

REPORTS

TO

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OF THE

Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)

2014

Rev. ALLAN MURRAY	<i>Moderator-Designate</i>
Rev. WARREN E. GARDNER.....	<i>Retiring Moderator</i>
Rev. JOHN MACLEOD, M.A.	<i>Clerk</i>
Rev. GRAEME CRAIG, B.Sc.	<i>Assistant Clerk</i>
Mr ANGUS MACMILLAN	<i>General Treasurer</i>
Messrs. DRUMMOND MILLER W. S., Edinburgh.....	<i>Law Agents</i>

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I.
REPORT
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS & NOMINATIONS

(A) ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS

1. Introduction

Although not the *radical court* of the Church, the General Assembly exercises an important function in providing the Church's highest earthly court and in uniting the various inferior Courts of the Church. That it function efficiently is to the benefit of all and the Committee have given careful thought as to its functioning can be improved, especially in the light of the changes which have taken place since January 2000.

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

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

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 £155 (£205 for Commissioners resident in the Outer Isles and £460 for Overseas Commissioners). These rates are £15 lower than previous years, a reduction which is half that initially proposed by the Committee. The reduction reflects the Committee's proposal that this year's Assembly Timetable be such as to ensure that the General Assembly conclude in good time to enable virtually all Commissioners to return home on the Thursday.

3. General Assembly

3.1. General

The Committee are once more indebted to the Minister and Congregation of Liberton Kirk, Edinburgh for the kind use of their buildings for the Assembly.

Mr Derick Gillies has again made himself available 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. They are also grateful to Miss Kaori Simpson of Yokati for again providing catering for Commissioners.

Last year, at the request of the Committee, the Principal Clerk included in his advice to Delegates a reminder that they should include in their address to the General Assembly relevant information about the work of the Church / Society they are representing. The Committee note that this advice was well received and followed by the various delegates and visitors and the General Assembly was therefore more edified by their presence. It is hoped that this will continue this year. The Committee, in consultation with the Ecumenical Relations Committee, are still considering how to manage the invitation of Delegates to the General Assembly.

3.2. Bowing at the beginning of Sederunts

The Committee, having considered the implications of bowing to the Moderator at the beginning of each Sederunt in the General Assembly, propose that this custom be retained, but simplified, to avoid misunderstanding by Commissioners and members of the public, and to avoid pretentiousness. Many do

not understand that the Assembly is not bowing to the person of the Moderator, but the bow is rather a public sign that both Moderator and Commissioners acknowledge Christ as the Head of the Church and the One to whom both Moderator and Commissioners are subject, as the judicial courts of the land bow as a sign of submission to the authority of the Crown. Perhaps an opportunity should occasionally be taken by the Clerks to make this clear. The simplification proposed is that the three bowings should be reduced to one, towards the centre of the Assembly.

In similar vein, the Committee have also proposed that intimation of Election be made to the new Moderator by the Clerk of Assembly alone.

3.3. Commemoration of 500th Anniversary of the birth of John Knox

Although there is uncertainty regarding the precise year of John Knox's birth, this year has seen many groups hold special events to mark its quincentenary. Under God, Knox played a major rôle in the Scottish Reformation, enabling the Church in Scotland to embrace wholehearted biblical reform in all areas of her life and doctrine. To him especially the Church in Scotland is indebted for his clear articulation of simple biblical worship, reformed doctrine, Presbyterian Church government and the biblical view of Church and State with co-ordinate jurisdiction and mutual subordination. His God-given wisdom, strength and faithfulness when dealing with Mary, Queen of Scots, and the nobility, did much to consolidate the work of reformation following the tumultuous events of 1560. Given the important rôle Knox played, the Committee believe it appropriate that a suitable opportunity should be given for commemorating his birth during the General Assembly and they have asked Rev. John J. Murray to give an address, which is expected to take place during the Tuesday evening Sederunt.

3.4. Moderator's Reception

Given the reduced size of the Church, the Committee felt that the existing form of the Moderator's Reception appeared somewhat antiquated and unnecessary, as well as consuming time which could be more profitably spent by the Assembly. The Committee are conscious of the benefits of having time for mixing and fellowship at the beginning of the General Assembly and have arranged that the Moderator's Reception be a shorter gathering for fellowship but without speeches, and concluding with Worship.

3.5. Timetable for 2014 General Assembly

As can be seen elsewhere in this Report, the Committee have spent time considering how the timetable of the General Assembly might be streamlined. Given that the Committee have no power themselves to implement radical changes and that some changes require amendments to Standing Orders, they are proposing only minor changes this year, but in the hope and expectation that they may lead to a significant saving in time, enabling the Assembly to be closed on the Thursday by 12noon or 2.30pm at the latest, thus enabling virtually all Commissioners to be able to return home that day. The Committee have therefore proposed that the Monday evening Sederunt be extended to allow a longer debate on Assembly Arrangements, in particular, the timetable of future General Assemblies. For this reason, the recently-introduced practice of a Thursday morning address has not been arranged this year.

3.6. Information enabling implementation of Findings

The Principal Clerk drew the Committee's attention to the need for adequate information to be supplied to the Clerk of Assembly to enable the implementation of findings. For example, on numerous occasions resolutions of the Assembly have been made which require an Extract to be sent to a named individual but without the mover of the motion providing details to enable the Extract to be sent. Such occurrences can be time-wasting and are unnecessary. The Committee are therefore proposing that the following be added as Para V.3.6 of Standing Orders of Assembly, with subsequent paragraphs 6 and 7 renumbered accordingly:

That no paragraph of a proposed Deliverance on the Report of a Standing or Special Committee shall be deemed competent unless it contain, or be accompanied by, any information which is essential for its implementation.

4. General Assembly Timetable

As indicated above, the Committee have given thought to the possible streamlining of the General Assembly in order that both time and financial resources may be utilised effectively. On the one hand, it is recognised that due to the reduced size of the Church, there is less business for the Assembly to deal with compared to former years. This, together with the benefits of modern communication methods making consultation outwith Committees easier, means that often there is not the same level of debate that there was hitherto, apart from isolated contentious issues. On the other hand, the Committee are aware of the need for Committees to give an account to the General Assembly of how they have sought to fulfil their remit and that adequate time must be given for questions to be asked and proposals made thereanent. There is also the fact that the General Assembly remains the face of the Church as a collective body and is the one time in the year when many people may meet face to face. The Committee, having wrestled with these diverse concerns, believe that an attempt should be made to alter the General Assembly timetable and various Standing Orders in such a way as to make business more efficient. The changes suggested include the following:

- The practice of having an Opening Sermon from the Retiring Moderator should be suspended and the Moderator's Address be given during the first Sederunt.
- Letters from other Churches should be passed automatically to and be answered by the Ecumenical Relations Committee; if a response is required from the General Assembly then the letter should be included in the Assembly Papers and a draft response included in the proposed deliverance of the Report of the Ecumenical Relations Committee.
- All proposed Amendments and Addenda to Printed Reports to the General Assembly should be handed in to the Clerk of Assembly during the first Sederunt. Their distribution during the second Sederunt will be taken as notice of Motion without them being publicly read out by the Clerk.
- Delegates should be given a maximum of 5-7 minutes to speak.
- An attempt should be made to curb irrelevant questions and inappropriate 'points of information'.
- The length of speeches should be reduced with the mover of motions being given 15 minutes, his seconder 5 minutes and speakers 5 minutes.
- Moderators should be more forthright in seeing that business is expedited without undue delay.
- Those presenting Reports should be discouraged from merely reiterating what is in their Report. They should limit their remarks to matters requiring emphasis or matters likely to be viewed as more controversial.
- Attempts should be made to cut down on the number of intimations.

The changes to the Timetable have been suggested with a view to most business being concluded by the close of the Wednesday evening (5th Sederunt). It may be possible that all business would be concluded that evening. However, it is recognised that should a difficult item of business arise then it may be that the Assembly would not be able to conclude their business without a 6th Sederunt with business finishing around mid-day on the Thursday (2.30pm at the latest, to allow most Commissioners to travel home that day).

In order to assist Commissioners, the changes to the timetable being proposed have been set out as an Appendix to this Report. Obviously, the timetable as proposed, were it to commend itself to the Assembly, would only be a template for use by the Assembly Clerks' Department to assist them in their drafting of the Agenda for future General Assemblies.

5. Assembly Clerks' Department

Once more the Committee are most grateful to the Assembly Office Manager, Mrs Janet MacKenzie, for the assistance she gives to the Assembly Clerks in the production of Memos, 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.

In recent years the Principal Acts & Proceedings of the General Assembly have been available in electronic format and have been posted on the Church's web-site within a month of the close of the General Assembly. In the light of this, and following on from a suggestion by the Assembly Clerks' Department, the Committee resolved to discontinue the practice of automatically supplying all Ministers and Clerks of Church Courts and Committees with hard copies unless such copies are requested, and directed the Clerk to ascertain from Presbyteries each year how many hard copies they require. This appears to have been viewed as a sensible move in keeping with the electronic age. Hard copies will still be supplied as requested.

6. Committee Personnel

The Committee wish to thank all those who serve on Committees, and their Clerks. In particular they are grateful that a new Clerk to the Finance & Sustentation Committee has been appointed.

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 and the Commission. They are also grateful to those who have provided hospitality on such occasions. The Committee are pleased to note that last year there was a reduction in both the length and frequency of meetings of the Commission, and trust that this may become the rule rather than the exception.

(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.

ALLAN MURRAY, *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 Derick Gillies, Assembly Officer, and his assistants, for again making their services available to the Assembly;
5. The General Assembly thank the Committee for their explanation of the practice of bowing at the

beginning of Sederunts of the General Assembly as a public sign that both Moderator and Commissioners acknowledge Christ as the Head of the Church and the One to whom both Moderator and Commissioners are subject and approve of the retention but simplification of this practice;

6. The General Assembly thank God for the life and labours of John Knox who under God played such a vital rôle in the work of reformation in Scotland. On this the generally-accepted 500th Anniversary of his birth, they express the Scottish Church's indebtedness to Knox for his articulation of simple biblical worship, reformed doctrine, Presbyterian Church government and the Biblical view of Church and State with co-ordinate jurisdiction and mutual subordination, and pray that such biblical truths may once again be enthusiastically embraced throughout our nation;
7. The General Assembly note the comments regarding the timetabling of the General Assembly this year;
8. The General Assembly amend Standing Orders by the addition of the following as Para V.3.6., with subsequent paragraphs 6 and 7 renumbered accordingly:

That no paragraph of a proposed Deliverance on the Report of a Standing or Special Committee shall be deemed competent unless it contain, or be accompanied by, any information which is essential for its implementation;

- 9.1. The General Assembly approve the suspension of the practice of the Retiring Moderator preaching a Sermon at the opening of the General Assembly;
- 9.2. The General Assembly direct the Assembly Clerk to pass all Letters from other Churches automatically to the Ecumenical Relations Committee for them to respond on behalf of the General Assembly, with the proviso that if a response be required from the General Assembly directly, the Assembly Clerk is to arrange for the letter to be included in the Assembly Papers with a draft response to the communication being included in the proposed deliverance on the Report of the Ecumenical Relations Committee;
- 9.3. The General Assembly amend Standing Order V.3.4. to read:

That amendments to the proposed deliverances on the Report of the Committee on Assembly Arrangements may be moved without previous notice of motion and that all other amendments to Reports previously printed and circulated shall be handed in to the Clerk of Assembly during the first Sederunt. Their distribution during the second Sederunt will be taken as notice of Motion without them being publicly read out by the Clerk;

- 9.4. The General Assembly amend Standing Order V.4.3. to read

That in the discussion of any question the proposer of each motion may address the House for not longer than 15 minutes, and the seconder for 5 minutes; and no subsequent speaker shall address the House for a longer period than 5 minutes; and that these limits shall be exceeded only when the Moderator shall have ascertained that the House desires any speaker to continue, and shall intimate the ascertained desire to that effect;

- 9.5. The General Assembly, in seeking to expedite the business of the House, remind Commissioners to avoid unnecessary questions or 'points of information';
- 9.6. The General Assembly note the proposed adjustments to the Assembly timetable set out in the Appendix to the Report of the Assembly Arrangements & Nominations Committee and approve the general principle of readjustment of the Assembly timetable; they direct the Assembly Clerks' Department to give due consideration to these suggestions in their preparation of the draft General Assembly timetable;

10. 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;
11. 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.

(B)

1. The General Assembly receive and adopt the Report (B) Nominations of the Assembly Arrangements and 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 James I. Gracie, *Vice-convener*, Legal Advice & Property Committee [4]
Mr Timothy McGlynn, *Convener*, Legal Advice & Property Committee [4]
Mr Raymond Kemp [3]
Mr Kenneth Macdonald, *Vice-convener*, Finance & Sustentation Committee [2]

Elders

Mr Callum MacLean (Stornoway) [3]
Dr Andrew Naylor, *Convener*, Finance & Sustentation Committee [1]
Mr John N. Gillies (Partick) [1]
Mr John MacKenzie (Assynt) [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
Mr John Macleod (Duthil-Dores, Rtd) and Mr Maurice Grant are Advisers to the Legal Advice & Property Committee

GROUP 2

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

Ministers

Mr David M. Blunt, *Convener*, Public Questions, Religion & Morals Committee [3]
Mr Andrew Allan, *Vice-convener*, Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee [3]
Mr James Clark, *Vice-convener*, Publications Committee [2]
Mr William B. Scott, *Convener*, Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee and *Vice-convener*, Public Questions, Religion & Morals Committee [1]

Elders

Mr Iain A.C. MacPherson (Portree) [4]
Mr Donald MacDonald (Stornoway) [3]
Mr Glenn Fraser [2]
Mr Lindsay MacCallum, *Convener*, Publications Committee [1]

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 Greg MacDonald, *Convener*, Home & Foreign Missions Committee and *Vice-convener*, Assembly Arrangements & Nominations Committee [2]
Mr William Macleod, *Convener*, Ecumenical Relations Committee [2]
Mr Allan Murray, *Convener*, Assembly Arrangements & Nominations Committee and *Vice-convener*, Ecumenical Relations Committee [1]
Mr Murdo A.N. Macleod, *Convener*, Welfare of Youth & Education Committee and *Vice-convener*, Home & Foreign Missions Committee [1]

Elders

Mr Donald Robertson, *Vice-convener*, Welfare of Youth & Education Committee [3]
Mr Alexander Watt [3]
Mr Peter Thurlow [2]
Mr Alister MacDonald (Sconser) [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

STRATEGY COMMITTEE

Ministers

Mr Timothy McGlynn, *Convener* [4]
Mr David M. Blunt [3]
Mr Greg MacDonald [2]
Mr William Macleod [2]
Mr Murdo A.N. Macleod [1]
Mr Allan Murray [1]
Mr William B. Scott [1]

Elders

Dr Andrew Naylor, *Vice-convener* [1]
Mr Lindsay MacCallum [1]

The Principal Clerk of Assembly, the Assistant Clerk of Assembly and the General Treasurer
are *ex officio* Advisers to the Strategy Committee

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON PSALMODY

Ministers

Mr Andrew Allan [3]
Mr William B. Scott, *Convener* [3]
Mr Robert Josey [2]

Mr Alexander Watt [4]
Mr Callum MacLean (Stornoway), *Vice-convener* [3]

CLERKS TO COMMITTEES

Mr Murdo Murray, *Clerk*, Finance & Sustentation Committee
Rev. John Macleod (Rtd), *Clerk*, Legal Advice & Property Committee
Rev. John Macleod (Rtd) *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
Assistant Clerk, *Clerk*, Strategy Committee
Principal Clerk, *Clerk*, Ecumenical Relations Committee

Other Committees have been appointed by the General Assembly as follows

PANEL OF CONSULTANTS ANENT ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL IMPROPRIETY INVOLVING ADULTS

Dr Murdoch Murchison

GENERAL TRUSTEES

Mr John MacKenzie (Northern Presbytery), *Chairman*
Mr Alistair MacKintosh (Inverness Presbytery)
Mr Donald Martin (Outer Hebrides Presbytery)
Mr Angus Shaw (Skye & Lochcarron Presbytery)
Mr John N. Gillies (Southern Presbytery), *Clerk*
Mr Maurice Grant (Southern Presbytery)

APPENDIX

Proposed Revised Timetable for the Assembly

1st Sederunt Monday 6pm

Brief Devotional Exercises - Singing reading and prayer — retiring Moderator constitutes.

Election of new Moderator

Moderator's address *6.15pm*

Appointment of Committees etc

Assembly Arrangements & Nominations Committee *7.15pm*

Youth + Sabbath School Prize winners *7.45pm*

Adjourn by 9pm.

Moderator's Reception from 9pm until 10pm

2nd Sederunt Tuesday 9.30am

Minutes

Bills, Overtures etc and Business Committees

Finance & Sustentation Committee — begin around 10am and conclude by Lunchtime *2 hours*

Ecumenical Relations Committee *1 hour*

Legal Advice & Property Committee *1 ¼ hour*

General Trustees *¼ hour*

Publications Committee *½ hour*

Petitions, Overtures etc *¼ hour*

3rd Sederunt - Tuesday Evening 6.30pm

Home & Foreign Missions Committee

Missionary Delegates

Delegates *½ hour*

4th Sederunt Wed 9am

Prayer meeting but constitute by 10am

Minutes

Loyal and Dutiful Address

Public Questions etc Committee begin by 10.30am and finish by Lunch *1 ½ hour*

Delegates *½ hour*

Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee *1 hour*

Psalmody Committee *½ hour*

Committee on Conspiracy

Committee anent Building Projects

Other special Committees -eg on Synods

Any Petitions and Overtures from 2nd Sederunt

Any Appeals

5th Sederunt Wed 6.30pm

Strategy Committee *1 hour*

Delegates *½ hour*

Leftover business and if possible conclude General Assembly by end of evening

6th Sederunt Thursday 9am

Any leftover business

Nominations *1 hour max for conclusion*

Committee on Visitation of Records

Committee on Printing Acts of Assembly

Committee anent Deceased ministers and elders

Protestations

Appoint Commission

Thanks

Appoint next General Assembly

Minutes

Closure

Meal breaks: 12noon to 1.30pm and 4.45pm to 6.30pm