Pension Scheme (2009) is a Defined Benefit Scheme (as were the previous three schemes).

In a Defined Benefit Scheme, the benefits, which a member receives, are fixed in advance and an actuary determines what rates of contribution are required to provide the benefits promised. The member contribution rate is set and the employer meets the balance. Such Schemes would generally be favoured by members in preference to a defined contribution scheme because they can predict what level of pension is likely at retirement as a proportion of their pensionable pay.

In a Defined Contribution Scheme the pension contribution by the “employer” and the “member” are agreed at a fixed level. Contributions are invested in an agreed form of investment (usually in what is referred to as a pooled fund of equities, bonds, property, cash etc) and when a member comes to retirement, the value of his/her fund is used to buy a pension from an insurance company. The amount of the pension will be determined by

- (i) the value of their fund which will be determined by the level of contributions made and the return on amounts invested and by
- (ii) the annuity rates at retirement usually expressed as the amount of annuity per £100 purchase price.

What are the advantages/disadvantages of the two types of scheme?

Defined Benefit Schemes

Advantages to members

- Retirement pensions benefits are pre-determined

- They don't carry the investment and longevity risks

Disadvantages to Employer

- Volatility in costs. Open-ended liability makes budgeting difficult.
- Carries all the investment and longevity risks
- High costs of administration
- Increasing costly regulation through legislation and by the Pension Regulator
- Pension Protection Fund levies

Defined Contribution Scheme

Advantages to the Employer

- Stable pre-determined cost, no open-ended liability which makes for easier budgeting
- Investment and longevity risks transferred to the scheme members.
- The rate of contribution paid by the “employer” and “member” is agreed and generally do not change. Members can top up their pension by increasing their contribution rate if they wish.
- Costs of administration are less than in a defined benefit scheme
- There is less costly regulation involved
- No Pension Protection Fund levies

Disadvantages to members

- The amount of pension a member will receive cannot be determined until a member's retirement date when the value of the fund and the level of annuity rates are known. So preplanning is difficult
- The members carry all the investment and longevity risks
- Anomalies can arise in that members paying the same amount over the same number of years could end up with significantly different pension because of differing investment performance or annuity rates. This could offend the collegiality taken for granted in Church schemes
- Historically employers normally contribute less to such schemes implying lower pension levels

SUMMARY

	Defined <u>Benefit</u> Schemes	Defined <u>Contribution</u> Schemes
Contribution rates	Reviewed at formal valuations (every 3 years)	Pre-determined and stable
Scheme benefits (pensions)	Defined in Scheme Rules	Not defined
Pension Risk	With Employer	With Member

(ii) Actuarial Valuations

For defined benefit schemes, a formal “actuarial valuation” has to be carried out every three years (with interim annual valuations) to see if the scheme is adequately funded to meet its liabilities. It will assess the funding level (i.e. the relationship between the value of the assets and the actuarial liability) and this is expressed in a percentage form.

Before completing his actuarial report, the scheme actuary discusses and agrees with the scheme trustees the level of prudence he intends to use when forecasting investment returns, inflation, gilt yields, salary levels, interest rates, longevity etc. Having obtained agreement on the proposed assumptions the actuary establishes the balance between assets and liabilities and strikes a contribution rate to support these assumptions. At the last valuation, as at 31 December 2008, the results were

Value of Investment assets	£59.8m
Value of Liabilities	£79.6m
Scheme deficit	£19.8m

Where a scheme deficit arises the period over which the deficit is to be recovered has to be agreed. The Pension Regulator’s view is that this would not normally exceed 10 years, although due to the current economic recession slightly longer periods have been agreed. In the latest valuation of the Scheme, the Regulator accepted a 14 year recovery period.

The investment strategy adopted by the Scheme Trustees clearly influences the value of the schemes investments. At present, the Scheme Trustees have invested the schemes investments approx 80% in equities (shares) and 20% in gilts (government bonds). Investing in equities allows the scheme to benefit from potential returns in excess of other investments and historically equities have outperformed most other forms of investment. Investing in e.g. gilts provides more capital security and reduces the variability of the contribution rate but, because it is a less risky investment, the returns are usually lower. The present investments strategy does mean the fund is susceptible to volatility in equity values. In an ideal situation the schemes assets should match the profile of its membership. Therefore, as the scheme matures and the liability to pay pension increases more of the scheme assets should be invested in gilts which do not fluctuate as much in value and where capital values are more secure. It should however be noted that investing in gilts solely, to avoid equity value fluctuations, would lead to a significant increase in the scheme contribution rates.

4. HISTORY OF CONTRIBUTION RATES

The following tables summarise the recent contribution rates for member and the Church.

	From	Member %	Church %	Total %
Ministers Pension Scheme	01.04.99	4.40	12.20	16.60
	01.04.02	5.00	14.00	19.00
	01.04.05	6.00	15.60	21.60
	01.04.08	6.00	23.20	29.20
Staff Scheme	01.01.98	3.75	15.25	19.00
	01.01.01	3.75	15.25	19.00
	01.01.04	5.00	20.85	25.85
	01.01.07	6.00	25.10	31.10
PWA Scheme	01.04.97	4.00	13.50	17.50
	01.04.00	4.00	13.50	17.50
	01.04.03	5.00	22.50	27.50
	01.04.06	6.00	26.20	32.20
PCI Pension Scheme (2009)	01.01.09	7.00	27.40	34.40

5. WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS OPEN TO THE CHURCH?

The Panel has identified the following options

- Option 1 – Continue with the present scheme in its current form.
- Option 2 – Continue with the present scheme but reduce the scheme benefits.
- Option 3 – Close the present scheme to new members who would join a new Defined Contribution Scheme.
- Option 4 – Introduce a “hybrid scheme” where part of a member’s benefit accrues on a defined benefit basis and part on a defined contribution basis.
- Option 5 – Close the present scheme and move all future accrual to a defined contribution scheme.

These are considered further below.

If changes to the scheme are subsequently agreed, these will only affect the accrual of member’s pension entitlement from the date the change becomes effective. Benefits accrued up to the date of the changes are unaffected. Changes to the scheme will require a formal consultation process to be carried out with scheme members in accordance with guidance issued by the Pension Regulator.

Please note that irrespective of which option is ultimately decided upon the Church will still be required to pay the Deficit Funding of 10.9% for 14 years, subject to change at subsequent actuarial valuations.

Option 1 – Continue with the present scheme

The latest actuarial valuation of this option as follows:

	%	Indicative Annual Costs £
Total Contribution rate required	23.5	3.3m
Deficit Funding for past service	10.9	1.5m
TOTAL	34.4	4.8m
Members Contribution rate	(7.0)	(1.0m)
Church Contribution rate	27.4	3.8m

based on pensionable payroll of approx. £14.0m

The latest comparative figures taken from a Kerr Henderson 2007 survey show the average level of contributions for private sectors Defined Benefit Schemes as follows:

	Employer	Member	Total
Northern Ireland	18%	6%	24%
UK Mainland	19%	6%	25%

Key Features of this option

1. No change is required to the present arrangements. No additional fees will be required to implement scheme changes and there will be no need to undertake a formal consultation exercise with members.
2. The “pension risk” i.e. the risk associated with paying the pension earned by members remains with the Church.
3. The Church is potentially committed to comparably higher rates of contributions.

Option 2 – Consider reducing the present scheme benefits

The following benefit changes could be considered

- (i) Reduce the rate at which members accrue future service pension entitlement
- (ii) Increase the rate of members contribution
- (iii) Increase the retirement age
- (iv) Introduce a pensionable pay cap whereby remuneration over a certain level is not pensionable

These are considered briefly below:

(i) Accrual Rate

By way of example, if the accrual rate was changed the following tables summarise the reduction in a member's pension based on 30 years service and on average pensionable remuneration of £25,000

Accrual Rate	Pension (p.a. gross) after 30 years service based on CARE (Career Average Revalued Earnings) of £25,000	Reduction in Contribution Rate by Church
1/60	£12,500	-
1/70	£10,714	2.8%
1/80	£9,375	4.9%
1/90*	£8,333	6.5%
1/100*	£7,500	7.8%

Under the Scheme rules, members may give up or commute part of their pension for a tax free lump sum. The figures for the various options above are as follows:

	OPTION 1	OPTION 2	
	Full Pension (p.a. gross)	Reduced Pension (p.a. gross)	Lump Sum
1/60	£12,500	£8,903	£59,353
1/70	£10,714	£7,631	£50,872
1/80	£9,375	£6,677	£44,514
1/90*	£8,333	£5,935	£39,567
1/100*	£7,500	£5,342	£35,612

* See Appendix 2 re Contracting Out

(ii) Members Contribution rate

If a decision were made to ask members for an increase in their contribution rate this would have a corresponding reduction in the Church's contribution rate. Members currently contribute at 7.0%. Members, particularly those on e.g. administration scales or ministers on minimum stipends, may find it difficult to pay higher contributions as this would reduce their net monthly earnings.

(iii) Retirement Age

Increasing the retirement age to 67 was previously considered by the General Assembly in June 2008 and rejected but if the retirement age were increased to 67, the contribution rate would reduce by 2.2%. Member's pensions would increase, as they would have an additional two years service. It is relevant

to note that the date on which state benefits will be payable in Northern Ireland is due to increase from 2023 as follows.

From 65 to 66	Phased in from April 2024 to April 2026
From 66 to 67	Phased in from April 2034 to April 2036
From 67 to 68	Phased in from April 2044 to April 2046

Please note the Conservative party proposes to move to 66 from 2016. Individuals can check their state pension retirement date on www.thepensionerservice.gov.uk/state-pension/age-calculator.asp

(iv) “Salary” cap

If a “salary” cap were put on pensionable earnings at the 30 year ministerial minimum stipend, which for 2009 is £27,300 (inclusive of CMF bonus), the contribution rate would reduce by 2.0%. The Panel is aware that the Board of Finance and Personnel, through its Tyrone Memorial Review Panel, is considering alternative basis for setting stipends and this may have an impact on pension costs.

Key features of this option

1. the Cost to the Church of providing pension reduces
2. members still receive their pension on a defined benefit basis
3. in future no retirement benefits would be earned on pensionable income in excess of the 30 year minimum stipend and this would penalise the higher earners
4. additional cost will be incurred implementing the changes, members will have to be consulted about proposed changes and the agreement of the Pension Regulator obtained

Option 3 – Close the present scheme to new members

Members of the current scheme would continue as eligible but new members would be offered membership of an alternative scheme.

Key features of this option

To some extent these will depend on the type of scheme introduced for new members

1. transfers the investment, volatility risks away from the Church for all new members
2. the agreed contribution rates for new members could be less than under the existing scheme
3. It will create a two-tier benefit level which could impact on the perceived collegiality of the Church
4. It will take some time for the “new members” to form a significant block and so any meaningful savings in costs for them will take time to build up

5. the non-admission of new younger members to the Defined Benefit Scheme will result in a steady increase in the average age of the membership with implications for the cost of the scheme

Option 4 - Consider a “hybrid scheme” where part of a member’s benefit accrues on a defined benefit basis and part on a defined contribution basis

This is by far the most complicated option. A Hybrid scheme would aim to provide part of a member’s pension on a defined benefit basis and part on a defined contribution basis. It would require a reduction in the accrual rate in the existing scheme from $\frac{1}{60}$ th to probably $\frac{1}{100}$ th and in addition separate Church and member contributions to a new defined contribution scheme. The Church’s overall contribution could be at a lower rate and members overall contributions could reflect a degree of personal discretion above the rate required for the defined benefit scheme. The introduction of a hybrid scheme would require the Church to contract back in to the state earnings related pension scheme. The current pension scheme is what is referred to as contracted out i.e. members do not accrue any state earning related benefits and just receive the basic state pension on retirement. By contracting out of the state scheme, schemes have to provide certain guaranteed benefits and in return the Church and members pay reduced rates of national insurance contributions. Contracting back in would mean the Church and members would have to pay higher rates of national insurance. The cost of providing part of a members retirement benefits through the state scheme may be less than providing these through the Church scheme.

For further information on Contracting In see Appendix 2 and Hybrid Schemes Appendix 3

Key features of this option

1. Reduces the risk to the Church and, if contracted in, passes part of the risk to the government.
2. Potential cost savings from contracting back in.
3. Retains an element of defined benefit.
4. Complicated, difficult to communicate to members.
5. Members future benefits accrual will be reduced.
6. Additional fees to implement changes.
7. Issues relating to contracting back in to the state scheme and change in accrual rate.

Option 5 – Close the present scheme and move to a defined contribution scheme

For information purposes the comparable contribution levels for average Defined Contribution Schemes in other organisations are

	Employer	Member	Total
Northern Ireland	4.5%	3.5%	8%
UK Mainland	7.0%	4.0%	11%

Contribution at these levels would have a dramatic impact of the level of pension members would receive on retirement. The Church could of course agree contribution at a higher rate.

Key features of this option

1. May be seen by many as the appropriate action in the current pension climate
2. Minimises the future risk to the Church
3. Facilitates cost budgeting
4. Will lead to a reduction in fees
5. Is likely to lead to a reduction in members benefits
6. Passes the investment and longevity risks to members
7. Current Scheme deficit will still have to be funded and therefore two contributions will be required, to old scheme and new scheme

6. THE PANEL'S VIEW

The Panel recognises that many organisations, for reasons largely related to cost, have opted to close their final salary schemes. The Panel believes, however, that the Church has a responsibility to ensure that scheme members

- have a reasonable pension related to their career average remuneration on retirement
- should be treated equitably
- should ideally, or at least to some extent, know in advance what their pension will be
- should not have to bear the entire risk as to what pension they receive on retirement, although there may be mileage in an element of risk sharing

The Panel preference is therefore for a defined benefit scheme or a scheme with an element of defined benefit with adjustments made to scheme benefits if cost exceeds agreed funding levels. However, the Panel wishes to avoid temporary fixes after each valuation.

The Panel therefore are of the view that options 1, 2 and 4 are worth further consideration but would not support options 3 or 5.

7. CONSULTATION WITH SCHEME MEMBERS

This consultation process is intended to obtain a wider Church view on the pension provision the Church should make for those called to service in varying capacities. If any changes are subsequently recommended to and approved by the General Assembly, it will be necessary to undertake a formal consultation process with the schemes membership. The Trustees will have a role to ensure members accrued benefits are not affected by any change. The consultation will be conducted in accordance with guidance issued by the Pension Regulator.

8. WHAT ARE OTHER ORGANISATIONS DOING?

Many commercial organisations are or have closed their defined benefit schemes entirely or to new members. They have moved to defined contribution Schemes.

Other denominations are having similar debates and are considering the various options highlighted in this paper. By way of example

The Church of England are considering whether to retain their existing defined benefit scheme or move to a defined contribution or hybrid scheme. They are also considering changes to the accrual rates, retirement age, contracting in and limiting the annual increases in pensionable stipend.

The Church of Scotland has four main pension schemes (for ministers, staff, missionaries, and care home personnel). The next actuarial valuation is as at 31 December 2009 and the situation will be reviewed in light of the results. A working group has been established in advance to discuss relevant issues, including the assumptions used in the valuation, with the Scheme Trustees. They are concerned not to make short term corrections to what is regarded as a long term issue.

The Methodist Church in Ireland has already reduced the scheme accrual rate from 80th to 100th but is considering further changes as part of the current valuation.

9. MANAGEMENT OF THE PENSION SCHEMES

When the Church had the 3 separate Schemes, each scheme had a Board of Trustees of 9 members, 5 members were common to the 3 Schemes, 1 member was nominated by the supervising Board and 3 of the members were nominated by the scheme membership. Each scheme had different employers (i.e. supervising Assembly Boards), although to facilitate the Management of the new Scheme it was agreed that the Board of Finance and Personnel should act as the “employer” for all schemes on behalf of the General Assembly. As part of the resolution approved by the General Assembly in 2008 the Panel was asked to consider the “future procedures of consultation and on-going management structures”.

The Panel submit the following proposals

1. THE SCHEME EMPLOYER

The “Scheme” Employer is to be the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland acting through the Board of Finance and Personnel.

In this capacity the Board will deal with routine matters relating to the pensions such as

- Providing information to the Pension Regulator including the completion of the Annual Scheme Return,
- Reporting breaches of law,
- Reporting notifiable events,
- Liaising with the scheme trustees as required,
- Allowing employees who are scheme trustees time to fulfil their duties,
- Consulting with scheme trustees regarding the schedule of contributions and statement of funding principles,
- Paying contributions to the scheme in line with the schedule of contributions,
- Making minor changes to the scheme if required.

Significant changes to the scheme such as, e.g. changes in the level of benefits or in the contribution rate will be reported to the General Assembly and approval sought for any proposals by way of resolution.

2. THE BOARD TRUSTEES

It is recommended that there is a Board of 12 Trustees, 7 are to be nominated by the Employer and 5 by the active and pensioner scheme membership.

It is noted that irrespective of whether Trustees are Employer or Member Nominated the role is the same and in outline is to

- Act in line with the trust deed and rules
- Act in the best interests of the scheme beneficiaries (in particular re accrued benefits)
- Act impartially
- Act prudently, responsibly and honestly

2.1 Employer Nominated Trustees

The Board of Finance and Personnel will recommend by way of Resolution to the General Assembly the names of those willing and suitable to act as Trustees. Employer Nominated Trustees will normally be Presbyterians.

The General Board Panel recommends, for the approval of the General Assembly, that in appointing Employer Nominated Trustees the Board of Finance and Personnel should ensure that 4 of the 7 Employer Nominated Trustees are reserved for the Clerk of the General Assembly, the Convener of the Board of Finance and Personnel, the Convener of the Pensions and Assessment Committee of the Board of Finance and Personnel and the Financial Secretary. Consideration should be given to normally having a maximum of 2 of the 7 Employer Nominated Trustees positions filled by Ministers of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

2.2 Member Nominated Trustees (MNT's)

Member Nominated Trustees should be appointed in accordance with the guidance issued by The Pension Regulator as set out in the Regulatory Code of Practice No 8 on "Member-nominated trustees and directors - putting in place and implementing arrangements"

- 3 of the 5 MNT's are to be Ministers
- 1 of the 5 MNTS is to be a member of Staff
- 1 of the 5 MNTS's is to be an Irish Mission Worker, Deaconess or Missionary.

2.3 Chairman of the Board of Trustees

It is recognised that the Trustees normally appoint a Chairman from their membership but best practice points to an independent Chairman who is not a member of the Board of Finance and Personnel and is not a beneficiary under the scheme.

2.4 Transitional Arrangements

The existing Employer Nominated Trustees will effectively be “removed” (term used in Trust Deed) and the names of 7 Employer Nominated Trustees presented to the General Board/Assembly.

The existing member Nominated Trustees will be contacted to see if they are willing to continue to act, any new names invited, and an election held if necessary.

10. CONGREGATIONAL ASSESSMENTS

Those familiar with congregational finances will be aware that assessments are collected based on the stipend paid to their minister in the previous year. The rates of assessment for 2009 and anticipated rates for 2010 are as follows:

	2010 p/£ stipend	2009 p/£ stipend
Central Ministry Fund	18.50	20.00
Retired Ministers Fund	2.75	4.25
Widows of Ministers Fund	4.50	5.00
Prolonged Disability Fund	0.25	0.50
Incidental Fund (incl. 0.25p re Peninsula)	5.00	5.00
Ministerial Development Fund	0.25	0.25
Special Assembly	0.25	0.25
Church House External Work	3.50	3.50
Sick Supply Fund	0.25	-
Students Bursary Fund	5.25	-
SUB – TOTAL	40.50	38.75
Ministers Pension Scheme (1978)	33.00	33.00
TOTAL	73.50	71.75

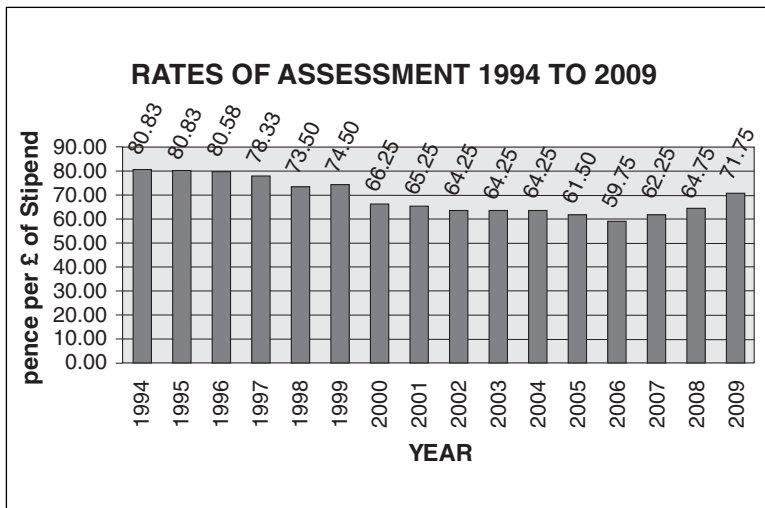
Full details on the various assessments are available in a booklet from the Financial Secretary’s Office, Church House, a copy of which has already been issued to Treasurers and Ministers. By way of general guidance 1p/£stipend collects approximately £100,000.

The amount collected by way of assessment for the Ministers Pension Scheme is 33.0p per £ of stipend and not 27.4% referred to earlier in this paper. By way of brief explanation, the 33.0p is based on a minister’s stipend but ministers generally receive additional income which is pensionable and therefore to collect the full amount due from congregations for pensions a higher assessment rate is required e.g.

Ministers Stipend	£20,000	Assessment at 33.0p	£6,600
Augmentation/CMF grants etc.	£4,000		
Pensionable Income	£24,000	Pension Contribution at 27.4%	£6,600

The Panel has reviewed the rates of assessments for the various funds and has concluded that while some adjustment can be made, it is unlikely that the rates of assessment will reduce significantly over the next 10 years. The only area where any significant changes could be made relates to the Central Ministry Fund. The Panel plans to have further discussions with Union Commission and other interested parties in particular on the level of augmentation and some of the other amounts/grants payable from the Central Ministry Fund.

The following chart summarises the historical rates of assessment since 1994



The Panel is considering recommending that the basis of Assessment on congregations be changed from stipend to levels of income as this would result in a fairer apportionment. Assessment would be based on unrestricted income. This would largely be what is commonly known as specified sources but would include

- Freewill Weekly Offering (FWO)

- Gift Aid on FWO
- Loose Offering
- Special Collections for general purposes
- Gifts, Donations and bequests which are for general purposes
- Rental income
- Any other income on which no restriction has been placed by the donor

Please note that income on which no restriction is placed by the donor which the Congregational Committee designate for a particular purpose is unrestricted income and not restricted income. Restricted income is income where the donor has indicated that the money must be used for a specific purpose e.g. property donations, donations to an appeal, a bequest with specific restriction etc.

The change from Stipend to Unrestricted Income as a rule will mean that the level of assessment will reflect a congregation's ability to contribute. The rates of assessment for the various Assessment Funds will continue to reflect the ongoing expenditure requirements of those funds. As a general guide, to collect the same amounts from congregations as at present it is estimated the rate of assessment on congregation's unrestricted income would be approximately 18%.

The introductions of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 means that congregations will have to submit annual accounts to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (CCNI). If the CCNI adopt the same approach as the Charity Commission in England and Wales accounts will have to be prepared in accordance with a "Statement of Recommended Practice" which requires Unrestricted Income to be disclosed in the accounts.

11. CHURCH APPEALS

The Church Appeals include the United Appeal, World Development, Sunday School, and Special Appeals (e.g. by Moderators).

United Appeal is the main Appeal and the target of Honour for 2010 is £3,309,654. While not collected as an assessment it equates to a rate of assessment of approximately 33p per £ stipend.

From 2010, the funding of the Students Bursary Fund will move from United Appeal to become an Assessment on Congregations. This means that funding of Ministry is largely through the assessment system and Mission through United Appeal. The Panel support this move as a long term objective with servicing and administration costs allocated to the various Boards/Committee using those services.

The Panel does not recommend any major changes to Appeals at this stage.

12. DISTRIBUTION OF CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

This document has been issued to Congregational Treasurers, Ministers, Presbytery Clerks and the Scheme Trustees. Congregational Committees and Presbyteries are encouraged to discuss it and appoint representatives to attend one of the Consultation meetings.

Please see the Consultation Reply Form attached to this Consultation document.

APPENDIX 1 – Scheme Benefits, The Presbyterian Church in Ireland Pension Scheme (2009)

Outline of Scheme Benefit of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Pension Scheme (2009)

1. The scheme is a defined benefit scheme. Members accrue benefits on a basis of 1/60 of their annual pensionable remuneration for each year of service. Members final pension benefits are based on their average remuneration over their service not their remuneration on retirement (known as a final salary scheme). The Scheme is what is referred to as a CARE Scheme (Career Average Revalued Earnings).

A simple example

- A member has pensionable service of 30 years
- Average revalued earnings are £25,000

On retirement, at age 65, their pension would be £12,500 (calculated as 30 (years service) divided by 60 (accrual rate) multiplied by £25,000 (average earnings)).

2. On retirement, members can give up or “commute “ part of their pension entitlement for a maximum cash lump sum equal to 25% of their fund value. The amount a member has to give, the commutation factor, is determined by the Scheme Trustees on the advice of the Scheme Actuary.

Based on the above example if the commutation factor is £1 : £16.5 i.e. for every £1 of pension given up the member receives £16.50 tax free cash, the member could take a Tax Free Cash Sum of £ 59,353 and a reduced pension of £8,903

3. The widows’ pension is 50% of the member’s pension before commutation i.e. based on £12,500 not on £8.903

4. There is death in service cover of 4 times a member’s pensionable salary. There is also a refund of contributions and a 50% widow’s pension. A child pension may be payable if children are still in full time education and under 21.

APPENDIX 2 – Contracting Out

Background to Contracting Out

Like the vast majority of defined benefit pension schemes, The Presbyterian Church in Ireland Pension Scheme (2009) is contracted out of the State Second Pension (S2P). When it was introduced in 1978 as the State Earnings Related pension Scheme (or SERPS), organisations that provided their own occupational pension schemes were allowed to stay outside the State scheme, given that they were already funding their own adequate pension arrangements.

As a result, most private sector pension schemes have always been contracted out of SERPS/S2P. Contracting out means that the employer and

employee pay lower rates of National Insurance contributions than if they were contracted in. Employees receive pension benefits from their occupational scheme but do not receive the additional State Pension (SERPS and/or S2P).

Initially it represented better value for many employers and employees to pay the lower NI contributions that came with contracting out. But, over time and with a higher average age of the Scheme's membership, the financial balance of advantage has shifted. Providing the same overall level of pension benefits on a contracted out basis now costs more than doing so on a contracted in basis. The difference is around 1% to 2% of scheme salaries.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Basic State Pension (BSP) is normally paid in addition to any S2P benefit.

How Contracting In Would Operate

The Church would pay additional National Insurance payments (currently around 3% of scheme salaries). In addition, the National Insurance rate paid by members would increase by 1.3%.¹ As a result of these higher contributions, members would become eligible for S2P in respect of future service.

The scheme benefits would be reduced to reflect the additional (reinstated) State benefits that members would then be earning. To accurately put all members in a similar position to that applying if the Scheme had not ceased to contract out would require a very complicated benefit design (e.g. with accrual rates varying by age).

A more simplified design which would ensure benefits were broadly unchanged would be to move to a 1/80th accrual rate rather than the present 1/60th. Some members would see a decrease in the total value of their pension (from S2P and the Scheme), but the vast majority (and in particular older members) would benefit from a higher level of total pension benefit.

When members retire they would receive a higher proportion of pension income from the State as they would be eligible to receive benefits from the Scheme, the Basic State Pension and S2P.

Controlling Risks and Other Advantages

Becoming more reliant on State provision does, of course, carry its own risks in relation to possible future changes in Government policy. However the overall risk is reduced as the employer will no longer be responsible for providing as large a proportion of the benefits.

There are further potential advantages:

- Increases in the S2P once in payment are linked to RPI. This would mean that part of the overall pension was no longer linked to price inflation capped at 2.5% pa.
- S2P earned each year is increased in line with National Average Earnings prior to retirement. These increases are generally higher

¹ This is the overall effect in terms of typical pensionable salary. NI contributions are levied at different rates on different bands of earnings.

than Retain Price Inflation which applies to revaluation of benefits within the Scheme.

Communication

However the advantages have to be balanced against the complexity of communicating changes to the membership. The situation with S2P is very complicated, and in particular it is likely to be unworkable to give illustrations to members which incorporate their individual State pension figures. However we could estimate the amount by which members' S2P would increase as a result of contracting in and remind them that they can request an estimate of their State entitlements from the DWP (Department for Work and Pensions).

Interaction of Contracting In With the Salary Cap and Hybrid Scheme

While remaining contracted out there is little scope for reductions to Scheme benefits below $\frac{1}{80}$ th accrual rate. This is because this is the minimum level of benefit that must be provided by a contracted out scheme. No such minimum applies for a contracted in scheme. So contracting in is a requirement if a hybrid arrangement at a $\frac{1}{100}$ th level is to be introduced.

The capping of salaries at the minimum stipend level would also be problematic if the scheme were contracted out as higher earners who were capped could receive less than the minimum level of benefit that must be provided in a contracted out scheme.

Members Over State Pension Age or Working outside the UK

Members over State Pension Age or working outside the UK would normally **not** be accruing S2P benefits. As a result, there would be no S2P earned to compensate for the reduction in Scheme benefits.

The implications for ministers and others in service in the Republic of Ireland of contracting in will need to be fully explored before any decision is made in this regard.

APPENDIX 3 – Hybrid Schemes

Hybrid Scheme

Under a hybrid arrangement, part of the overall pension benefit would be provided through a defined benefit arrangement (at a relatively low accrual rate e.g. $\frac{1}{100}$ th) and part through a defined contribution arrangement. This would mean that contributions would buy pension benefits, part of which would be guaranteed and part dependent on investment returns and annuity rates at retirement.

Risk Sharing

The potential advantage of this approach is that it involves the greatest sharing of risk between the employer, the members and the State. The advantage to the Church of a hybrid scheme compared with a defined benefit scheme is that it transfers some of the future funding risk to the individual members of the

pension scheme. For the members, the advantage is that, compared with a defined contribution scheme, it does not transfer all of the risk.

It also avoids the irrevocable step of closing the defined benefit scheme.

Possible Hybrid Scheme

A hybrid scheme with a future service accrual rate of $\frac{1}{100\text{th}}$ would require a contribution rate of 7.5% of scheme salaries from the Church for the defined benefit element.² The Church would also have to pay the additional National Insurance contributions of 3% of scheme salaries in order to qualify members for S2P.

An additional defined contribution would then be paid to bring the overall contribution rate up to the level desired by the Church. There would need to be a decision whether these should be age related or on a flat rate basis. An age-related approach would be needed if the aim is to target a particular overall level of pension (e.g. $\frac{1}{80\text{ths}}$).

Additional Administration

Introducing a hybrid scheme would require additional administration, but similar to that required if the DB scheme were closed and a DC scheme put in place for future service.

APPENDIX II

PENSION CONSULTATION EVENTS

1. Approximate Numbers attending

Omagh (09/11/09)	32
Dublin (10/11/09)	10
Belfast (16/11/09)	150
Coleraine (17/11/09)	100

As a general observation, the attendees tended to be treasures or congregational members. There were not a significant number of ministers in attendance at most meetings. In general, those attending fully engaged in the question and answer sessions.

2. Main Comments/Issues

- (a) The report was well presented and explained clearly a complex topic. There appeared to be some appreciation of the work the Panel had undertaken. Some appeared to think this was a follow on of the work previously undertaken by the Board of Finance and Personnel and did not realise this was something the General Assembly had asked the General Board to do.
- (b) One of those attending queried why further changes were being considered so early after the latest changes especially in view of the significant cost incurred. More time needed to be given to see if the changes made any difference.

2 Based on the 31.12.08 actuarial assumptions and date

- (c) At most, events a query was raised regarding the “elimination” of the defined contribution option, although it was pointed out that while this was not the Panels preferred option it had not been ruled out. There are clearly those who are of the view that this is the only option for the Church. At one of the events, the view was expressed that indicative retirement pension figures for a DC scheme should have been made available so that a comparison with pensions from a DB scheme could have been made. Some members are concerned about the long term implications of sustaining a defined benefit scheme. There was no significant discussion about the level of contribution to a DC scheme, although one person appeared to suggest that the current DB rates could be used (i.e. 16.5% and 7%).
- (d) Some views were expressed that clearer recommendations should have been made by the Panel as to the preferred way forward. Some Treasurers feel they do not have the expertise to deal with this matter and were “none the wiser” after the presentation – they required recommendations from the “experts” (i.e. Kerr Henderson).
- (e) There were mixed views on the use of Unrestricted Funds as a basis for collecting assessments. Some were concerned that e.g. unrestricted bequests would be included; others were concerned about the increase in assessments for their congregations as a result of such a change.
- (f) On occasions the Presbyterian Mutual Society issue was raised e.g. it was questioned whether any of the pension funds were invested in the PMS, others suggested that the level of income to specified sources had reduced in protest and that money was being diverted to other restricted funds.
- (g) Concern was expressed regarding the no of scheme beneficiaries on the Board of Trustees and indeed on the Panel.
- (h) One person raised a question regarding the arrears paid by members over 30 to join the PWFA (not relevant to this Panel).
- (i) There was a view that changes need to be made and that the Church with declining numbers and income could not afford to continue to pay the present level of pension assessments etc. It was pointed out that up to 2008 there had not been a decline in income.
- (j) Questions were raised, which are really issues for the Pension Scheme Trustees, regarding the level of investment performance; one person also questioned the level of administration costs in the scheme.
- (k) Some commented that they were not in a position to comments on what level the Church could afford re assessments etc.
- (l) The role of ministers in the decision making process was strongly questioned by some and there are those who suggested that ministers should not take part in General Assembly decisions on pensions.
- (m) One minister expressed concern about comments made by some members attending the event. Those members seem content to reduce minister’s pensions and he was very discouraged by the nature of the comments made.

- (n) Some uncertainty was expressed re the situation of ministers in the Republic of Ireland and missionaries re the implication of contracting in.
- (o) As a general comment, there was no overwhelming support for one of the five options. The most vocal support was for a move to a DC scheme.
- (p) Some commented that the situation was not as bad now due to recent increases in investment values – actuary had to explain the position re valuation of liabilities; estimated current deficit £16m/17m.
- (q) Some appeared to think current scheme was a “final salary scheme” and did not realise it is a CARE Scheme. Some did not appreciate that changes had been made to the schemes in recent years.
- (r) There was some discussion of the ratio of employers to members contributions (2:1).

A significant number of additional copies of the Consultation Paper were taken to be used by congregations. Copies of the presentation have been e-mailed to a number of congregations.

APPENDIX III

CONSULTATION RESPONSE

122 congregations returned the Consultation Response Form.

KEY FINDINGS

Question 1(i) – Support for a Defined Benefit Pension Scheme

63% of congregations indicated they were in favour of the Church continuing to provide a defined benefit pension for members on retirement. 28% did not support retaining this type of scheme and 9% indicated that the existing arrangements should be retained for existing members only.

Question 1(ii) – Should the Defined Benefit Structure be changed

86% of congregations indicated that changes should be made to the existing scheme benefit structure with 14% suggesting no changes should be made.

Question 2 – Comments on how benefits should be reduced

Accrual Rate – 83% of congregations who responded to this question indicated that the accrual rate should be amended with 11% of the view it should be left unchanged.

Retirement Age – 85% of congregations who responded to this question agreed that the retirement age should be increased and there was a clear indication this should mirror the state pension arrangements.

Salary Cap – 72% of congregations who responded to this question supported the introduction of a salary cap although 28% specifically did not support its introduction on grounds on equity/fairness.

As a general observation, if changes are to be made to the benefit structure it would appear that the preferred order would be retirement age, accrual rate, salary cap.

Question 3 – Proportion of Church and Member Contributions

The responses were varied although there appears to be a consensus that the Church should contribute in the range of two to three times the member's rate. While there was some support for retaining member's contributions at the current rate of 7%, the majority view was that the rate should be increased.

Questions 4 and 5 – Defined Contribution Scheme

The response to this question mirrored the answers to question 1 with 61% not supporting a change to a defined contribution scheme, 10% supporting it for new members and 29% were in favour of such an arrangement. Those in favour of such an arrangement suggested a wide range of contribution rates, but as a general observation would support contributions at the rates to the existing scheme (ignoring the amount towards the deficit).

Question 6 – Hybrid Scheme

73% indicated that they would not support the introduction of a Hybrid Scheme.

Question 7(i) Level of Assessments

Not all congregations responded to this question. Some congregations indicated they did not know enough about the various fund to comment. There was an indication from some congregations that at the present time they are finding it difficult to meet their financial commitments and would therefore welcome any reduction in assessments. Analysing the various comments, there were some recurring themes and in particular:

- Reducing the level of the Central Ministry Fund assessment
- Stopping the work to Church House
- Concern about level of central costs which should be reviewed

Question 7 (ii) Unrestricted Income as basis of assessments

56% of congregations responding to this question supported using Unrestricted Income as a basis of assessment. 42% did not support a change and a few congregations suggested some form of combined arrangement.

Question 8 – Management Arrangements

A considerable number of congregations did not make any comment, which based on the question would suggest agreement to the proposals; 19 congregations specifically indicated support for the arrangements. There were a variety of other comments which may be summarised as concern about the role of beneficiaries, either on the Board of Trustees or through their involvement in the decision making process.

PANEL ON MINISTRIES

The Rev Dr WP Addley reports:

Following the 2009 General Assembly the membership of the Panel was strengthened, by the addition of representatives from the Union Commission and the Board of Mission in Ireland, and the enhanced Panel has sought to fulfil the remit of that Assembly, namely:

“to continue its work looking particularly at outstanding issues including ‘tent-making ministries’ and ‘part-time ministries’”.

Accordingly the Panel has produced schemes on Part-Time Ministry in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, on Auxiliary Ministry, and on the Appointment and Training of Evangelists. In addition it gave consideration to the Salary Scales, Terms and Conditions of Additional Pastoral Personnel. Its report on this last item along with the three schemes may be found in the appendices to this Report.

APPENDIX 1

Towards a Scheme for Part Time Ministry of Word and Sacrament in PCI

Introduction

1. Over the past number of years it has become apparent that PCI needs to have more flexibility in its use of Ministerial resources. One such change that could prove helpful would be to permit the Union Commission to give leave to call for ‘part-time Ministry of Word and Sacrament’ to a charge where that was the most appropriate way to proceed.

2. While it is not envisaged that a large number of such positions would be created, such posts could be attractive to a number of Ministers and may prove a useful option for Presbyteries and the Union Commission to have available for specific situations. Such a part-time congregational ministry could also be linked to a part-time non-parish ministry.

The Basic Scheme

1. After consultation, with the Presbytery concerned and other relevant bodies, the Union Commission, in situations where it is clearly deemed appropriate, should be authorised to create a position which is deemed to be a ‘part-time charge’.

2. The Union Commission in granting ‘leave to call’ to such positions should both set the stipend at a suitable proportion of appropriate ministerial minimum and also specify the hours to be worked etc.

3. No current full-time position would be permitted to ‘evolve’ into a part-time position during a ministry. Such changes to the status of a charge can only be made at the time of a vacancy or realignment.

4. 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*.

5. The Union Commission should exercise due care in creating such positions, taking into account not only the local need, but the use of ministry personnel throughout PCI.

APPENDIX 2

Towards a Scheme for an Auxiliary Ministry in PCI

Introduction

1. This paper seeks to outline a scheme for part-time Ministry of the Word, for those who are not already Ministers of Word and Sacrament, either as part of a 'Ministry Team' or in a 'Pioneering Situation'.

2. This scheme will be referred to as an 'Auxiliary Ministry Scheme', where an 'Auxiliary Minister' is a part-time Minister of the Word. The creation of an Auxiliary Minister post will be authorised by the Union Commission, in consultation with Presbytery, (see sections 3.1 and 3.2 below for details relating to pioneering situations), with the Commission setting the terms including length of appointment etc.

3. An Auxiliary Minister post will fall into one of the following two categories:

- (a) An Auxiliary Minister who will work alongside, and under the supervision of, a full Minister of the Word and Sacrament in either a larger congregation or in a linkage or in appropriate circumstances under the supervision of a Convener of a Vacancy. This could be either on an 'expenses only' basis or on a 'part-time salaried' basis.
- (b) An Auxiliary Minister who will provide ministry in a pioneering situation, working under the auspices and supervision of a Presbytery and/or Board, either in a small congregation or linkage which has clear potential for growth or in a Church planting location, (see section 3 below). This could be on an 'expenses only' basis, i.e. as a 'tent-maker', or on a 'part-time salaried' basis.

The Basic Scheme

1. Normally an applicant for the Auxiliary Ministry Scheme would be required to be an Accredited Preacher within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, having completed the selection process, training and probationary period of that scheme.

2. Admission to the process of training for the 'Auxiliary Ministry' will be by formal application, nomination by the local Minister and Kirk Session, followed by Presbytery endorsement of that nomination. Those candidates endorsed by a Presbytery would be interviewed centrally by a Board of Christian Training Panel prior to final approval. (In the light of the relatively short training period, the selection process should seek to identify relevant existing 'giftedness' which could be enhanced through training.)

3. The normal training course for the Auxiliary Ministry should build on the Accredited Preacher Training and should include units in pastoral care and theology, normally taken over one year, delivered through a combination of regional courses and weekend residentials.

4. The one-year course would normally include congregational placements, both in the individual's home congregation and in other congregations. These would be assessed through reflective reports, by the trainee and by the 'supervising minister'.

5. Costs will be covered in two ways – central funds will cover the cost of providing trainers, with the trainee covering other costs. The local Congregation and/or Presbytery will be encouraged to support the trainee in meeting these costs. A bursary fund for particular exceptional cases, where finance is a major issue, will be made available.

6. After successful completion of the one year course, the individual would enter a six month probationary period, attached to a congregation, prior to full recognition. They would then be eligible to apply for Auxiliary Ministry positions which have been created within PCI, being commissioned to their first such position. Those who wish to apply for an Auxiliary Ministry post which will not be working directly under the supervision of a full Minister of the Word and Sacrament, i.e. one in category 1.3 (b) above, will be required to complete additional modules of study and other prescribed preparation, either before taking up such a post or within an agreed period after appointment. (See section 3 below.)

7. The oversight of the main training course for the 'Auxiliary Ministry' will be the responsibility of the Director of Ministerial Studies, with the courses approved by the relevant Board of Christian Training Committee and accredited by Union Theological College. The additional training necessary for those going into a 'pioneering' situation will be overseen jointly with the Board of Mission in Ireland. (See section 3 below.)

Auxiliary Ministry in pioneering situations

1. Auxiliary Ministry posts created in 'pioneering situations' will be primarily missional in nature i.e. a position created in a small situation where there is clear potential for growth or in a Church planting location. Such posts will not be created for 'maintenance' reasons.

2. Posts will be authorised by the Union Commission following a joint request by a Presbytery and the Board of Mission in Ireland. Such a request will normally be initiated by a Presbytery, with the backing of the Board of Mission in Ireland, but could also be initiated by the Board of Mission in Ireland, with the backing of a Presbytery.

3. Those applying for such posts will normally be required to have met the full requirements of the Auxiliary Ministry scheme outlined above. They will also be required to carry out additional modules of study and other prescribed preparation, either before taking up such a post or within an agreed period after appointment. As these posts are designed to be primarily pioneering missional in nature, the additional preparation should be focussed to help equip Auxiliary Ministers exercise such missional work.

4. Appointments to such posts will be by a Panel made up of representatives of the Presbytery and of the Board of Mission in Ireland.

5. Oversight of the development of such pioneering situations, and the supervision of the work of Auxiliary Ministers in such situations, will be by a Presbytery Panel made up of representatives of the Presbytery and of the Board of Mission in Ireland. Normally this Panel will be convened by a member of Presbytery and line management arrangements agreed.

APPENDIX 3

Towards a Scheme for the Appointment and Training of Evangelists

Introduction

1. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland is committed to evangelism. The effective reaching of people with the gospel message of salvation has always been an imperative for us. In the paper *“An Understanding of Mission for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland”* (GA Mins, 2009, p63) the authors seek to help the Church towards a rounded view of mission. They quote Chris Wright as follows: *“...mission that does not ultimately include declaring the word and the name of Christ, the call to repentance, and faith and obedience has not completed its task. It is defective mission, not holistic mission”*. (Chris Wright, *The Mission of God*, p 319). Evangelism therefore, is central to our identity as a people and our understanding of mission.

2. The BMI strategy of seeking to plant new Churches and revitalize existing congregations requires gifted and trained evangelists in the front line, either as Church Planters themselves, or working alongside Planters and Ministers.

The Office of Evangelist

1. The office of “evangelist” is not formally recognized within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland beyond the collective responsibilities of a Teaching Elder (Code, Par 16(2)), although the role, calling and work of an evangelist is provided for both through the Irish Mission which includes the work of evangelism as an explicit function for its workers, (Code, Par 302(1)(b)) and through the appointment of paid staff as evangelists within congregations under the APP scheme.

2. Historically there has been a Director of Evangelism appointed centrally by the denomination, whose task was to provide resources and training at congregational level to encourage effective evangelism to take place. For a number of years a Panel of Evangelists was recognized by the General Assembly and, for a shorter period, a Panel of Youth Evangelists. It is further noted that in 1949 the post of General Assembly Evangelist was created as a six-month temporary secondment for a Minister to fulfil, releasing him from normal parish life to lead evangelistic missions across the Church. There were four post holders before the scheme came to an end.

3. This paper will not propose any changes to the Code regarding the office of Evangelist or propose to establish any new salaried posts regarding the provision of training for evangelists.

The Irish Mission

1. The Irish Mission is an evangelistic agency within the structures of the Church. (Code, Par 116(1))

2. In the past Irish Mission workers were offered training prior to their appointment, should this have been considered necessary. Sometimes this involved a full time year of theological study at Union College, but such a course was not mandatory. In all cases, a one-year period of probation prior to Commissioning was served.

3. Some workers joined the mission with many years of experience, and this was deemed to be sufficient in lieu of additional formal training.

4. Some workers were given permission to undertake specialist in service training by correspondence courses or attendance at, for example, the Irish Bible Institute in Dublin.

5. The place and purpose of the Mission within the PCI is changing, with an intentional move from central to local deployment of evangelists in growing numbers. While the BMI retains the capacity for some central deployment of personnel where local resources are inadequate or non-existent, the tactical assumption is that evangelists will work from congregations or groups of congregations to help them reach into their communities.

Training evangelists – Current Provision

1. No formal dedicated training in evangelism is currently provided through Union Theological College, other than as part of the wider training for ministry, or as part of specialist courses such as Youth and Children’s ministry.

2. It is not assumed that theological training or degree-level education is a pre-requisite for effective evangelists. However, it is assumed that the identification of spiritual gifting, appropriate training and equipping both initially and ongoing is essential for an evangelist to be effective and to grow in their role and calling.

3. Exposure to new and effective models of evangelism may help to define the possibilities, and to birth genuine vision. Many of our attempts to evangelise are hampered by the perception of outsiders that it has all been heard before, or that the outmoded methodologies match an old fashioned or irrelevant message. Just as there is a universal call to re-imagine Church for the next generation, so there is a need to re-imagine evangelism for this new spiritual environment, and to devise styles of communication, which truly connect with ordinary people.

Proposal for Training of Evangelists

1. It is proposed that a dedicated course on evangelism be introduced, to be run by the Board of Mission in Ireland in conjunction with the Board of Christian Training.

- (i) The course would be run annually, as a series of evening classes over a period of weeks.
- (ii) The course would be open to any person, whether in a paid capacity or volunteer, ordained or not, seeking to identify their giftedness in evangelism and improve their skills in this ministry.
- (iii) Admission to the course would normally require approval by the participant's congregation, which may be encouraged to provide some financial support.
- (iv) Completion of the course may be expected or required for some employed positions within the Church.
- (v) The course will be internally accredited by Union Theological College.
- (vi) The course would be funded through a combination of central provision of trainers' costs, and participants' fees. It may also qualify for support under the Ministerial Development scheme.
- (vii) The content of the course might include:
 - The content of the Gospel – a theological foundation.
 - Am I an evangelist? Discerning spiritual gifting.
 - Evangelism and the mission of the local Church.
 - Evangelistic preaching.
 - The way of salvation. Leading a person to Christ.
 - Conversational evangelism, and evangelistic Bible studies.
 - Use of literature, video and other media.
 - Evangelism and the creative arts.
 - Children's evangelism; Youth evangelism; Pastoral evangelism.
 - Blogging the gospel.
 - Understanding changes in Irish culture.
 - Effective story-telling.
 - Talking with strangers; making new connections.
 - Apologetics. Common questions people ask.
 - How to mobilise God's people for evangelism.

APPENDIX 4

Additional Pastoral Personnel salary scales, terms and conditions

Issues for consideration

1. Advantages of standardising Additional Pastoral Personnel (APP) pay and conditions

If the General Assembly was to adopt a standardised set of pay and conditions for APPs, there would be some clear benefits:

- (a) Fair reward for work of similar standard by staff of comparable ability;
- (b) Vital equity if APPs were to be paid centrally;
- (c) Would encourage APPs to commit to one situation for an extended time due to increased structure and job security, particularly if they have changing personal responsibilities;
- (d) Provides appropriate career development and incremental scales;

- (e) Standard pay and conditions can be linked to the professional development of APPs throughout the denomination, thus continuing to raise standards across the Church;
- (f) It would open up the option that Peninsula's standard job description and terms and conditions include not only the legal requirements but also guidelines from PCI on certain key terms and conditions. This would help to reduce confusion and inequitable employment practices but still allow local application as appropriate.

2. Potential drawbacks of standard pay and conditions for APPs

However, there are also concerns or potential drawbacks should such a policy be pursued:

- (a) Imbalance of pay in some situations compared to minister(s) and other ministry staff;
- (b) Increased costs to some congregations, possibly seen as prohibitive to a few;
- (c) Resistance by some to what may be seen as central interference;
- (d) Would not recognise the socio-economic and other local conditions which would restrict a congregation's ability to pay.

Proposals on standardising conditions

The Panel makes the following recommendations on the pay and conditions of APPs:

1. *It is recommended that* the following framework should be used for setting the salary of any APP and the APP Committee will provide guidance to congregations on how to apply this:

Steering salary pt (equivalent JNC pt)	Level of responsibility of post	Qualification attained by employee or level of experience
Band A 1. £16,509 (5) 2. £17,100 (6) 3. £17,697 (7) 4. £18,291 (8) 5. £19,047 (9) 6. £19,636 (10)	Mostly direct work with children, young people or adults under close regular supervision; low management responsibility for people or projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Obtained or working towards OCN level 2 and 3 qualifications, PCI Youth/Children's Ministry Course or similar qualification in the relevant field; - where this level of qualification is not held, demonstrated experience in this field of activity may be deemed equivalent.
Band B 7. £20,591 (11) 8. £21,525 (12) 9. £22,489 (13) 10. £23,485 (14) 11. £24,166 (15+)	General responsibility for specific areas of programme and ministry oversight; graduating and less closely supervised responsibility for programmes, strategy volunteers or leaders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appropriate recognition of attainment or working towards undergraduate or postgraduate theological study or professional qualifications (including Youth and Community, teaching qualifications or other related professional qualifications such as counselling or social work). - where this level of qualification is not held, demonstrated experience in this field of activity may be deemed equivalent.

Note: this salary scale is based on the latest JNC Youth and Community work scale (2009 – agreed Feb 2010) for the UK and will be updated annually. The RoI salary will be the appropriate salary point multiplied by RoI Ministerial Minimum and divided by NI Ministerial Minimum i.e. uplifted by PCI's agreed percentage for RoI cost of living differential.

2. *It is recommended that* no APP's salary should be higher than 95% of the current minister's stipend regardless of qualification or experience.
3. *It is recommended that,* in a situation where a congregation provides accommodation for the APP, a proportionate reduction in salary may be made if deemed appropriate.
4. *It is recommended that* the Additional Appointments Committee of the Union Commission (APC) should agree with Peninsula a set of terms and conditions which must be adopted by congregations employing APPs including annual and parental leave, sick pay, disciplinary and grievance procedures, training and continuing professional development policies.
5. *It is recommended that* although all APPs will continue to be employed by the Kirk Session of the congregation(s) in which they work, the payroll function will be centralised through the Presbyterian Financial Secretary's Office.
6. *It is recommended that* a PCI stakeholder pension should be available for use by congregations through the FSO.
7. *It is recommended that* a standard pro forma should be provided which congregations may use for claiming of personal expenses.
8. *It is recommended that* the APC should issue guidelines for those responsible for the line management and appraisal of APPs which will help to standardise practice in this area.
9. *It is recommended that* it should be standard practice that all who manage APPs will undergo suitable training in management and appraisal. (This would both address some common areas of tension and difficulty currently experienced by some APPs and congregations, and also support those less experienced in management.)

PANEL ON FUTURE OF PEACEMAKING

The Rev Dr DJ Watts reports:

1. The Panel appointed by the Priorities Committee to consider the future of "peacemaking" within the Church has continued to meet. It has taken note of the Memorial of the Dromore Presbytery and the Resolution of the Youth and Children's Ministry Board (res 7) at the General Assembly.
2. The Panel is concerned at the lack of political leadership in forwarding the "shared future" agenda and believes that it is even more vital for the Church to give strong leadership. There is a perception that while a political accommodation has been maintained, there is little real progress towards reconciliation at a community level. Some feel that in fact relations in the community have become worse. It is therefore very important to ensure that the Church continues to move forward on "peacemaking" issues, even if the terminology needs to change.
3. The Panel identified three areas to be considered:
 - (i) **At a societal level** work needs to be done to speak clearly and prophetically into a situation of relative stalemate. It is recognised that the Church and Society Committee is already appointed to give a lead in this area.

- (ii) **At a congregational level**, leaderships need to be encouraged to look seriously and creatively at fostering good relations in their local area. As this is a gospel imperative it was felt that it would be helpful if leaderships consider this aspect of the gospel within their overall mission planning. To encourage discussion it was agreed to send out again the Peace Vocation, which is still seen as very relevant, with a series of questions to help the Panel clarify what is needed at congregational level.
- (iii) **At a denomination level**, aspects of “peacemaking” need to be built in to our overall thinking and planning. In particular training in changing attitudes needs to be part of ministerial, eldership and discipleship training. The Church also needs to ensure that its own practices nurture good relations and challenge any tendency towards sectarian attitudes.

4. The response to the questionnaire on the Peace Vocation was interesting, if a little disappointing. The questions asked were:

- (i) What do you like about the Peace Vocation and what would you want to change?
- (ii) What has been happening in this regard in the Congregation and what might happen in the future?
- (iii) How does this thinking impact your mission planning?
- (iv) Are there ways in which young people can be involved?
- (v) What help and support might be offered by:
 - a) Presbytery; b) the Church centrally?
- (vi) How would you like to see the peacemaking initiative developed in the denomination?

Only 8 replies were received from 7 Congregations and 1 Presbytery. The Panel believes there may have been some confusion between this request and the consultation on sectarianism being conducted by Church and Society. The responses received were encouraging, but it is difficult to assess the lack of response except that it may indicate uncertainty at a time of rapid change in society as to where the congregation should place emphasis in its witness to Kingdom values.

5. To enable the Church to think seriously about its role in relating within relatively post-conflict society the panel would like to bring together some people to work on how the Church may contribute to building good relationships in the emerging Irish society. This would include a review of past work and the lessons learnt from it, as well as new initiatives which could be taken. It may also enable us to reflect on some of the anniversaries which are approaching. The intention would be to look academically at some of the issues but with practical outcomes which may help focus the work of the Church. It may be that a conference or symposium will be held next Spring.

6. It was reported to the General Board that an application had been made to the Special EU Programmes Body for an inter-Church Peacebuilding Project. The five partners are the Church of Ireland, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches in Ireland, the Roman Catholic Church and the Irish Council of Churches. For practical reasons in submitting the application the PCI was designated lead partner. The application has been accepted at the first stage of

the process and is now subject to economic appraisal. The International Fund for Ireland has also expressed interest and an application has been submitted to them also. If this application is successful it would mean a number of people working in various denominations with an overall co-ordinator. The overall cost may be well in excess of £1m. A decision on European funding is expected in May and if the project application is successful fuller details will be published in the Supplementary Reports.

PANEL ON PASTORAL CARE OF MANSE FAMILIES

The Rev Gabrielle Farquhar reports:

1. It is the Panel's continuing aim to ensure that Ministers and Manse families have the support and services they need from the Church they serve. The Panel would urge use of resources available, i.e. an appropriate person who provides a listening ear with strict confidentiality observed or an opportunity for those who just want to share a concern, spiritual or otherwise. Resources can be provided by the Church but it is up to the individuals concerned to avail of this organised help.

2. The Panel is now beginning to work on a resource for Kirk Sessions. It will contain helpful pointers to more effective pastoring of the Minister and Manse family.

PANEL ON SAINTFIELD ROAD MEMORIAL

The Rev Dr DJ Watts reports:

1. The Panel to consider the Memorial of the Kirk Session of Saintfield Road met to consider appropriate legislation. The Memorial reads:

That Ruling Elders, when elected, are ordained to the office of the ruling eldership, and installed to the oversight of a particular Congregation, or to a sphere of special service, e.g. with the Board of Mission Overseas.

That a Ruling Elder desiring to resign may either resign the duties in a Congregation or from the office of the eldership in the Presbyterian Church with the consent of the Presbytery [Code Par 33 (3)].

That when a Ruling Elder has resigned the duties in a Congregation he/she should be placed upon a roll of Elders without charge [Code Par 33 (4)].

That after 3 years upon the roll of Elders without charge a Ruling Elder is deemed to have resigned from the office of eldership [Code Par 33 (5)].

That in recent years provision has been made for Ruling Elders to step down from the duties of the eldership for a specified time, after which a return to those duties is envisaged [Code Par 25 (1)].

That there is no provision for Ruling Elders who, due to age, infirmity or declining health, wish to retire from the duties of the eldership, while still remaining an Elder of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

That a Minister/teaching Elder who retires from a charge, being still ordained continues in the office of Minister of the Church, with the title Minister Emeritus. [Code Par 225]

That a Ruling Elder should be permitted to retire from the duties of the eldership with a title such as Elder Emeritus, and be placed on a roll of such Elders Emeriti.

2. The Panel was aware of the work of the Strategy for Mission Committee, esp Reports 1976, and the Assembly response to a similar Memorial from the Kirk Session of Railway Street in 1999 (see Reports 2000, pp 6-8; Minutes 2000, p 56).

3. Following discussion it was agreed that the prayer of the Memorial would be effective if a new sub-paragraph (3) was added to Par 33 of The Code to read:

“A ruling elder who has reached the age of 65, or is in special circumstances, may retire from their duties in a congregation with the consent of the Presbytery, who may if it so wishes, in consultation with the Kirk Session, deem the elder to be an ‘elder-emeritus’ of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland”.

MEMORIAL RECORD

The Very Rev Dr Ronald Gavin Craig, BA, DD, died on 1 June, 2009 in the 93rd year of his age and the 65th of his ministry. A Belfast man, he was brought up within the fellowship of Newtownbreda Congregation where he was licensed as a probationer for the ministry. He was educated at Rosetta Primary School, the Royal Belfast Academical Institution, Queens University and, what was then called the Assembly’s College, Belfast. He served his Assistantship in First Larne Congregation before being ordained and installed to his first charge of Glennan and Middletown in 1944. Four years later he was called to Woodvale Congregation – then one of the largest Congregations in the General Assembly – where he spent the next twenty one years. In 1969 he moved to First Carrickfergus Congregation where he remained until retirement in 1982. He was Moderator of the General Assembly in 1980/81 and, significantly, during his year as Moderator he was given the honour of opening the first Youthreach event which was designed to encourage young people in various leadership roles within and beyond the Church. Prior to this he held various important positions within our Church among them: Convenerships of the Youth Committee, the Arrangements Committee and the Incidental Committee. Outside the Church he made a valuable contribution to the Government Youth Committee, the Youth and Sports Council and UNESCO (NI). A man with a ready pen, he wrote several useful publications including – “Treasures in Earthen Vessels” and – “A History of Woodvale Congregation”. Ronnie Craig’s life and ministry pulsated with energy and infectious enthusiasm. A man of ideas and idealism, he brought life to everything to which he turned his hand. His love for Christ and the Church was matched with his love for people of all ages and persuasions. He had that knack of drawing alongside people, listen to their point of view, share in their joys or sorrows and bring blessing to their lives. In a real sense he epitomised all that the ideal Minister ought to be. How blest were the Congregations who had

the privilege of having him as their Minister!! During the last war he served as a reserve in the Royal Artillery and, due to his zest for life in general and contact sport in particular, one can easily imagine the impact for good which he had on the service personnel who came under his influence. Ronnie Craig's lifetime interest in sport was nurtured early in life within the Youth Organisations of Newtownbreda Congregation and Belfast Inst. A former safe pair of hands as Ireland's Rugby Fullback, he also in his day, played a straight bat for Ulster at Cricket and was, in every sense, a true sportsman. What a massive contribution this must have made to his Church work in general and his Youth work in particular and what a role model he must have been within organisations like the Boy Scouts and Boys' Brigade. The death of his beloved wife Isobel was, to Ronnie a severe blow. As a couple they worked tirelessly in the service of their Lord and Master – Jesus Christ and His Church. Their daughter Joan, son Gavin and their families can be assured of the sympathy and prayers of the General Assembly as they mourn the passing of a dear father and outstanding servant of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

The Rev William Chestnutt, BA, died on 8 June, 2009 in the 89th year of his age and the 61st of his ministry. He was brought up in and licensed in Mosside Congregation. His primary education was delivered first of all in the little single room Tullyban Primary School and later in Knockaholet Primary School from which he graduated to Ballycastle High School. As was then the practice for most candidates for the Presbyterian ministry, he proceeded to Magee University College, Trinity College and, what was then, Assembly's College, Belfast. As a young Licentiate he was assigned in 1944 to Ballykelly Congregation to look after this Congregation while it's Minister, the Rev Victor Quinn, was serving as a war Chaplain to the Forces. He further served an assistantship to the Rev Temple Lundie who was then minister of Dundalk, Carlingford, Castlebellingham and Greenore. He was ordained to his first charge of Kilmount in 1948 where he remained until 1951 when he received a call to Dromore Congregation in County Tyrone. For the next twenty one years he, with his wife Margaret, exercised a much appreciated ministry. For much of his time in Dromore he was Clerk of the Omagh Presbytery – a position which he undertook most assiduously. In 1975 he responded affirmatively to a call from Donaghedy Congregation where he remained until retirement in 1986. In the year 1976 he received the honour of being appointed Moderator of the Synod of Derry and Omagh. Whilst William's Pulpit ministry was thoughtful and much appreciated, it was in the Pastoral side of ministry that he excelled. A country man himself he understood country people and, in his own quiet way, he had the capacity to draw alongside people to bring comfort, challenge, healing and strength. Many remain who look back in thanksgiving that this genuine man of God passed their way and touched their lives for good and for God. William would be the first to acknowledge the massive contribution Margaret made to his ministry. As a couple nothing pleased them more than to work hand in hand in the Master's service among the people God had called them to work. Their retirement was spent in Coleraine where William loved to develop and practice his interest in painting, carpentry and clock repairs. Even in the sad circumstance of memory loss his optimism and sense of humour shone through in a typical

comment – “my forgettery is getting better.” His beloved Margaret predeceased him by three years. Their sons Norman and Alastair and their families can be assured of the sympathy and prayers of this Supreme Court of the Church which their father loved so well and served so faithfully.

The Rev Moore Dunlop Wasson, BA, died on 19 July, 2009 in the 91st year of his age and the 63rd of his ministry. Brought up on the Crumlin Road area of Belfast, he attended St Mary’s Primary School before proceeding to Belfast Royal Academy. For his higher education he attended Magee University College, Trinity College, Dublin, New College, Edinburgh and, what was then, Assembly’s College, Belfast. He graduated from Trinity College with honours in History and Political Science and, while at New College, he was a New Testament prize winner. Upon satisfying the Board of Studies he was licensed by the Belfast Presbytery in 1944 in his home Congregation of Greenisland and ordained and installed in his first charge of Roseyards in 1946. His assistantships in Shankill Road Mission and Rosemary Congregations were to stand him in good stead in his subsequent ministry both as a parish Minister and in Broadcasting. Speaking of the latter, he was appointed as Organiser for Religious Broadcasting for the BBC in 1955. In this position he was responsible for the planning and production of religious programmes for both radio and television. He remained in this position until 1979. In 1980 he became a teacher of Religious Education in Larne Grammar School where he remained until receiving a Call from the Congregations of Ballina, Killala and Ballymote in 1984. Here he remained until retirement in 1988. Moore Wasson’s walk with God was quiet, gracious and gentle. To be in his presence was a benediction. His thoughtful and compassionate life and ministry brought blessing and inspiration to many and he will be remembered by his friends both within and beyond the Irish Presbyterian Church as one of the most Christlike people they have ever had the privilege to meet. The dark shadow of bereavement crossed his pathway not only through the passing of his beloved wife Lorna but also his daughter Charis. His remaining daughters Christine and Eirene and son Robert and their families can be assured of the sympathy and prayers of the General Assembly at this time of sorrow and loss.

The Rev William Douglas Ferguson Marshall, MA, died on 9 August, 2009 in the 87th year of his age and the 59th of his ministry. He was bought up within the fellowship of Ballykelly Congregation and educated at Coleraine Academical Institution, Magee University College, Trinity College, Dublin, New College, Edinburgh and, what was then Assembly’s College, Belfast. On completion of his Theological Studies he was licensed by the Limavady Presbytery in June 1947 and ordained and installed to his first charge of First Killyleagh in June 1950. Following a short ministry of two years in First Killyleagh he was called to Townsend Street Congregation in 1952 where he remained until 1965 when he responded affirmatively to the call of Whitehouse Congregation. His final charge was to Windsor Congregation where indeed he had served a very well received assistantship. He was installed in Windsor in 1976 and remained there until retirement in 1988. Fergie, as he was affectionately known by many of his friends, possessed many gifts of heart and

mind which enhanced his ministry and endeared him to a wide circle of friends within and beyond the confines of our denomination. Possessing a fine deep bass voice which, coupled with an effective command of the English language, he was a pleasure to listen to whether in the pulpit, at the rostrum or in general conversation. His love for his God and fellow human beings; his sound grasp of the scriptures and reformed theology; his ready wit and down to earth common sense all combined towards making him the outstanding servant of our Church which he undoubtedly was. None knew this better than those among whom he worked in the various Congregations he ministered. His service to the wider Church and community were, to say the least, impressive, including his Chairmanship of the Church's Board of Trustees. His lifelong interest in Education was enhanced through his membership and subsequent chairmanship of the Belfast Education and Library Board. His experience here made him an ideal Convener of the Churches Education Board. His concern for people doubtless led to his appointment as Honorary Secretary of the Presbyterian Orphan Society, Convener of the Widows of Ministers Fund, Convener of the Ulster Institute of the Deaf and to his being a Life Member of the Workshops for the Blind. For many years he was Clerk of the Belfast Synod and in 1982 was its Moderator. It was while Assistant in Windsor that he met Olive Smith who was later to become his wife. What an outstanding example of true Christian Marriage they turned out to be! Their devotion to each other and their Lord was the springboard from which they unitedly served our Church with such distinction and devotion. Olive, their daughter Penelope and sons Mark, Glen and Douglas and their families can be assured of the sympathy and prayers of the General Assembly at this time of sorrow and loss.

Mr Jonathan Alexander McKay, MA, DipMin, died on 22 September 2009, having completed his first year as a Licenciate. Born in Ballymena on 31 May 1975, he was brought up within the fellowship of Brookside Congregation, Ahoghill where his father, the Very Rev Dr Ivan McKay, was minister. He was educated at Gracehill Primary School, Ballymena Academy, Cambridge University, where he gained his MA and Union Theological College where he gained his DipMin. In June 2007 he was assigned to Rathcoole Congregation as Student Assistant and, on completion of his studies for the ministry, was licensed by the Carrickfergus Presbytery in June 2008. As a very young child he trusted in Jesus as his Saviour and developed a genuine appetite for the things of God far beyond his years. In addition to the spiritual nurture he received within his home, he benefitted greatly from the encouragement of diligent leaders within the youth and children's work of Brookside Congregation. He loved to attend Portballintrae CSSM and initially as a leader and eventually as Leader in Charge he contributed enormously to the success of this ministry for many years. He was never more – "at home" – than when he was involved in some form of children's work. His capacity in this regard made him ideally suited for the years he spent in teaching in the primary school sector. As time went on he became more and more convinced that God was calling him into the Christian Ministry. Throughout the process of application for the Ministry concerns were raised regarding his health. However this did not stand in the way of following his Lord into, what he strongly believed, to be his Lord's will. Only

on the other side will we, as human beings, fully understand why a man possessing such outstanding gifts for the ministry was not allowed to continue longer in the ministry. Jonathan himself never questioned God's will in all this. Sustaining grace was provided for all his needs and he bore his terminal illness without complaint. He died in the faith that he lived and his concern throughout was that Christ would have the supremacy. His wife Susan, son Benjamin, daughter Hannah, father, mother and indeed the wider family circle can be assured of the sympathy and prayers of the General Assembly with them in their great sorrow and loss.

The Rev William Campbell McReynolds, BA, died on 17 January 2010 in the 90th year of his age and the 65th of his ministry. He was born near Limavady on 13 April 1919. His father William and mother Catherine were teachers in Largy Public Elementary School. They had five children of whom William was the third. The spiritual life of the family was nurtured through their involvement in Largy Presbyterian Church. As William's education in Limavady Grammar School drew to a close his mind was set on a career in banking. However, at a Belfast City Mission meeting, at the age of eighteen, he encountered Christ in a deeply personal way and that experience altered his career path. He soon felt drawn to the Christian Ministry and this led to study at Magee University College, New College, Edinburgh and, what was then, the Assembly's College, Belfast. As he gave consideration to where God might use him in the future, the lure of India became increasingly strong within him. Following an assistantship in Bloomfield Congregation, he was licensed by the Limavady Presbytery in 1944 and ordained in 1945 as a PCI missionary and sent to Cambai, Gujarat to learn the language and local culture. Although he was transferred to Surat to head up the Gujarat Mission Publishing Centre, his real passion was evangelism. With fellow Indian evangelists he often travelled out to remote villages to share the story of Christ with people who knew little or nothing of His love. He became so fluent in the language that many thought that he had been born in Gujarat. With a heart warmed by the spirit of Christ, the warmth of his friendship and simple preaching of the gospel brought many to faith in Christ. In 1950 he returned to Ireland on furlough and launched into a wide ranging tour of PCI Congregations in order to inform them of the challenge of India. On such a visit to First Dromara Congregation he met the young organist, Marion Kerr, whose parents had served in India. They invited William for lunch and romance blossomed. In May 1951 they were married in Wilson College Chapel, Bombay. They set up home in Surat and over the next eight years their three sons – John, David and Douglas were born. As a family they returned to Ireland in 1961 and William received a call to the Congregations of Carrowdore and Ballyfrenis where he remained until 1970 when he responded affirmatively to the call of Gransha Congregation. Here he remained until retirement in 1984. Following retirement he and his wife Marion joined Fitzroy Congregation where he served as elder and occasional preacher. The dark shadow of sorrow crossed William's pathway in 1997 when his wife Marion died and ten years later when his son David died. His surviving sons John and Douglas and indeed the wider family circle can be assured that their loved one is remembered by the General Assembly as one who was an effective evangelist,

a thoughtful preacher, a caring pastor, a faithful missionary and a most likeable human being whose life and ministry touched the lives of all who had the privilege of knowing him.

The Rev Robert John Lester died on 14 March 2010 in the 84th year of his age and the 45th year of his ministry. He was brought up within the fellowship of St Enoch's Congregation and was educated at the Boy's Model School, Cookstown Technical College, Pomona College California, San Jose State College and, what was then the Assembly's College, Belfast. Before entering the ministry he worked for British Rail and in the Travel Agents – Messrs McCalla and Co Ltd. The experience he gained in these establishments was to stand him in very good stead throughout his future life and ministry. For many years he toiled with the idea that God could be calling him into some form of full time Christian Work. When it became clear to him that this was indeed the case he allowed no challenge to stand in his way of following his Lord throughout a long period of study and subsequent ministry. On completion of his studies he was licensed by the North Belfast Presbytery in May 1965 and ordained and installed as Assistant Minister in Ballysillan Congregation in December of that same year. In November 1967 he was installed to his first Charge of First and Second Ramelton. During his time here he took on the additional responsibility of Kilmacrennan Congregation. In March 1976 he responded affirmatively to a call from Newington Congregation where he remained until 1983 when he moved to his final Charge of Ringsend. Here he remained until retirement in April 1992. In all his Congregations his pulpit ministry was deeply appreciated. However it was as a most caring pastor that he is most lovingly remembered. As a shepherd he knew his flock and as he loved them, they in turn loved him and continue to remember him with the utmost respect. Roy had many gifts and varied interests. He was throughout his life a strong supporter of the Boys Brigade. As he himself had received so much from this organisation he unstintingly gave much back and epitomised all that was best in BB. Having benefitted himself from the Ministry of Divine Healing during a serious life-threatening illness, he maintained a lively interest in this ministry thereafter and indeed was the Convener on the General Assembly's Divine Healing Committee from 1985 until 1992. In April 1967 he married Lorna Hunter and what an example of true Christian Marriage their union turned out to be! Their joy was to work hand in hand with the people God had called them to work amongst. Lorna, their three daughters Sylvia, Florence and Louise can be assured that the sympathy of the General Assembly is with them in this time of sorrow and loss.

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the Report be received.

Priorities Committee

2. That the General Assembly agree the procedure for prioritising the work of the Boards outlined in the Priorities Committee Report, par 1.

3. That the General Assembly agree the priority areas for new work (2011-2013) identified in the Priorities Committee Report, pars 3, 4.

4. That the General Assembly agree the remit and membership of the Priorities Committee, as outlined in the Priorities Committee Report, par 5.

Moderator's Advisory Committee

5. That the General Assembly encourage the provision of conciliation training at all levels in the Church and especially ask Presbytery Clerks to ensure that they have adequate understanding of the conciliation process.

6. That the Panel of Conciliators, co-ordinated by the Rev Doug Baker, be thanked for their work.

7. That the General Assembly appoint an ad-hoc Committee to consider the possibility of ruling elders serving on a Kirk Session for a set period of time.

Doctrine Committee

8. That the Report of the Doctrine Committee be sent down to Presbyteries for comment and report to the Convener by 31 December, 2010.

Global Concerns Committee

9. That the General Assembly note the work of the Global Concerns Committee and thank all those involved in the various Panels.

10. That the following grants be made from the Incidental Fund:

Embrace (NI)	£5,000
Churches Asylum Network (ROI)	£500
Valeka Trust and Diakonia Council of Churches (SA)	£1,500

Church Relations Committee

11. That the General Assembly welcome the merger of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council into the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

12. That the Rev Lorraine Kennedy-Ritchie replace the Rev Dr Allen Sleith as a delegate to the Uniting General Council Meeting of the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

13. That the General Assembly appoint the following:

To the Irish Council of Churches Executive: the Revs John Brackenridge, Lorraine Kennedy-Ritchie, Dr Donald Watts.

To the Irish Inter-Church Committee: the Revs Gabrielle Farquhar, Dr Donald Watts.

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

Irish Council of Churches	£19,000
Irish Inter-Church Meeting	£10,000
Conference of European Churches	£5,000
Community of Protestant Churches in Europe	£3,000
Church and Society Commission (Brussels)	£2,000
World Communion of Reformed Churches	£13,000

Recognised Ministries Committee

15. That the General Assembly adopt the recommendations of the Recognised Ministries Committee on Ministers and Licentiatees without Charge.

16. That the Recognised Ministries Committee be thanked for its work and discharged, with any residual responsibility being passed to the Reception of Ministers and Licentiatees Committee.

Church and Society Committee

17. That the General Assembly adopt “Human Rights Position Paper – A Church Perspective” (Appendix 1) as guidance for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

18. That the General Assembly note the General Board’s submission to the consultation paper: “A Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland : Next Steps”.

19. That the General Assembly believe that the administration of funding from the Dormant Accounts Scheme by the Big Lottery is only helpful if a way can be found to show that the monies received are not raised by gambling.

Church Courts

20. That where a case before the Judicial Commission substantially involves an interpretation of doctrine and the General Assembly has not recently issued on the subject, the Judicial Commission shall consult with the Doctrine Committee as outlined.

21. That the General Assembly encourage the Courts of the Church to ensure that in cases of difficulty conciliation is attempted, where possible, before a judicial process is begun.

Judicial Appeals

22. That the General Assembly encourage a Presbytery, where it is appropriate, to hear a case rather than refer it to the Judicial Commission and in order to assist in this process the Clerk of Assembly is asked, in consultation with others, to bring a Draft Guide on the Judicial Process to the next General Assembly for approval.

SPUD

23. That the General Assembly encourage greater co-operation between the Mission Boards, in which young people may play a meaningful part, as our denomination seeks to respond to the challenge of holistic mission and actively engage with both our local and global communities.

Pensions and Assessments

24. That the General Assembly agree the normal pensionable retirement age be kept in line with the State Pensionable Age (N Ireland).

25. That the General Assembly accept the recommendation of the Pensions and Assessments Panel to reduce the accrual rate from $\frac{1}{60}$ to $\frac{1}{70}$ of pensionable income for each year of future service from January 2011.

26. That the General Assembly adopt the recommendations of the Pensions and Assessments Panel on the Board of Trustees (Appendix I, 9.2).

27. That the General Assembly agree in principle that assessments be raised on an “unrestricted income” basis and instruct the Panel to bring detailed proposals to the General Assembly 2011.

Panel on Ministries

28. That the General Assembly adopt the Scheme for Part-Time Ministry.

29. That the General Board adopt the Scheme for an Auxiliary Ministry.

30. That the General Board adopt the scheme for the Appointment and Training of Evangelists.

31. That the General Assembly adopt the recommendations in the Report on Salary Scales, Terms and Conditions of Additional Pastoral Personnel, effective for all new posts, and extensions of existing posts, from September 2010 onwards.

Resignations

32. That the resignation of the Rev Prof Laurence Kirkpatrick as Principal of Union Theological College be accepted, that he be thanked for his services and that the Rev Prof Patton Taylor be appointed in his place.

33. That the resignation of the Rev Charles McMullen as Convener of the Global Concerns Committee be accepted, that he be thanked for his services and that _____ be appointed in his place.

34. That the resignation of the Rev Dr Allen Sleith as Convener of the Church Relations Committee be accepted, that he be thanked for his services and that _____ be appointed in his place.

35. That the resignation of the Rev Dr Jack Richardson as Convener of the Memorial Record be accepted, that he be thanked for his services and that _____ be appointed in his place.

General

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

OVERTURES ON THE BOOKS

Anent Par 62 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 62 of the Code the words “but without a vote.” be deleted and the words “but without a vote, and shall invite ministers without charge under their care to do so.” substituted in their place.

Anent Par 98 of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that in Par 98 of the Code the words “but without a vote.” be deleted and the words “but without a vote, and shall invite ministers without charge under the care of Presbyteries to do so.” substituted in their place

DJ WATTS

OVERTURES TRANSMITTED**Anent Par 33 of the Code**

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

DJ WATTS

Anent Par 81 of the Code

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

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

JW LOCKINGTON

Anent Par 272(4) of the Code

It is hereby overtured to the General Assembly to enact that Par 272(4)(d) of the Code be deleted and the following substituted in its place:

"prioritising the work of the Boards of the General Assembly".

DJ WATTS