I.

REPORT

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS & NOMINATIONS

(A) ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS

1. Introduction

The Apostle reminds us that 'God is not the author of confusion, but of peace' and therefore exhorts the Church that 'all things be done decently and in order' (1 Corinthians 14:33, 40). This principle applies not only to worship, but also to the administration and outward arrangements of the Church. The ordering of our affairs, though often regarded as ordinary, is not without spiritual significance, for it serves the peace, unity, and effectiveness of the body.

At the same time, Scripture also teaches that, where necessary, structures may be adjusted for the better discharge of responsibility. When the burden of oversight in the early Church became too great for the Apostles alone, steps were taken to appoint others, 'that we may give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word' (Acts 6:2–-4). This was not disorder, but rather a wise ordering of labour to meet present need. The Assembly Arrangements & Nominations Committee sought to act in accordance with these principles, and this will be seen in Part (B) of this Report.

Much of our work may appear routine, yet it undergirds the effective functioning of the General Assembly and its Committees.

In all its deliberations, the Committee has been mindful that good order is best maintained not only by preserving what has been received, but also by ensuring that our structures remain clear, proportionate, and fit for purpose. In all its work, the Committee has enjoyed harmony.

The Committee is again thankful for all who have assisted in any way with the work of the Gospel in our denomination.

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

For the past three years, the General Assembly has been very comfortably accommodated in the Partick Free Church (Continuing) church and hall. The Committee are very thankful to all those in the Southern Presbytery who have assisted, in a whole variety of different ways, to make this 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 2026.

2.2 Assembly Officer

The Committee are grateful to Mr Kevin N. MacDonald 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.

2.3 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 £180 (£230 for Commissioners resident in the Outer Isles, £460 for Commissioners from Overseas within Europe and £600 for Commissioners from Overseas outwith Europe). For Commissioners from the Presbytery of the United States, it was resolved to set a maximum figure of £3,000.

2.4 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 suggests changes where appropriate.

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.

2.5 Assembly Catering

Over the previous two years a group of ladies from various Congregations within the Southern Presbytery have kindly undertaken to provide the catering for the Moderator's reception, as well as lunch on Tuesday and Wednesday. This arrangement has worked well and will be repeated this year. As in previous years, *Regis Banqueting* will provide the evening meals on Tuesday and Wednesday of Assembly week.

2.6 Assembly Broadcasting

We hope to be able 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 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. Review of Memoranda of Procedure

It is one of the stated functions of this Committee to review the Memoranda of Procedure of all Standing and, where appropriate, Special Committees of Assembly. This current year it has been the turn of Group 3 Committees to come under review, and some considerable changes have been recommended to the Memoranda of some Committees. This now completes the cycle of review initiated three years ago. The Committee will consider during the coming year whether this process needs to be continued and will report thereanent to the next General Assembly.

6. Committee Meetings

All Standing Committees of Assembly meet during the year at Inverness, Free Greyfriars. The Committee are grateful to their Deacons' Court for the use of their building for the meetings.

7. Synod Records

The Committee gave some consideration to the Records of the two Scottish Synods. They recommend that the Synod Records be stored by the Assembly Clerks' Department with access as required. They also noted that there might be some confusion as to the procedures to be adopted should a Synod meeting become

necessary and agreed to make some further investigation of this matter in the forthcoming year and report to the 2027 General Assembly.

8. Clerks to Committees

During the year under review, Rev. Calum Smith resigned as Clerk to the Public Questions, Religion & Morals Committee and Rev. Stuart Farmes resigned as Clerk to the Home & Foreign Missions Committee. The Committee are grateful to both of them for their labours over several years. The Committee are bringing two nominations to the Assembly in regard to these two vacancies, and these appear in the Nominations (C) section of the Report.

(B) Review of Committee Structure

The General Assembly of 2025 instructed the Assembly Arrangements & Nominations Committee to undertake a review of the Assembly Committee Structure. The proposals are outlined below, and legislation is included in the proposed deliverance.

1. General

The current Committee system, whilst by no means perfect, has served the Church well over a period of twenty-five years. Indeed, the system in operation goes back a long time prior to the division of January 2000 and should not be lightly abandoned. However, in recent times, a shortage of men available to serve on Committees has made the work of Presbyteries, and the Nominations Committee extremely difficult and it became generally recognised that a Review was necessary.

2. Review

The Committee began by reviewing the current arrangement, whereby the Church's Standing Committees are organised into three groups, each comprising a number of Committees with distinct remits.

In its deliberations, the Committee recognised that any alteration to this structure must be approached with due caution. While there is a clear and pressing need to reduce the burden placed upon the limited number of office-bearers available, there are also inherent risks in any restructuring. These include: a reduction of personnel to the point where Committees become unable to function, the weakening of oversight, the over-concentration of responsibility, and the potential disruption of the Church's work.

Particular consideration was given to Groups 1 and 2. The Committee concluded that, by reason of the nature and weight of their respective responsibilities, these groups do not readily lend themselves to significant restructuring. The work undertaken within these groups is often complex, sensitive, and requires a breadth of experience and continuity which would be difficult to maintain were their structures to be materially altered. Accordingly, the Committee judged that it would not be expedient to pursue substantial changes within either Group 1 or Group 2 at this time.

Attention was therefore directed to Group 3, whose more routine work lends itself more readily to reorganisation, and where streamlining could best be achieved.

With respect to the individual Committees within Group 3, the Committee offers the following proposal:

Assembly Arrangements & Nominations Committee:

Given the largely administrative and routine nature of its work, the Committee considered that the current membership of the *Assembly Arrangements & Nominations Committee* is greater than necessary. It was therefore judged appropriate that this Committee be reconstituted as a smaller Special Committee rather than a Standing Committee. This would be comprised of a reduced number of members, including one Elder from each Synodical area in Scotland and one from the USA, who will serve for four years, together with both former Moderators serving in an *ex officio* capacity and the Assembly Clerks' Department as

Advisers. One of the past Moderators would serve as Convener for two years, one of the Elders as Vice-convener, and the Assistant Clerk of Assembly will continue as Clerk to this Committee. Given the routine nature of the business of this Committee, they should be permitted, if required, to meet by teleconference with meetings held around the same dates as before.

This arrangement would preserve experience while significantly reducing the demand on personnel.

Ecumenical Relations Committee:
The Committee noted that the work of the *Ecumenical Relations Committee* is similarly regular and procedural. It was, therefore, considered both practical and efficient that this Committee should operate in tandem with the *Assembly Arrangements & Nominations Committee* as a Special Committee. They would share the same core membership, but with a distinct Convener. The previous Moderator who is not serving as Convener of *Assembly Arrangements & Nominations* would serve as Convener of *Ecumenical Relations* for the duration of the two years. One of the Elders would serve as Vice-convener. The Principal Clerk would continue to serve as Clerk to the *Ecumenical Relations Committee.*

Again, given the routine nature of the business of this Committee, it would, if desired, meet by 'Zoom' with meetings held around the same dates as before this restructuring.

This new arrangement would ensure continuity while avoiding an unnecessarily large number of personnel.

Welfare of Youth & Education Committee:
In view of the nature of its work, its compatibility with existing responsibilities elsewhere, and that a good deal of its work is attended to by its Clerk, the Committee agreed that this Committee could appropriately be transferred to Group 1. In order to assist with the transition, some of the current membership of the *Welfare of Youth & Education Committee* will be appointed as Supernumerary members of that Committee for a period of at least one year. These should include the Convener and Vice-convener.

Such a transfer would allow its work to be maintained within an established structure while contributing to the reduction the number of groups of Committees.

Home & Foreign Missions Committee:
The Committee recognised that, of all the Committees in this Group, this is the most difficult to re-organise. This Committee's remit differs from the others in Group 3, in that its work is extensive and less suited to simplification. While various options for restructuring were considered, it was considered best, at this stage, to retain the name *Home & Foreign Missions Committee,* with its unified remit, but to revert to a similar setup used in the Free Church historically that was known as the *Foreign, Overseas and Jewish Missions Board.*

The Committee would be reconstituted as a Special Committee with a defined membership drawn from across Presbyteries, including Navarre & Aragon and the USA: one member from each Presbytery to give a membership of six. A Clerk will be appointed by the General Assembly. Members serving on other Groups or Special Committees would not be excluded from serving on the *Home* & *Foreign Missions Committee*. There would be a specified minimum number of elders required, but parity between elders and ministers would not be mandatory. This was the case in the pre-2000 arrangements for the *Foreign, Overseas and Jewish Missions Board.*

The newly organised *Home & Foreign Missions Committee* would meet by 'Zoom' on, or around, the stated dates for the Standing Committee meetings, with additional meetings as required. This ensures adequate representation while allowing flexibility in service. Transitional arrangements would be put in place to preserve continuity. To assist with the transition, some of the current members of the *Home & Foreign Missions Committee* will be amongst those appointed as the first members of the newly arranged *Home & Foreign Missions Committee.*

In line with the pre-2000 setup, it is proposed to have a four-year appointment with the option of immediate re-appointment. However, re-appointment would only be for one four-year period, i.e. up to a maximum of 8 years. After a minimum one-year gap, re-appointment would be allowed.

The Committee commend the above approach to the restructuring of the Committees to the General Assembly.

(C) 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.

CALUM MACLEOD, *Convener*
J. LOGAN SHELTON, *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 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;

3. The General Assembly are grateful to Mrs Isobel Ann Macleod, Assembly Office Manager, for her assistance during the General Assembly;

4. The General Assembly thank the Minister and Congregation of Partick, Glasgow, for kindly affording us the use of their buildings for the Assembly and other friends in the Southern Presbytery for their assistance;

5. The General Assembly thank Mr Kevin N. MacDonald, 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 of Procedure of the various Committees and await further recommendations;

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 direct the Assembly Clerks' Department to collect and retain the Records of the Mainland and Western Synods, with access granted as required. They further direct the Committee to investigate such matters relating to the functioning of Synods as might require clarification and report thereanent to the next General Assembly.

(B)

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

2. The General Assembly noting the results of the Review of Committee Structure enact and ordain that Standing Orders VI.2.1-4 and VI.3 be amended to read as follows:

    1. That Standing Committees shall comprise two Groups

    2. That the Groups shall be arranged as follows:

    Group 1: Legal Advice & Property — *Adviser: Principal Clerk*

    Finance & Sustentation — *Advisers: General Treasurer and one General Trustees member*

    Welfare of Youth & Education — *Adviser: Editor of 'The Explorer magazine*

    Group 2: Public Questions, Religion & Morals — *Adviser: Editor of 'Free Church Witness magazine*

    Publications (including defence of Church Principles) — *Advisers: Editorial Team*

    Training of the Ministry & Admissions – *Adviser: Principal of the Seminary*

    These groups shall have stated meetings on the same dates as appointed by the General Assembly for the meeting of the Commission of Assembly but shall also meet, as may be necessary, on dates additional to these dates.

    3. 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, Group 2 shall include one Minister and one Elder from the Presbytery of the USA. The Welfare of Youth & Education Committee shall include one representative from the Presbytery of the USA. The Presbytery of Navarre & Aragon shall have one representative on the Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee and one representative on the Welfare of Youth & Education Committee.

    4. That every person nominated to Group 1 or 2 of Standing Committees must serve on all the Committees of the Group.

    3.*Special Committees*

    1. These shall be appointed by the General Assembly

    2. That Special Committees shall comprise the following:

    2.1 A Psalmody Committee which shall have a Membership comprised of one Minister or Elder from each Presbytery, nominated by Presbyteries on the grounds of special knowledge of and practical experience in Psalmody. It shall also include a Minister or Elder from the Presbytery of the USA.

    2.2 A Committee on Assembly Arrangements & Nominations which shall have a Membership comprised of the Moderator of the immediately preceding Assembly, Moderator of last but one Assembly and one Elder from each Synod and the Presbytery of the USA. One of the

Ministers shall serve as Convener and one of the Elders shall serve as Vice-convener. The Assistant Clerk of Assembly shall serve as Adviser and Clerk to the Committee.

2.3 A Committee on Ecumenical Relations which shall have a Membership comprised of the Moderator of the immediately preceding Assembly, Moderator of last but one Assembly and one Elder from each Synod and the Presbytery of the USA. One of the Ministers shall serve as Convener and one of the Elders shall serve as Vice-convener. The Principal Clerk of Assembly shall serve as Adviser and Clerk to the Committee.

2.4 A Committee on Home & Foreign Missions which shall have a membership comprised of one representative of each Presbytery, including Navarre & Aragon and the Presbytery of the USA, of whom at least two shall be Elders, and the period of appointment shall be for four years, with eligibility for a second term without interval after which there shall be no immediate return. Members serving on Standing or other Special Committees shall not be precluded from serving, simultaneously, on the Home & Foreign Missions Committee. The Committee shall meet in-person or by teleconference on, or around, the stated dates for the Standing Committee meetings, with additional meetings as required.

3. No less than three persons serving on the Home & Foreign Missions Committee at the time of the transition shall be amongst those appointed as the first members of the newly-arranged Home & Foreign Missions Committee.

4. This amendment to take effect so as to enable nominations for the revised Committee structure to be brought to the 2027 General Assembly.

(C)

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

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 Greg MacDonald [4]
Mr Thomas J. Buchanan, *Convener*,
Legal Advice & Property Committee [2]
Mr James I. Gracie, *Convener*,
Finance & Sustentation Committee [1]

Elders
Mr Lindsay MacCallum [3]
Mr David W. Norris, *Vice-convener*,
Legal Advice & Property Committee [3]
Mr Gordon Furzer, *Vice-convener*,
Finance & Sustentation Committee [3]
Mr Donald Buchanan [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 Craig Scott [4]
Mr Andrew R. Allan, *Convener*, Publications Committee [3]
Mr Iain Smith, *Vice-convener*, Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee [2]
Mr E. Trevor Kirkland, *Convener*, Public Questions, Religion & Morals Committee, and *Vice-convener*, Publications Committee [2]
Mr Jorge Ruiz Ortiz [2]
Mr David M. Blunt, *Convener*, Training of the Ministry & Admissions Committee, and *Vice-convener*, Public Questions, Religion & Morals Committee [1]

Elders
Mr Alastair Manderson [4]
Charles M. Greenewald [3]
Mr George McMillan [3]
Mr John Campbell (Snizort), [1]
Mr Duncan MacSween [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 David S. Fraser, *Convener*, Assembly Arrangements & Nominations Committee [3]
Mr A. James MacInnes, *Convener*, Home & Foreign Missions Committee, and *Vice-convener*, Ecumenical Relations Committee [3]
Mr J. Logan Shelton, *Convener*, Welfare of Youth & Education Committee, and Vice-*convener*, Assembly Arrangements & Nominations Committee [3]
Mr Murdo A.N. Macleod, *Convener*, Ecumenical Relations Committee, and *Vice-convener*, Home & Foreign Missions Committee [2]
Mr Hugues Pierre [2]

Elders
Mr Sandy Murray [4]
Mr Alasdair Nicolson, *Vice-convener*, Welfare of Youth & Education Committee [3]
Mr Norman Smith [3]
Mr John Campbell (Shettleston), [2]
Mr Randall Taylor [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* [1]

Elders
Mr William MacLeod [4]
Mr Graeme Sinclair [4]
Mr Charles M. Greenewald [3]
Mr Iain A.C. MacPherson [3]

CLERKS TO COMMITTEES

Mr Murdo Murray, *Clerk*, Finance & Sustentation Committee
Mr Murdo Murray, *Clerk*, Legal Advice & Property Committee
Mr Gordon Bell, *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
Mr Ruairidh MacLeod, *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:

GENERAL TRUSTEES

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