

I
REPORT
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS & NOMINATIONS

(A) ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS

1. Introduction

The role of the Assembly Arrangements & Nominations Committee is to facilitate the smooth running of the General Assembly and its statutory Standing & Special Committees in accordance with its remit from the General Assembly. This includes the preparation of Nominations to Committees of Assembly in accordance with Standing Orders of Assembly. Thus as well as dealing with practical arrangements for the General Assembly, Committees of Assembly and the Commission of Assembly, they continually keep under review the general functioning of the General Assembly and the Assembly Committees so as to be able to suggest changes should these prove necessary. Additionally, it is part of the Committee's remit to keep under review any need for restructuring of Presbyteries so as to propose changes to the current Presbytery & Synod structure should these prove necessary.

2. General Assembly

2.1. General

Once more the Committee are indebted to the Minister and Congregation of Liberton Kirk, Edinburgh, for the kind use of their buildings for the Assembly. The Committee are pleased that the Assembly is once again able to return to these familiar surroundings.

Mr Derick Gillies had expected to be available to resume duties as Assembly Officer this year but has been unable to do so for various reasons. The Committee are pleased to note that Mr Bill McQueer has kindly offered to fulfil this role. The Committee are grateful to him and his assistants for the time they so freely give up to help the Assembly.

In accordance with Act II Class II 2002, the Committee nominated a Moderator-Designate.

2.2. Location of General Assembly

Whilst acknowledging that Liberton Kirk has been an ideal location within Edinburgh for the meetings of the General Assembly, the Committee indicated in their Report to the 2016 General Assembly that they were of the view that there would be merit in examining the question of whether other locations outside of Edinburgh, in particular Inverness, could be utilised for meetings of future General Assemblies. The matter has been reviewed over the last year, and the view of the Committee was that they were unanimously in favour of future meetings of the General Assembly being held in Edinburgh, particularly in the light of the availability of Liberton Kirk. Reasons for this conclusion include the following:

1. Edinburgh remains the centre of ecclesiastical life for the nation.
2. The ability to have delegates present is greatly enhanced by remaining in Edinburgh.
3. Holding Committee and Commission meetings in the North and the Assembly in the South helps to maintain a balance in the degree of inconvenience on members as they meet for business.
4. It would be difficult to find better-suited premises than those currently used and there are no obvious contenders in other locations suggested.
5. It is questionable whether much time or money would be saved by the use of a different location.

6. There did not appear to be a general concern that the location required to be changed.

Should circumstances change, the Committee would be open to re-examining the matter. As with many aspects of the organising of the General Assembly, this matter remains under constant review.

2.3. Assembly Commissioners' Expenses

In accordance with Act I Class II 2001 the Committee notified Presbyteries that they had set the maximum rate for Assembly Commissioners' expenses which are paid from Central Funds through Presbyteries at £170 (£220 for Commissioners resident in the Outer Isles and £460 for Overseas Commissioners). This is unchanged from last year.

2.4. Timetable for General Assembly

For the last two years, the business of the General Assembly has been such that it has been possible to conclude the General Assembly by noon on the Thursday. The Committee and the Assembly Clerks are working to this end to ensure that this is repeated again this year if practicable, with a cut-off time of 2.30pm on the Thursday, so as to enable virtually all Commissioners to be able to return home that day. In the unlikely event of there being any outstanding business, this would require to be remitted to a meeting of the Commission of Assembly at a convenient date.

2.5. Catering

It is expected that the catering arrangements will follow the pattern of the last two Assemblies, with lunch being provided by the café now using the halls at Liberton and a local restaurant being used for the evening meal. This has worked well and has led to cost savings. The Committee continue to note comments made by Commissioners regarding catering in order to ensure that the provision made is welcomed as widely as possible.

2.6. Representation in the General Assembly

In accordance with Standing Order I.5 the Committee notified Presbyteries of their representation in the Assembly.

At present representation in the General Assembly is governed by Act I (Class I) 2002. It stipulates that:

Each Presbytery of the Church shall henceforth be represented in the General Assembly by all members of the said Presbytery. Where any Representative Elder who is a Member of Presbytery can show just cause why he cannot attend the diets of the General Assembly it shall be permissible for that Presbytery to elect an Elder as an Assembly Commissioner from outwith the membership of Presbytery; such election in the first place to be from bona fide acting Elders of Kirk Sessions within the Bounds of the Presbytery, failing which, any bona fide acting Elder within the Church. Each Presbytery is to make due return in accordance with the laws and practice of the Church.

The Committee have begun a process of review of this legislation to consider whether in the current situation it continues to be the most suitable means of determining representation in the General Assembly. In coming to any recommendation on this matter, the Committee will require to examine and evaluate a variety of issues, including the cost of the General Assembly and the efficient use of manpower (especially ministerial manpower) and weigh up the benefits and drawbacks of any potential changes. This review is at an early stage and no proposals will be brought to a future Assembly without consultation with Presbyteries.

3. Assembly Clerks' Department

The Committee remain indebted to the Assembly Office Manager, Mrs Janet MacKenzie, for the assistance she gives to the Assembly Clerks in the production of Committee Papers and Assembly Reports etc., as well as her most efficient assistance during the meetings of the General Assembly. With the increasing use of e-mail, more general circulars and memos are now being sent by this means. As well as reducing workload, there are also significant cost savings to the Church.

Mr Murdo Murray (Stornoway), who is Clerk to the Finance & Sustentation Committee, continues to assist the Assembly Clerks' Department in the preparation of papers for printing for Committees and the General Assembly. He has been most diligent in this work and has proved willing to help in whatever way he can. This has led to a considerable burden being lifted from the Assistant Clerk of Assembly and Mr Murray's willing assistance is greatly appreciated. Because of this, the Assistant Clerk is willing to remain in his position at present, although this situation remains under review by the Committee at all their meetings.

Last year the Assembly directed the Committee to continue to monitor the workload of the Assembly Clerks and to provide assistance whenever possible, and to continue to consider means by which the technical aspects of clerking may be more easily communicated to others in order to facilitate the obtaining of prospective clerks. Whilst the provision of assistance has been forthcoming, it is more difficult to provide means by which the technical aspects of clerking may be more easily communicated to others in order to facilitate the obtaining of prospective clerks. The Assembly Clerks continue to make guidance available to all Clerks of Church Courts and Committees as well as annotated electronic copies of *The Practice*. However, in practice the skills required in clerking are generally obtained through the ongoing practice of clerking. It is then that both the technical and the "soft" skills required are honed. There tends to be a progression from clerking at a local level to that of a wider body, either a Presbytery or Committee of Assembly. It is usually from Clerks to these latter bodies that prospective future Assembly Clerks will be obtained. The Assembly Clerks themselves also seek to involve others in their work that have shown an aptitude and interest in clerking. It is hoped that by this way a supply of clerks will be maintained through time.

The Assembly Clerks continue to make available in electronic format the Principal Acts & Proceedings of the General Assembly. Although hard copies are no longer supplied automatically to individuals, Church Courts and Standing Committees of Assembly, they will be supplied if requested. Should anyone require a copy of the Acts & Proceedings they are asked to communicate the same to the Assistant Clerk before the beginning of the Assembly to ensure that adequate supplies are available.

4. Committee Personnel

A suggestion was made to the Committee that they review the current Committee set-up to consider whether there might be a possibility of reducing the number of personnel on Committees. In particular there is the question of the use of ministerial manpower, when many Ministers in Charges are also involved in Committee work. Discussion on this matter within the Committee is at a very early stage and any proposals emanating from the Committee's review will be circulated to Presbyteries for their consideration before being brought to a future Assembly.

5. Addenda etc

After the last General Assembly, representations were made to the Committee regarding the manner in which Addenda were being used to bring matters into the General Assembly. The Committee thought it expedient to seek advice thereanent, together with advice on Petitions and Overtures, and to include a reference thereanent in their Report to the 2017 General Assembly.

5.1 Addendum

While a suggested change to the wording of a motion is ordinarily styled an amendment, a change to a motion by the addition of completely new material not referred to in the original motion is styled an addendum. By this method, new paragraphs may be inserted into the main motions resulting from Reports of Committees to the General Assembly.

Of particular concern has been the question of when it is appropriate to raise a new subject not referred to in the body of a Proposed Deliverance on an Assembly Report. The following basic principles should be noted:

1. Committees should report on all significant matters brought before them and a reference thereon should be included in their Proposed Deliverance.
2. Ordinarily, any matter should be introduced at the Court of first instance, or in the case of Standing Committees of Church Courts, with the relevant Standing Committees. Should matters be submitted to a Church Court having a Standing Committee, it would be normal practice to refer the matter to the Standing Committee to enable full discussion and investigation to take place before the matter would come before the Church Court. This is especially relevant to the General Assembly.
3. Whilst matters which suddenly arise, or to which there is general assent, might be dealt with in a manner which appears to by-pass the Court of first instance, or Standing Committee, it is ill-advised to introduce a subject for debate otherwise.
4. Nothing should be introduced in a manner which might be construed as circumventing normal procedure and limiting debate at the lower Court / Standing Committee.
5. No matter should be brought before the General Assembly or significant change in legislation be proposed without proper debate and consultation with relevant parties.

Were the above to be followed then it would allow parties who had raised a matter with the relevant body and who did not receive satisfaction from them, to present a counter-motion when the matter was reported on.

Likewise, the above would ensure that proper consultation took place to enable proposals to be matured before they were brought before the Church Courts for a final decision.

It is highly irregular to submit an Addendum without bringing the matter to the Court of first instance and the Committee believe that in such circumstances, unless urgency can be shown and general unanimity is found, such addenda should not be admitted to the Assembly for debate, whatever their intrinsic merits.

5.2 Petition

A Petition is a vehicle by which a person or Church Court might initiate business in the Court of first instance in order to request the Court to grant something which it is within the rights of the Petitioners to request for themselves and of the Court to grant.

5.3 Overture

An Overture differs from a Petition in that it presents a formal proposal to a Court from an inferior Court (or by members of the Court itself) to initiate legislative or executive action which it is within the powers of the Court itself to initiate, the proposal itself being of general interest to the Church as opposed to being of specific help to the Court or individuals presenting the Overture.

6. Committee Clerks

The Committee are grateful for all who serve as Committee Clerks. Without them, the work of Committees would be seriously hindered. For the last number of years Rev. John Macleod (Rtd) has served as Clerk to the Public Questions, Religion & Morals Committee and the Legal Advice & Property Committee. His work has been marked by diligence and great efficiency, but regretfully he now believes it is time for this work to be passed on to another. The Committee wish to place on record their indebtedness to Mr Macleod for his willingness to assist the Church in this way over the last number of years and they pray that he may be spared and given health and strength to continue his usefulness in the Master's service.

7. Meetings of Committees and the Commission

The Committee are grateful to the Deacons' Court of Inverness, Free Greyfriars, for the use of their building at Westhill for meetings of Committees. They are also grateful to those who have provided hospitality on such occasions, especially Mr Glenn Fraser.

During the past year there was no urgent business to be brought before the Commission of Assembly and therefore the Commission did not meet. This is the first time that this situation has arisen since 2000, although the meetings of the Commission have been less frequent in recent years. Whilst the Commission of Assembly will continue to be available to meet under the terms of its appointment, if required, for urgent business, it is hoped that meetings will continue to be infrequent. This has a number of benefits, including the reserving of business to the better attended and more representative General Assembly, and the freeing up of time for other business or the enabling of Committee members to return home sooner on the stated Committee days.

(B) NOMINATIONS

The Committee, having duly considered the returns from Presbyteries in regard to the filling of impending vacancies in Committees, agreed to recommend the lists of Committees and Clerks to the General Assembly as in the Proposed Deliverance. A note of other Special Committees for which Nominations have not been sought is added for convenience.

HENRY J.T. WOODS, *Convener*
ALEXANDER WATT, *Vice-convener*

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

(A)

1. The General Assembly receive and adopt the Report (A) Assembly Arrangements of the Assembly Arrangements & Nominations Committee and thank the Committee, especially the Convener and the Assembly Clerks' Department;
2. The General Assembly welcome the practical arrangements made both for the Assembly itself and the Moderator's reception;
3. The General Assembly thank the Minister and Congregation of Liberton Kirk, Edinburgh, for the kind use of their buildings for the Assembly;
4. The General Assembly thank Mr Bill McQueer, Assembly Officer, and his assistants, for making their services available to the Assembly;
5. The General Assembly welcome the Committee's desire to timetable the General Assembly to finish by around noon on Thursday;
6. The General Assembly adopt the result of the Committee's review of the location of future Assemblies in the near future, namely, that the meetings of the General Assembly should continue to be held in Edinburgh, with meetings of the Standing Committees of Assembly and the Commission of Assembly being held in Inverness;
7. The General Assembly note that the Committee are undertaking a review of Committee Personnel which may lead to proposals being brought to a future General Assembly;
8. The General Assembly thank Mrs Janet MacKenzie for the work she undertakes for the Church throughout the year as Assembly Office Manager and for her assistance in preparing and printing documents for the Assembly;
9. The General Assembly thank Mr Murdo Murray, Stornoway, for his assistance in helping in the preparation of papers for printing for Committees and the General Assembly;

10. The General Assembly direct that the Committee continue to monitor the workload of the Assembly Clerks and to provide assistance for them whenever possible: they note that the Committee and the Assembly Clerks are continuing to monitor means by which they may facilitate the provision of future Clerks of Committees and Assembly Clerks;
11. The General Assembly note that the Committee is undertaking a review of representation in the General Assembly which may lead to proposals being brought to a future General Assembly;
12. The General Assembly note the advice of the Committee anent Addenda, Petitions and Overtures and commend it to the consideration of all Commissioners, Church Courts and Committees;
13. The General Assembly thank all those who contribute to the efficient functioning of the various Committees of Assembly, especially the respective Committee Conveners and Clerks: in particular they thank Rev. John Macleod (Duthil-Dores Rtd) for the service he has given as Clerk to the Public Questions, Religion & Morals Committee and Clerk to the Legal Advice and Property Committee;
14. The General Assembly thank the Deacons' Court of Inverness, Free Greyfriars for the use of their Westhill building for the meetings of Standing Committees of Assembly and the Commission of Assembly, and Mr Glenn Fraser for helping in the provision of hospitality.

(B)

1. The General Assembly receive and adopt the Report (B) Nominations of the Assembly Arrangements & Nominations Committee and thank the Committee, especially the Convener;
2. The General Assembly appoint Standing and other Committees and Clerks to these Committees in accordance with the following lists:

GROUP 1

FINANCE & SUSTENTATION
LEGAL ADVICE & PROPERTY*Ministers*

Mr Iain Smith, *Convener*,
 Legal Advice & Property Committee [4]
 Mr James I. Gracie, *Vice-convener*,
 Legal Advice & Property Committee [1]
 Mr Timothy McGlynn, *Vice-convener*,
 Finance & Sustentation Committee [1]
 Mr James MacInnes, *Convener*,
 Finance & Sustentation Committee [1]

Elders

Mr Calum MacLeod (Stornoway) [3]
 Mr Lindsay MacCallum [3]
 Mr John MacRae [2]
 Dr James Millar [2]

The General Treasurer is *ex officio* an Adviser to the Finance & Sustentation Committee

The Principal Clerk is *ex officio* an Adviser to the Legal Advice & Property Committee

A General Trustee member is *ex officio* an Adviser to the
 Finance & Sustentation Committee

GROUP 2
PUBLIC QUESTIONS, RELIGION & MORALS
PUBLICATIONS
TRAINING OF THE MINISTRY & ADMISSIONS

Ministers

Mr Greg MacDonald, *Convener*, Public Questions,
Religion & Morals Committee [4]
Mr Davide Ratti, *Vice-convener*,
Publications Committee [3]
Mr Andrew Allan, *Convener*, Training of the Ministry
& Admissions Committee [2]
Mr Raymond A. Kemp, *Vice-convener*,
Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee [1]

Elders

Mr Alexander Watt, *Vice-convener*, Public Questions,
Religion & Morals Committee [4]
Mr David Morrison (Scalpay) [4]
Mr John N. Gillies (Partick), *Convener*,
Publications Committee [3]
Mr John MacDonald [1]

The Principal of the Seminary is *ex officio* an Adviser to the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee

The Editor of the *Free Church Witness* is *ex officio* an Adviser to the Public Questions, Religion & Morals Committee

The Magazine Editorial Team are *ex officio* Advisers to the Publications Committee

GROUP 3
WELFARE OF YOUTH & EDUCATION
HOME & FOREIGN MISSIONS
ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS & NOMINATIONS
ECUMENICAL RELATIONS

Ministers

Mr Alasdair J. Macleod, *Vice-Convener*,
Ecumenical Relations Committee [3]
Mr Gavin Beers, *Convener*, Ecumenical Relations
Committee and *Vice-convener*, Home & Foreign
Missions Committee [3]
Mr Henry J.T. Woods, *Convener*, Assembly
Arrangements & Nominations Committee and
Convener, Home & Foreign Missions Committee [2]
Mr Richard Ross, *Convener*,
Welfare of Youth & Education Committee [2]

Elders

Mr Glenn Fraser, *Vice-convener*, Assembly
Arrangements & Nominations Committee [4]
Mr Angus Ross (Staffin) [4]
Mr James Haram [3]
Mr Samuel Cameron [3]

The Assistant Clerk of Assembly, the Moderator of the immediately preceding Assembly and the Moderator of the last-but-one Assembly are *ex officio* Advisers to the Assembly Arrangements & Nominations Committee

The Editor of *The Explorer* is *ex officio* an Adviser to the Welfare of Youth & Education Committee

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON PSALMODY

Ministers

Mr John W. Keddie [4]
Mr James I. Gracie [4]
Mr John MacLeod, (Tarbat), *Convener* [3]

Elders

Mr Iain MacRae, *Vice-convener* [4]
Mr Alexander Watt [1]

CLERKS TO COMMITTEES

Mr Murdo Murray, *Clerk*, Finance & Sustentation Committee
 TBA *Clerk*, Legal Advice & Property Committee
 Mr John N. Gillies, *Clerk*, Public Questions, Religion & Morals Committee
 Rev. David M. Blunt, *Clerk*, Publications Committee
 Rev. James I. Gracie, *Clerk*, Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee
 Mrs Isobel A. Macleod, *Clerk*, Welfare of Youth & Education Committee
 Mr Donald John Morrison, *Clerk*, Home & Foreign Missions Committee
 Rev. Andrew Allan, *Clerk*, Psalmody Committee
 Assistant Clerk, *Clerk*, Assembly Arrangements & Nominations Committee
 Mr Murdo Murray, *Clerk*, Strategic Review Committee
 Principal Clerk, *Clerk*, Ecumenical Relations Committee
 Mr John N. Gillies, *Clerk*, General Trustees

Other Committees have been appointed by the General Assembly as follows

PANEL OF CONSULTANTS ANENT ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL IMPROPRIETY INVOLVING ADULTS

Dr Murdoch Murchison	Mrs Marion Macleod (Glasgow)
Mr Allan Murray	Mrs Maurine Murray (Brora)
Dr Andrew Naylor	

GENERAL TRUSTEES

Mr John MacKenzie (Northern Presbytery), *Chairman*
 Mr Murdo Macdonald (Inverness Presbytery)
 Mr Donald Martin (Outer Hebrides Presbytery)
 Mr John MacDonald (Skye & Lochcarron Presbytery)
 Mr Maurice Grant (Southern Presbytery), *Vice-chairman*

STRATEGIC REVIEW COMMITTEE

<i>Ministers</i>	<i>Elders</i>
Mr Timothy McGlynn, <i>Convener</i>	Mr Alexander Watt
Mr David M. Blunt	Mr Donald Robertson
Mr Raymond A. Kemp, <i>Vice-convener</i>	Mr John N. Gillies
Mr Andrew Allan	Mr Lindsay MacCallum
Mr John W. Keddie	

The Principal Clerk of Assembly and the General Treasurer
 are *ex officio* Advisers to the Strategic Review Committee