

I.
REPORT
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS & NOMINATIONS
(A) ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS

1. Introduction

The Assembly Arrangements & Nominations Committee have continued their review of the running of the General Assembly and its statutory Standing & Special Committees in accordance with its remit from the General Assembly. As can be seen from this Report, certain changes are being proposed, but they are such, the Committee believe, as will enable the Committees of Assembly and the Assembly itself to function more efficiently. Although much of the Committee's business is routine and will not be obvious to those outside the Committee, the work done over the years has enabled the Assembly and the Committees of Assembly to continue functioning smoothly.

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 and the Committee are pleased that the Assembly is once again able to return to these familiar surroundings.

Mr Bill McQueer has agreed to act as Assembly Officer this year. 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. 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.

2.3. Timetable for General Assembly

For the last three 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 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.

2.4. Catering

Following a review of possible venues for catering, it is expected that the catering arrangements will follow the pattern of the last few assemblies, with lunch being provided by the café now in the Halls at Liberton and high tea by Braid Hills Hotel. 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.

2.5. Representation in the General Assembly

Last year the Committee reported that they had begun to review the legislation anent Representation in the General Assembly to consider whether in the current situation it continues to be the most suitable means of determining representation in the General Assembly. As things turned out the process of review had not

proceeded far when the paper which had stimulated the review was withdrawn. The Committee therefore did not pursue the matter further and have no proposals to make.

2.6. Committees to Expedite the Business of the House

Each year at the Assembly various Committees are appointed to Expedite the Business of the House, namely, a Bills, Overtures, etc Committee, a Business Committee (for the timetabling of Assembly business), a Committee to prepare a Loyal & Dutiful Address to Her Majesty The Queen, a Committee for Examination of Records, a Committee to prepare a Minute anent Deceased Ministers & Elders and a Committee anent Printing of the Acts of Assembly. It was felt by the Committee that these various Committees to Expedite the Business of the House were unnecessarily large, often entail members serving on a multiplicity of Committees and often are not attended as punctually as they should be.

In practice the Assembly Clerks' Department prepares the list of proposed Committees and Committee members beforehand, although the General Assembly is free to amend the list as they see fit. The Committee, having examined the work of these Committees, believe that there is scope for streamlining the Committees to Expedite the Business of the House and have requested the Clerks to prepare the Committees as undernoted:

- i. The six Committees shall be arranged as follows: a group comprising the Bills, Overtures, etc Committee and the Business Committee; a group comprising the Committee anent Deceased Ministers & Elders and the Committee on Printing of Acts of Assembly; the Committee to prepare a Loyal & Dutiful Address to Her Majesty The Queen; the Committee for Examination of Records
- ii. Membership of each Committee shall be three Ministers and three Elders; with the same personnel on Committees grouped together, and with the addition of the Assembly Clerks on the Group dealing with the Bills, Overtures, etc Committee and the Business Committee.
- iii. Each Presbytery shall be represented on each Committee; in addition to the above, one Commissioner certified by the Home & Foreign Missions Committee shall be appointed to one Committee as a member where available.
- iv. Where possible, duplication of personnel across Committees shall be avoided.
- v. Regard shall be had to experience and expertise in appointments to the various Committees.

3. Assembly Clerks' Department

At the end of June 2017, Mrs Janet MacKenzie intimated her retiral from the position of Assembly Office Manager. For 18 years Mrs MacKenzie has been a quiet but most efficient and discreet presence at the Assembly and her absence will be sorely missed. Not only was she involved in secretarial work during the Assembly, but she also assisted the Assembly Clerks in the production of Committee Papers and Assembly Reports, etc. This was a significant workload but it was always undertaken cheerfully and willingly. The Church is enormously indebted to Mrs MacKenzie for all the expertise she has made available freely to the Church since January 2000. Indeed, her involvement in assisting the brethren goes back to at least 1996. It is intended to arrange a presentation to Mrs MacKenzie as a token of the Church's gratitude for her assistance over the years.

The Committee were saddened to hear in March 2018 that Mrs MacKenzie is at present unwell and commend her and her husband to the prayers of 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. Following the retirement of Mrs MacKenzie, he has agreed to print and distribute the papers for Committees and for the General Assembly. Mr Murray's willingness to assist has lifted a great burden from both the Committee and from the Assistant Clerk of Assembly. Given the level of help provided, 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.

The Committee hope to have sufficient secretarial help in place this year for the Assembly itself. This is being organised by the Assistant Clerk.

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

4.1 General

It was noted in the Report to the 2017 General Assembly that a suggestion had been 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 was 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 did not proceed far when the suggestion was withdrawn and the Committee therefore have no comments to make thereanent.

4.2 Committee personnel from the Presbytery of the United States of America

Up until the present time, personnel for Standing Committees of Assembly have been drawn from the home Presbyteries. This is not surprising given the communication difficulties which have prevailed until recently. However, given modern communication methods, there is a real possibility of Office-bearers from the Presbytery of the USA being involved in Standing Committees of Assembly and joining meetings by video-conferencing. The Committee, having examined the matter, believe that there is nothing in principle to preclude Office-bearers from the Presbytery of the USA being involved in Standing Committees of Assembly, and in particular Group 2 and Group 3 Committees which would be of relevance to them. Committees would continue to be arranged to meet at a convenient time for members based in Scotland, with those from the USA having to fit into this timeframe.

The Committee are therefore proposing that Standing Orders be amended to include the nomination of one Minister and one Elder from the said Presbytery to serve on Group 2 and Group 3 Committees.

5. Video-conference Facilities for Church Courts and Committees

5.1 Internet facilities for Committee Meetings in Inverness

The Committee have been investigating the most efficient way of improving the Broadband facilities available to Committees at Westhill, Inverness so as to enable video-conferencing to take place. Given that fibre broadband is not currently an available option, the Committee considered the possibility of installing Satellite Broadband. However, the property receives a very good 4G signal and it would appear that the easiest and cheapest solution would be to use 4G to connect to the internet. A single Vodafone Mobile Wifi router could serve both Groups 2 and 3. This device only requires power, and will produce a wifi hotspot in the upper floor of Westhill Church suitable to provide both Group 2 and Group 3 Committees with video-conferencing facilities. .

The cost of this device on 'Pay As You Go' would be £35, plus a further £10 (for 1 GB of data) every 3 months. This will be much cheaper than a contract. There should be no need for special laptops to be purchased, and presumably it could be arranged for one of the Committee members to provide their own machine for video-conferencing use during Committees.

The data estimate is based on the following. Video-conferencing through Zoom will reportedly use up to 1 MB per minute in 4G/LTE setting. Over six hours of meetings, this equates to a maximum of 360 MB of data. With two groups meeting, and video-conferencing in both, that will be data usage of 720 MB

(assuming maximum usage and no breaks) for each Committee day. Only experiment will verify if all this is correct, but it should be roughly accurate.

Such a device would not be difficult to use, and all that would be required was someone to be appointed to take charge of the facility and ensure it is working. The duties would be to arrange in advance for both Committee groups to have suitable laptops available, to phone to make a data purchase a few minutes prior to the designated starting time, to switch the router on (literally one button), get laptops booted up with Zoom in both Committee rooms, and connect them to the wifi hotspot using the supplied password.

The Committee have therefore authorised the purchase of the aforesaid equipment, subject to the General Assembly amending Standing Orders as proposed above.

5.2 Video-conferencing

Many Church Courts and Committees now make use of Conference Call facilities. These have tended to involve participants using either costly premium-rate telephone calls or poor quality and unreliable internet facilities. Neither option is ideal. The attention of the Committee was drawn to one provider, Zoom, which offers conferencing facilities which are excellent and can be used over the internet or by telephone at local rate (frequently free) calls. After initial tests, a number of meetings were arranged which were most successful. The facilities on offer include conferencing with up to 100 participants in one conference, video facilities, the option to audio-record meetings, sharing of documents for internet users during conferences and chat during meetings. Each meeting must be arranged by a Host, although he need not be present for the meeting. Once an app has been downloaded, access is normally through clicking a link on the e-mail invitation to the meeting.

The Committee have agreed to use the Zoom Platform and make it available to Church Courts, Committees and other groups for Church related business. They have arranged for the purchase of two Host licenses to enable two meetings to be held concurrently. At present Rev. James Gracie and Mr Murdo Murray are the Hosts who arrange the meetings. Anyone wishing to use the facilities must contact them and they will arrange the meeting and then communicate the details to the relevant Clerk who has requested the meeting, whose duty it will be to invite others to the Conference Call meeting. The cost of two Host licences for one year is currently £240 in total, and this should lead to real cost savings.

6. 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 second year in a row that this situation has arisen. 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 welcome the proposals of the Committee anent Personnel of Committees to Expedite the business of the House and direct the Assembly Clerks to prepare lists in accordance with the foregoing schedule:
 - i. The six Committees shall be arranged as follows: a group comprising the Bills, Overtures, etc Committee and the Business Committee; a group comprising the Committee anent Deceased Ministers & Elders and the Committee on Printing of Acts of Assembly; the Committee to prepare a Loyal & Dutiful Address to Her Majesty The Queen; the Committee for Examination of Records.
 - ii. Membership of each Committee shall be three Ministers and three Elders; with the same personnel on Committees grouped together, and with the addition of the Assembly Clerks on the Group dealing with the Bills, Overtures, etc Committee and the Business Committee.
 - iii. Each Presbytery shall be represented on each Committee; in addition to the above, one Commissioner certified by the Home & Foreign Missions Committee shall be appointed to one Committee as a member where available.
 - iv. Where possible, duplication of personnel across Committees shall be avoided.
 - v. Regard shall be had to experience and expertise in appointments to the various Committees
7. The General Assembly thank Mrs Janet MacKenzie for the work she has undertaken for the Church throughout the last 18 years' as Assembly Office Manager and for her assistance in preparing and printing documents for the Assembly; they pray that she may know God's blessing and the Lord's upholding at this time;
8. The General Assembly thank Mr Murdo Murray, Stornoway, for his willingness to assist in helping in the preparation and printing of papers for Committees and the General Assembly;
9. 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 further note that the Committee and the Assembly Clerks continue to monitor means by which they may facilitate the provision of future

Clerks of Committees and Assembly Clerks;

10. The General Assembly, noting that technology is now available to enable overseas Presbyteries to take part in Committee meetings by video-conferencing, amend Standing Order VI.2.3 to read:

Each Group shall comprise four members from each Synod, two Ministers and two Elders, and each Presbytery shall, in so far as is practicable, be represented on each group of Committees. In addition Groups 2 and 3 shall include one Minister and one Elder from the Presbytery of the USA;

11. The General Assembly thank the Committee for arranging access to video-conferencing facilities for the use of Church Courts, Committees and individuals on Church related business;
12. 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;
13. 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 William B. Scott, *Convener*,
Finance & Sustentation Committee [4]
Mr James Clark, *Vice-convener*,
Legal Advice & Property Committee [4]
Mr Calum Smith, *Vice-convener*,
Finance & Sustentation Committee [4]
Mr Iain Smith, *Convener*,
Legal Advice & Property Committee [3]

Elders

Mr Calum MacLeod (Point) [2]
Mr Lindsay MacCallum [2]
Mr John MacRae [1]
Dr James Millar [1]

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

Elders

Mr Donald Robertson, *Vice-convener*,
 Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee [4]
 Mr Murdo MacDonald, *Vice-convener*,
 Public Questions, Religion & Morals Committee [3]
 Mr David Morrison (Scalpay) [3]
 Mr John N. Gillies (Partick), *Convener*,
 Publications Committee [2]

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

The Magazine Editors are *ex officio* Advisers to the Publications Committee

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

GROUP 3

WELFARE OF YOUTH & EDUCATION

HOME & FOREIGN MISSIONS

ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS & NOMINATIONS

ECUMENICAL RELATIONS

Ministers

Mr James Haram, *Vice-convener*, Home & Foreign
 Missions Committee [4]
 Mr Alasdair J. Macleod, *Convener*,
 Ecumenical Relations Committee [2]
 Mr Henry J.T. Woods, *Convener*, Assembly
 Arrangements & Nominations Committee and
Convener, Home & Foreign Missions Committee [1]
 Mr Richard Ross, *Convener*,
 Welfare of Youth & Education Committee [1]

Elders

Mr Glenn Fraser, *Vice-convener*, Assembly
 Arrangements & Nominations Committee [3]
 Mr Angus Ross (Staffin) [3]
 Mr Peter Thurlow [2]
 Mr Samuel Cameron, *Vice-convener*,
 Ecumenical Relations Committee [2]

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

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

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON PSALMODY

Ministers

Mr John W. Keddie [3]
 Mr James I. Gracie [3]
 Mr John MacLeod, (Tarbat), *Convener* [2]

Elders

Mr Glenn Fraser [4]
 Mr Calum MacLeod, (Point), *Vice-convener* [3]

CLERKS TO COMMITTEES

Mr Murdo Murray, *Clerk*, Finance & Sustentation Committee
 Mr Murdo Murray, *Clerk*, Legal Advice & Property Committee
 Mr John N. Gillies, *Clerk*, Public Questions, Religion & Morals Committee
 Rev. Raymond A. Kemp, *Clerk*, Publications Committee
 Rev. Murdo A.N. Macleod, *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
 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

TBA (Northern Presbytery)
 Mr Murdo Macdonald (Inverness Presbytery)
 TBA (Outer Hebrides Presbytery)
 TBA (Skye & Lochcarron Presbytery)
 Mr Maurice Grant (Southern Presbytery), *Chairman*

ADVISORY PANEL ON BUILDING PROJECTS

Rev. Kenneth Macdonald	Mr John MacKenzie, <i>Convener</i>
Mr John Smith	Mr Sanders Fraser
Mr Norman Smith	Mr Murdo MacDonald (Aultbea)
Mr Iain MacPherson	