I.

REPORT

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS & NOMINATIONS

(A) ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS

1. Introduction

In the days of His humiliation, our Lord frequently applied the Hebrew method of emphasis by the use of repetition. We read that he used phrases such as, "Verily, verily…", "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem…", "Simon, Simon…", and "My God, My God…" The Apostle Paul, "a Hebrew of the Hebrews" himself, and having been taught at the feet of Gamaliel, was, no doubt, very familiar with this Hebrew method too. Being an expert in the Law, he would be well aware of the injunction repeatedly given to Moses to: "…make them after the pattern, which was showed thee in the mount" (Exodus 25:40; cf. 26:30, 27:8, & Numbers 8:4). It is evident, therefore, that God is jealous of how we approach Him in worship, and it is no surprise to see Paul exhorting the Corinthian Church to "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40).

The Assembly Arrangements & Nominations Committee, likewise, conscious of this pattern of orderliness in God's economy, and that He is "not the author of confusion" (1 Cor. 14:33), seek to arrange things in the administration of His Church on earth so that all we do as a denomination is done "decently and in order." In endeavouring to achieve that, the Committee has enjoyed a good measure of harmony over the past year, with all the decisions having been unanimous.

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. General Assembly

2.1 Location

In May 2023, as a result of a decision of the previous Assembly, the General Assembly met in Glasgow and was very comfortably accommodated in the Partick Free Church (Continuing) Church building and hall. Initial fears concerning the size of the venue and possible parking difficulties proved unfounded. The Committee are very thankful to all those in the Southern Presbytery who assisted, in a whole variety of different ways, to make this new location such a success. The Committee would also like to place on record the ready assistance and co-operation of many people in preparing for the General Assembly of 2024.

2.2 Location 2025

The General Assembly of 2023 instructed the Committee to undertake a thorough investigation of the practicality of the 2025 General Assembly being held in Edinburgh. Accordingly, steps were taken to identify a suitable location, and in the autumn of 2023 a potential venue came to our attention: a church building on the south side of the city. An approach was made to the Congregation in question, and it was agreed that, in the event of a positive response being received, several members of the Committee would visit the premises in order to gauge its suitability. A favourable reply to our enquiries was received, but not until April of this year. By that time, due to other pressures, it proved impossible to arrange a site visit. Therefore, the Committee are unable to recommend an Edinburgh location for the 2025 General Assembly. Accordingly, they are recommending that the General Assembly of 2025 be held in Partick Free Church (Continuing), Glasgow. Meantime, the Committee will continue to consider the practicalities of an Edinburgh venue for the 2026 General Assembly, and will report thereanent to the General Assembly of 2025.

2.3 Assembly Officer

The Committee are grateful to Mr Alan Blaney for agreeing to undertake the role of Assembly Officer. They are also very grateful to his various assistants for the time they so freely give to help the Assembly.

2.4 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 £180 (£230 for Commissioners resident in the Outer Isles, £460 for Commissioners from Overseas within Europe and £600 for Commissioners from Overseas outwith Europe).

2.5 Assembly Timetable

The timetabling of the Assembly follows a similar pattern each year for obvious reasons. The Committee, in giving guidance to the Assembly Clerks' Department, reviews matters each year and suggest changes where appropriate. At the time of writing, it is still unclear how many visitors and delegates may be able to attend the Assembly from outwith the Church. This will obviously affect the number of speakers, who may be less in number than on previous occasions. It is anticipated that the Assembly will have completed their business by lunchtime on Thursday, allowing most Commissioners sufficient time to return home that day.

2.6 Assembly Catering

Moving to a different location in 2023 meant that new arrangements were required for catering. A group of ladies from the various Congregations within the Southern Presbytery kindly undertook to provide the catering for the Moderator's reception, as well as lunch on Tuesday and Wednesday. All agreed that this was a considerable success, and similar arrangements are in place for this year. The arrangements for the evening meal proved more challenging, with transport issues being particularly difficult. Following discussion, it was agreed to arrange for outside caterers to provide the evening meals on Tuesday and Wednesday of Assembly week. These will be served at the usual time in the adjacent church hall.

2.7 Assembly Broadcasting

It is intended to broadcast the Assembly proceedings, as in recent years, on Zoom, using the Partick facilities.

3. Assembly Clerks' Department

The Committee are, once again, indebted to Mr Murdo Murray (Stornoway), for all the work he undertakes on behalf of the Department. Quietly, behind the scenes, he organises the preparation and printing of papers for Committees and the General Assembly. His assistance is all the more valuable as it is discharged with cheerful efficiency, and the whole Church owes him an enormous debt of gratitude.

Mrs Isobel Ann Macleod, Snizort, will continue to serve as Assembly Office Manager.

4. 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.

5. Clerk to Home & Foreign Missions Committee

The Committee are happy to report that Rev. Stuart Farmes has agreed to serve as Clerk to the Home & Foreign Missions Committee. They are very grateful to the former Clerk, Mr Donald J. Morrison, for his many years of faithful and devoted service to the Committee.

6. Panel of Consultants

The General Assembly of 2023 were informed that there was ongoing consideration being given to the future role of the *Panel of Consultants Anent Allegations of Sexual Impropriety Involving Adults*, whose

membership has been noted by the Assembly annually. The Legal Advice & Property Committee are currently engaged in a wide-ranging review of this whole area and are expected to bring forward proposals regarding the Panel to this General Assembly.

7. Review of Memoranda on Procedure

It is one of the stated functions of this Committee to review the Memoranda on Procedure of all other Standing and, where appropriate, Special Committees. The General Assembly of 2023 noted that, for various reasons, this had not been pursued in recent times. With the approval of the Assembly, the Committee commenced a review in 2023, beginning with Group 1 Committees. This current year, all Group 2 Committees will submit their Memoranda on Procedure for review. Once a complete cycle of review of all Committees has been completed, the Committee will consider whether the practice should be continued and report thereanent to the following General Assembly.

8. Committee Meetings

All the Standing Committees of Assembly meet during the year at Free Greyfriars, Inverness, in their Westhill building. The rooms are very comfortable and commodious with good breakout areas between meetings. The Committee are grateful to the Deacons' Court for the use of their building for the meetings, and also for the hospitality given to members of Committees.

(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, etc., for which nominations have not been sought through the Committee is added for convenience.

CALUM MACLEOD, C*onvener*
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 express their gratitude to Mrs Isobel Ann Macleod, Assembly Office Manager, for her assistance during the General Assembly;

3. The General Assembly thank Mr Murdo Murray for his continued willingness to assist in helping in the preparation and printing of papers for Committees and the General Assembly;

4. The General Assembly thank the Minister and Congregation of Partick, Glasgow, for kindly affording the Committee the use of their buildings for the Assembly;

5. The General Assembly thank Mr Alan Blaney, Assembly Officer, and his assistants, for making their services available to the Assembly;

6. The General Assembly welcome the practical arrangements made both for the Assembly itself and the Moderator's reception;

7. The General Assembly approve of the arrangements made for the public broadcasting of the Assembly;

8. 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;

9. The General Assembly note with interest the ongoing review of the Memoranda on Procedure of the various Committees;

10. 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;

11. The General Assembly appoint the General Assembly of 2025 to meet within Partick Free Church (Continuing), Glasgow;

12. The General Assembly continue the remit of the Committee in investigating a possible location in Edinburgh for a future General Assembly.

(B)

The General Assembly receive and adopt the Report (B) Nominations of the Assembly Arrangements & Nominations Committee and thank the Committee, especially the Convener and Clerk;

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 Thomas J. Buchanan, *Vice-convener*,
Legal Advice & Property Committee [4]
Mr James I. Gracie, *Convener*,
Finance & Sustentation Committee [3]
Mr Raymond A. Kemp [2]
Mr Greg MacDonald, *Convener*,
Legal Advice & Property Committee [1]

Elders
Mr David Chin, *Vice-convener*,
Finance & Sustentation Committee [4]
Mr Donald Buchanan [4]
Mr Donald MacDonald (Stornoway), [1]
Mr George McMillan [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 Iain Smith, *Vice-convener*, Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee [4]
Mr E. Trevor Kirkland, *Convener*, Public Questions, Religion & Morals Committee [4]
Mr David M. Blunt, *Convener*, Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee [3]
Mr Brent C. Evans [3]
Mr Henry J.T. Woods, *Convener*, Publications Committee [1]

Elders
Mr John Campbell (Snizort),[3]
Mr Duncan MacSween [3]
Mr Alan Wilson [2]
Mr Lindsay MacCallum, *Vice-convener*, Publications Committee, and *Vice-convener*, Public Questions, Religion & Morals Committee [1]
Mr John M. King [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 & EDUCATION
HOME & FOREIGN MISSIONS
ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS & NOMINATIONS
ECUMENICAL RELATIONS

Ministers
Mr Murdo A.N. Macleod, *Vice-convener*, Welfare of Youth & Education Committee [4]
Mr William Macleod, *Convener*, Ecumenical Relations Committee, and *Vice-convener*, Home & Foreign Missions [2]
Mr Kenneth M. Macdonald, *Convener*, Home & Foreign Missions Committee [1]
Mr Timothy J. McGlynn, *Convener*, Welfare of Youth & Education Committee, and *Vice-convener*, Ecumenical Relations Committee [1]
Mr Gavin Beers, *Vice-convener*, Assembly Arrangements & Nominations Committee [1]

Elders
Mr John Campbell (Shettleston), [4]
Mr Randall Taylor [3]
Mr Calum Macleod, *Convener*, Assembly Arrangements & Nominations Committee [2]
Mr Gordon Furzer [1]
Mr Iain A.C. MacPherson [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 James I. Gracie, *Vice-convener* [3]
Mr Calum Smith, *Convener* [2]

Elders
Mr Donald Martin [2]
Mr Derek W. Maclean [1]
Mr Christopher Reeder [1]
Mr Graham Sinclair [1]

CLERKS TO COMMITTEES

Mr Murdo Murray, *Clerk*, Finance & Sustentation Committee
Mr Murdo Murray, *Clerk*, Legal Advice & Property Committee
Rev. Calum Smith, *Clerk*, Public Questions, Religion & Morals Committee
Mr Donald Macleod, *Clerk*, Publications Committee
Rev. Andrew R. Allan, *Clerk*, Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee
Mrs Isobel A. Macleod, *Clerk*, Welfare of Youth & Education Committee
Rev. Stuart Farmes, *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 (Northern Presbytery)
Mr Thomas MacInnes (Skye & Lochcarron Presbytery)
Mr John N. Gillies (Southern Presbytery)