

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

**1. Introduction**

If 2019-20 was an extra ordinary year for the Assembly Arrangements & Nominations Committee, then the same could be said for the current ecclesiastical year. First, there was the sudden passing of Rev. John MacLeod, *Principal Clerk of Assembly*, in December. Then, much to the dismay of the Committee, the situation facing them at the beginning of March left them with little option but to have the Assembly Clerks' Department arrange for the meeting of the 2021 General Assembly to be held by Zoom. The Lord's providence is often strange and can at times, be painful or challenging for the believer, but it is his comfort to know that the Lord understands all things and is working out his perfect plan through which he will be glorified in the building of his Church and the triumph of the Kingdom of grace. The Committee submit to Christ's sovereign wisdom in the sure knowledge that he is "head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

**2. General Assembly**

**2.1 Mode of Meeting**

After each General Assembly, the Committee routinely conduct a wide-ranging review in an attempt to learn lessons so that the working of future Assemblies may be as profitable and efficient as is practicable. It was a relief to the Committee to note how successful the Zoom meetings of the 2020 Assembly had proved to be, considering the potential difficulties associated with any teleconferencing format. This was in large measure down to the preparations of the Assembly Clerks beforehand, the skill of the Moderator and, above all, the most efficient technical help of Mr Murdo Murray. The Committee were aware of some difficulties incurred with voting, and also that some brethren would have been put off speaking by the format. However, although not ideal, and much being lost through the lack of informal personal interaction, the business was conducted in a God-honouring and efficient manner.

The date of the 2021 General Assembly having already been set by the previous Assembly, when the Committee met in early March they were not convinced that it would be possible to hold an 'in-person' meeting. The timetable then outlined by the Scottish Government for easing lockdown restrictions meant that there was no guarantee of travel or accommodation difficulties being easily overcome. Further, the usual building in Edinburgh might not have been available. Given this, the Committee were left with two options: either they arrange a brief meeting in May, and seek to have an in-person meeting in October in Inverness (as was planned for last year), or they arrange a fuller meeting in May. Given the uncertainties in being able to meet in October, the desirability of having Committees revert to a normal timetable, and the relative success of the Zoom meetings in October 2020, the Committee believed that the best arrangement was to have as full an Assembly as possible in May by Zoom. The Assembly Clerks' Department have been asked to organise the Assembly on this basis. Obviously the Committee can only recommend this to the Assembly when they meet, but they are assuming that this will be accepted and that, with the Lord's help, such a meeting may prove beneficial to the Church.

The Committee are, of course, aware of the shortcomings of such modes of meeting. Some people will be put off speaking and votes will be more difficult. There is not the usual interaction between Commissioners which can help in the resolution of difficulties or the clarifying of queries. There is no time for the fellowship which helps cement the bonds of friendship and also assists in the smooth running of business.

The reception of Delegates and informal fellowship with them becomes near impossible. In other words, much is missing from a normal General Assembly. It is the fervent prayer of the Committee that the 2022 General Assembly will be a 'normal' Assembly.

## **2.2. Business**

The Committee are hopeful that if more time is given over to business on the Monday evening, then, with a full day of business on the Tuesday, it should be possible to have the business completed by 5pm on the Wednesday. The Clerks have been requested to prepare a timetable which, together with other available papers, will be circulated beforehand to help expedite the business.

Last October, brethren were asked, where possible, to submit questions in writing beforehand to assist the smooth running of business. It is proposed to repeat this for this Assembly. Although not a requirement, it will assist in the expediting of business. In the same way, the early submission of motions will assist the Clerks in circulating to members any amendments, etc.

Given that last time some Commissioners encountered difficulties with voting, the Committee believe that, in order to ensure equity, all votes should be carried out by means of calling the Roll. Although this may lengthen the process, it will avoid issues encountered last year and ensure that all votes are counted.

## **2.3 Moderator-Designate**

Last year the Committee, with the concurrence of the Moderator-Designate and the previous Moderator, suggested that the Moderator of the previous Assembly convene the Assembly with a brief Address/Sermon and that he remain in the Chair for the proceedings of this Assembly, with the current Moderator-Designate becoming Moderator-Designate of the 2021 Assembly. In the event, the Moderator-Designate of the 2021 General Assembly, Rev. John MacLeod, *Tarbat*, subsequently passed away. In the circumstances, the Committee, taking note of previous suggestions from Presbyteries, nominated a Moderator-Designate and an announcement was duly made.

## **2.4 Assembly Officer**

Mr Murdo Murray has agreed to act as Assembly Officer this year. The Committee are grateful to him for his technical assistance to the Assembly and commend him to the prayers of the brethren.

## **2.5 Assembly Commissioners' Expenses**

In accordance with Act I Class II 2001, the Committee notified Presbyteries of Assembly Commissioners' expenses. It is not expected that these expenses will be required, unless it is to attend a meeting of the Commission should it be required to convene.

## **2.6 Broadcasting of General Assembly**

The 2020 General Assembly was unique in a number of ways, one of which was that there was public broadcasting of the Assembly over the internet for the first time. This was particularly successful on one of the days when the Zoom feed was able to be broadcast on Facebook. The Committee are hopeful that this will be repeated this year, and have asked the Clerks' Department to make the necessary arrangements. It is also hoped that it may be possible to continue public broadcasting of the General Assembly when, DV, the meetings return to their usual setting at Liberton. The public broadcasts met with an enthusiastic reception from many in the Church who otherwise would have been unable to attend.

## **2.7 Location of Assembly**

The Committee undertook a review of the location of the Assembly and in particular whether the Partick buildings would be suitable for future meetings. Given the difficulties perceived, the Committee agreed to pass from the matter.

### 3. Assembly Clerks' Department

The whole Church was saddened to learn of the sudden passing of Rev. John MacLeod, *Principal Clerk of Assembly*, on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020. His knowledge of Church principles and practice was second to none, and since the division of 2000, he had been enabled graciously, yet firmly, to guide the Assembly and the Church Courts and Committees in many varied ways. He spent and was spent in the service of the Lord, and the Committee place on record their appreciation of the labours of Mr MacLeod on behalf of the Church and thank the Lord for him. He has been called to higher service, and whilst the Church on earth is poorer for his loss, the Committee are thankful that, at a time of great disruption and uncertainty in the Church, such a skilful and helpful Church administrator was provided, one who sought not his own glory, but the welfare of the Church and the glory of Christ.

The Committee are grateful to the Assistant Clerk, Rev. Graeme Craig, for taking on the added burden of trying to run the Assembly Clerks' Department without a colleague, and in providing clerking and advice to the Committees and Courts of the Church.

The Committee have asked Presbyteries for Nominations for the position of Principal Clerk. Aware that the current Assistant Clerk may be elected to that office, they have, in the light of this possibility, also sought nominations for Assistant Clerk. These nominations are contained in a Supplementary Report. Given that the current Assistant Clerk is effectively the acting Principal Clerk of Assembly, the Committee have arranged that Rev. James I. Gracie should, for this Assembly, be appointed the Assistant Clerk *pro tem* should this be required.

Mr Murdo Murray (Stornoway), who is Clerk to both Group 1 Committees, continues to assist the Assembly Clerks' Department in the preparation of papers for printing for Committees and the General Assembly. This work, which is done quietly and behind the scenes, has relieved the Assembly Clerks and especially the Assistant Clerk of a great burden. The whole Church owes him an enormous debt of gratitude.

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 hard 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.

The Committee were concerned to hear of the fire in the study of the Tarbat Manse, home of the late Principal Clerk, on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021, but were thankful to the Lord that there was no loss of life and limited damage to the property. The Assistant Clerk of Assembly was able to visit the property and retrieve many items related to the General Assembly and various Standing Committees. Some folders of documents relating to the Ecumenical Relations Committee or previous meetings of the Assembly were lost in the fire, but it was a relief to learn that few documents could not be replaced, if required. The official records of the various Special & Standing Committees appear to be accounted for. Even the contents of the boxes containing many items used for the Assembly suffered only minor smoke damage, and have either been made good or will be replaced in time for the 2022 meeting of the General Assembly. The fire has highlighted the need to consider how and where to store official records and other materials, including archival material relating to the Church, and the Committee will give active consideration to this in due course.

### 4. Committees

#### 4.1 Committee Personnel

Last year the usual turnover of Committee personnel was suspended, due to the fact that the new Committee year was only beginning in October, after the rising of the General Assembly. Whilst this was helpful at a time of uncertainty, the Committee believe that a return to the normal pattern of personnel changes is to be

preferred and this is reflected in their Proposed Deliverance (B). With regard to Group 3 Committees, there has been a higher turnover of members than would normally be desirable, but this has been unavoidable, and is due to Committee members feeling the need to retire early due to ill health or age. The Committee are grateful to all those who serve on Committees, and without them the work of the Church would be much hindered.

#### **4.2 Clerks to Committees**

It will be noted that the Committee are presently seeking the services of someone to Clerk the Publications Committee and also someone to Clerk the Public Questions, Religion & Morals Committee. They have been struggling to have these posts filled, and continue to seek out suitable individuals who are available to assist in this way. Thanks are owed to those who have filled in meantime, especially to Rev. David Blunt, who has assisted the Publications Committee.

#### **4.3 Committee Structure**

The Committee constantly review the manner in which Committees are working and whether there is a possibility of their structure, etc., being reviewed. Although fresh work has been undertaken on this during the past year, the Committee have not as yet come to any final decisions or recommendations.

#### **5. Video-conference Facilities for Church Courts and Committees**

Over the last year most meetings of Committees and Church Courts have been held by the Zoom video-conferencing facility. Whilst this has been of great assistance during the current public health restrictions, the Committee are aware that it is not ideal. The fact that the brethren know one another well due to regular in-person meetings means that the occasional Zoom meeting can work relatively well. Some brethren from remote areas have expressed concern over the time that travel to Committees can sometimes take, especially from island communities. Having reflected on this, and aware that the June Committee meetings occur soon after the rising of the Assembly and tend to be the least intense of the three stated meetings of Committees, the Committee are recommending that these be held as Zoom meetings, with the October and March meetings being held in-person. Although Group 2 and 3 Committees use Zoom to enable brethren from the USA to join in Committees, the Committee would discourage others from joining in this way on a regular basis. It is recognised that much can be lost where there is no face-to face contact with others, and that this is especially true when weighty or more controversial business is under consideration.

#### **6. Meetings of the Commission**

During the past year there was no urgent business to be brought before the Commission of Assembly, and therefore the Commission did not meet. 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

GLENN FRASER, *Convener*  
A. JAMES MACINNES, *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, noting the health crisis which is still having effects on the nation, approve the Committee's actions in preparing for the Assembly to meet by teleconference over a number of days in May, and welcome the practical arrangements made as outlined in the Report;
3. The General Assembly accept the recommendation of the Committee that any votes taken during this Assembly should be by calling the Roll;
4. The General Assembly appoint Mr Murdo Murray as Assembly Officer and thank him for making his services available to the Assembly;
5. The General Assembly welcome the attempts made to provide a public broadcast of this Assembly and encourage the Committee to provide this facility in future years;
6. The General Assembly note with sadness the sudden passing of Rev. John MacLeod, *Principal Clerk of Assembly*; they record their deep sense of gratitude to God for the invaluable help and guidance he provided to the Church over the critical years before and after January 2000, and his unstinting labours to assist in whatever way possible the Committees and Courts of the Church;
7. The General Assembly thank Rev. Graeme Craig, *Assistant Clerk of Assembly*, for taking on the added burden of trying to run the Assembly Clerks' Department without a colleague and for providing clerking and advice to the Committees and Courts of the Church;
8. The General Assembly appoint Rev. James I. Gracie, Assistant Clerk of Assembly *pro tem*, for this Assembly;
9. 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;
10. The General Assembly encourage the Committee in their consideration of the best manner of storing official records and other materials, including archival material relating to the Church;
11. 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;
12. 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, and commend its use when appropriate; in particular they approve the suggestion that the June meetings of Committees be held by video-conferencing facility.

**(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 list:

GROUP 1  
FINANCE & SUSTENTATION  
LEGAL ADVICE &  
PROPERTY

*Ministers*

Mr Murdo MacIver, *Convener*,  
Legal Advice & Property Committee [3]  
Mr Murdo A.N. Macleod, *Convener*,  
Finance & Sustentation Committee [2]  
Mr William B. Scott [2]  
Mr Iain Smith, *Vice-convener*,  
Finance & Sustentation Committee [1]

*Elders*

Mr Donald MacDonald (Stornoway), *Vice-convener*,  
Legal Advice & Property Committee [4]  
Mr George MacMillan [4]  
Mr Colin Crichton [3]  
Mr Colin MacDonald (Duthil-Dores) [3]

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 Henry J.T. Woods, *Convener*,  
Publications Committee [4]  
Mr David S. Fraser, *Convener*,  
Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee [3]  
Mr Warren E. Gardner [2]  
Mr Calum Smith [2]  
Mr Greg MacDonald, *Convener*,  
Public Questions, Religion & Morals Committee [1]

*Elders*

Mr Lindsay MacCallum, *Vice-convener*,  
Publications Committee [4]  
Dr William Sullivan [4]  
Mr Donald A. Robertson, *Vice-convener*, Training  
of the Ministry & Admissions Committee [2]  
Mr Donald Morrison (Shader) [2]  
Mr Murdo MacDonald, *Vice-convener*,  
Public Questions, Religion & Morals Committee [1]

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 &amp; EDUCATION

## HOME &amp; FOREIGN MISSIONS

## ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS &amp; NOMINATIONS

## ECUMENICAL RELATIONS

*Ministers*

Mr Kenneth M. Macdonald, *Convener*,  
Ecumenical Relations Committee [4]  
Mr Timothy J. McGlynn, *Convener*,  
Welfare of Youth & Education Committee and  
*Vice-convener*, Ecumenical Relations Committee [4]  
Mr Gavin Beers [4]  
Mr A. James MacInnes, *Convener*,  
Home & Foreign Missions Committee and  
*Vice-convener*, Assembly Arrangements &  
Nominations Committee [3]  
Mr James S. Haram, *Convener*, Assembly  
Arrangements & Nominations Committee and  
*Vice-convener*, Home & Foreign Missions  
Committee [2]

*Elders*

Mr Gordon Furzer [4]  
Mr Iain A.C. MacPherson [4]  
Mr Norman Smith, *Vice-convener*,  
Welfare of Youth & Education Committee [3]  
Mr James Wanliss [2]  
Mr Angus Ross (Staffin) [1]

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, *Convener* [1]  
Mr James I. Gracie [1]

*Elders*

Mr Graham Sinclair [4]  
Mr Calum Macleod (Point), *Vice-convener* [1]

## CLERKS TO COMMITTEES

Mr Murdo Murray, *Clerk*, Finance & Sustentation Committee  
Mr Murdo Murray, *Clerk*, Legal Advice & Property Committee  
TBA, *Clerk*, Public Questions, Religion & Morals Committee  
TBA, *Clerk*, Publications Committee  
Rev. Andrew R. Allan, *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 R. 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

Mr Colin MacDonald (Dores)  
Dr Andrew Naylor

Mrs Marion Macleod (Glasgow)  
Mrs Maurine Murray (Brora)

## GENERAL TRUSTEES

Dr Andrew Naylor (Outer Hebrides Presbytery), *Chairman*  
Mr Lindsay MacCallum (Northern Presbytery), *Vice-chairman*  
Mr Murdo MacDonald (Inverness Presbytery)  
Mr Thomas MacInnes (Skye & Lochcarron Presbytery)  
Mr John N. Gillies (Southern Presbytery)

## ADVISORY PANEL ON BUILDING PROJECTS

Rev. Kenneth M. Macdonald  
Mr John Smith  
Mr Norman Smith  
Mr Iain A.C. MacPherson

Mr John MacKenzie, *Convener*  
Mr Sanders Fraser  
Mr Murdo MacDonald (Aultbea)