

MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OF

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

CONVENED AT EDINBURGH, 18 MAY 2015

At Edinburgh, and within the Assembly Hall, the 18th day of May 2015 years, at 9.15 am, Session III.

After observance of the Lord's Supper in the Assembly Hall, the General Assembly did again convene and was constituted with prayer.

BUSINESS COMMITTEE

The General Assembly called for the Report of the Business Committee which was given in by the Rev Dr Derek Browning, Convener.

It was moved, seconded and agreed-

The General Assembly:

1. Agree the Order of Business for the third to the seventh day.
2. Agree that, in terms of Standing Order 83, the Report and draft Deliverance of the Church and Society Council scheduled for Tuesday 19th May (Session IV) shall be taken in a time-bound process of debate and decision according to the timetable in the Assembly Papers p22-23.
3. Appoint the following Selection Committee:

Rev Dr Ian Bradley	(474)
Rev Prof David A S Fergusson	(7)
Rev Dr John A Ferguson	(549)
Miss Elizabeth Fox	(704)

Dr David France	(496)
Rev James M Gibson	(328)
Mrs Myrtle Gillies	(667)
Mrs Louisa Greenwell	(578)
Mrs Susan Hollands	(690)
Rev Eleanor McMahan	(156)
Rev Julia M Meason	(686)
Rev Peter W Nimmo	(631)
Mr Brian Porteous	(487)
Rev Lisa Jane Rankin	(116)
Mr Duncan Ross DCS	(240)
Rev Christine Sime	(451)
Rev James C Stewart	(506)
Mr Douglas Taylor	(547)

Rev Dr John L McPake, *Convener*
Rev Jennifer Macrae, *Vice Convener*

4. Note the 21 day deadline for the submission of commissioners' expenses.
5. Note arrangements for the election of the Committee to Nominate the Moderator if required.

The General Assembly called for the Report of the Committee appointed to prepare a reply to the Most Gracious Letter from Her Majesty the Queen which was given in by the Very Rev John Chalmers.

The Reply to Her Majesty's Most Gracious Letter was submitted and approved for signature and transmission to Her Majesty.

The Reply was in the following terms:

TO THE QUEEN'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY

May it please Your Majesty

We, Your Majesty's loyal subjects convened in General Assembly, have received with pleasure Your Majesty's gracious letter to us.

We greatly value Your Majesty's continuing pledge to maintain the historic rights and privileges of the Church of Scotland.

Your Majesty and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh continue to be in our prayers. We wish to record our gratitude at the high number of public engagements and duties which Your Majesty and His Royal Highness carry out in the course of serving our nation and Commonwealth. The Church of Scotland wishes once more to commend Your Majesty for all that has been accomplished in the course of Your Majesty's reign. Your untiring efforts on our behalf are a stirring example of service.

We are also delighted that Your Majesty has been blessed with a great-granddaughter, Princess Charlotte Elizabeth Diana. It is always a joy to welcome the safe arrival of a child, and we pray that good health and happiness will be a constant presence in the family of the Earl and Countess of Strathearn.

It is with delight we welcome the appointment of Lord Hope of Craighead as Your Majesty's Lord High Commissioner to our General Assembly. As a Member of the Order of the Thistle and one of the first Justices of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom and its first Deputy President we recognise the high regard in which Lord Hope is held in our country.

It was a particular pleasure for us to note Your support at the services to commemorate the beginning of the First World War and especially Your Gracious

presence at the annual service at the Scottish National War Memorial.

We can also assure Your Majesty of the great comfort Your presence brought at the service to mark the end of the hostilities in Afghanistan to the families of those whose lives were lost, or who were injured.

We were delighted with the initiative of Prince Harry in organising the Invictus Games. They were an unprecedented success and again brought such hope and inspiration to the fore in the face of previous sadness and suffering, allowing us to marvel at the depths of human resilience and to rejoice in the skill of medical teams.

Your Majesty's comments about the ecumenical work and projects of our Church, and our continuing concern for the poorest and marginalised in our society are most apposite as the Church seeks to reconcile people and build harmonious communities across barriers and boundaries that would otherwise divide. We remain committed to working with all people of goodwill to build a society grounded on the values we find in the gospels and on the faith we share in Jesus Christ.

Finally, we commend to the unfailing grace and protection of Almighty God, Your Majesty and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh and as we begin our deliberations we pray that God will continue to bestow favour upon Your Majesty, that you may long reign over us.

THE MINISTERS, ELDERS AND DEACONS OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND CONVENED IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Signed in our name, in our presence and at our appointment by

ANGUS MORRISON
Moderator

WORLD MISSION COUNCIL

The General Assembly called for the Report of the World Mission Council which was given in by the Rev Iain Cunningham, Convener.

It was moved and seconded-

The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.
2. Give thanks for the life and witness of Mission Partners who have died, acknowledge with gratitude those who have completed their period of service overseas, and uphold in prayer all who continue to serve.
3. Encourage congregations to read and study the report, use the worship service and resources, and learn more about the life of the churches in other parts of the world, and the links with the Church of Scotland.
4. Encourage congregations and Presbyteries to develop links, particularly Twinings, with congregations and Presbyteries of other Churches.
5. Instruct the Council to seek appropriately trained mediators to work with the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan in addressing the issues of post-conflict rebuilding and reconciliation.
6. Instruct the Council to engage with the Church and Society Council and Christian Aid in organising a partner consultation on Climate Change in 2016.
7. Instruct the Council to engage with, support, and promote the work of Christian Aid in its 70th anniversary year.
8. Encourage continued participation in working with the Scottish Churches Anti-Human Trafficking Group, the Church and Society Council, and overseas partners to raise awareness in the Church of Scotland of the effects of human trafficking, and encourage action to combat it.
9. Continue to pray for and support minority communities, especially Christians, as they face extremism, and other challenges to personal, family and community wellbeing, on a daily basis.
10. Encourage any groups visiting the Middle East region, including Israel and occupied Palestine, to make contact with the Council for suggestions of partners and communities to visit.
11. Support the Korean churches in their commitment to healing, reconciliation and peaceful reunification; and instruct the Council to work with Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI), and other partners, in supporting the healing of the historical wound of the Korean people.
12. Instruct the Council to continue its work supporting the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka in promoting peacebuilding and reconciliation.
13. Congratulate the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan on its 150th anniversary.
14. Encourage the Council to develop new fundraising strategies for the Church of Scotland HIV Programme whilst continuing to promote Souper Sunday for congregational use.
15. Encourage the Council to be open to new areas of partnership in areas of the world where it presently does not have living links, but where there are strategic opportunities.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:-

Add a new Section 5 and renumber:

Congratulate The Vine Trust on their 30th anniversary as an overseas development agency serving some of the poorest people in South America and Africa.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of Section 8:-

After 'awareness in the Church of Scotland' add 'and amongst the people of Scotland'.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of Section 9:-

After 'daily basis' add 'and instruct the Council to express, at every opportunity, loving and prayerful solidarity with churches whose members have suffered martyrdom in recent times'.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:-

Add a new Section 10 and renumber:

Note with satisfaction the continuing progress towards freedom and democracy in Myanmar while expressing concern about current and proposed laws which restrict eligibility to stand as a presidential candidate in the election this year and so debarring Aung San Sui Kyi from doing so.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:-

Add a new Section 11 and renumber:

Noting with concern proposed new laws in Myanmar limiting the right to religious freedom particularly in respect of inter-faith marriage and conversions to a different religion, instruct the Council to support the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar, in appropriate ways, in its opposition to such laws and in its continuing work of Christian evangelism.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:-

Add a new Section 11 and renumber:

Instruct the Council and the Church and Society Council to work together to encourage churches, congregations and individuals to become customers of Hadeel as a practical way of supporting the Palestinian economy and social enterprises.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:-

Add a new Section 11 and renumber:

Express deep and heartfelt sympathy for the people of Nepal following the devastating earthquakes; commend the work being done by the Nepali Christian community, especially our partner the United Mission to Nepal; give thanks for the support given already to the Christian Aid appeal, particularly through the Moderators' Munro Challenge; and instruct the Council to develop resources that will encourage congregations to commit their support to a three year initiative for the long term rebuilding of communities.

The General Assembly suspended their sitting at 12.38 pm until 2 pm.

The Deliverance as amended was then agreed.

ECUMENICAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

The General Assembly called for the Report of the Ecumenical Relations Committee which was given in by the Rev Alison McDonald, Convener.

It was moved and seconded-

The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.

2. Encourage Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions to take up the invitation of the World Council of Churches to join in a pilgrimage of justice and peace and to do so ecumenically, wherever possible.
3. Commend the action taken to explore continued relationships with the United Free Church following their steps taken to stand back from the Covenant.
4. Approve the process used to respond to *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* and note the brief summary given in the Report.
5. Approve the delegates to Assemblies, Synods and Conferences of the other churches, as detailed in Appendix I.
6. Note the appointment of representatives to ecumenical bodies as detailed in Appendix II.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:-

Add a new Section 4 and renumber:

Rejoice that the Church of England has formally recognised the Church of Scotland under their Ecumenical Relations Measure.

The Deliverance as amended was then agreed.

PANEL ON REVIEW AND REFORM

The General Assembly called for the Report of the Panel on Review and Reform which was given in by the Rev Donald Campbell, Convener.

It was moved and seconded-

The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.
2. Note the desire expressed by Presbyteries to see local leadership developed to sustain congregations

without an inducted parish minister as an alternative to instituting a further programme of unions and readjustments and:

- (a) affirm this as an approach to be developed further;
 - (b) affirm the previous instruction of the General Assembly to the Panel to work in collaboration with Councils, Committees and Presbyteries, to consider the shape of new local church leadership roles which might be developed to sustain and build the Church in the future;
 - (c) instruct the Panel to consider further the implications and sustainability of such an approach.
3. Instruct the Panel, in consultation with other Councils and Committees as appropriate, to consider how strategic leadership can best be developed within local congregations, including the role which Kirk Sessions play in this regard.
 4. Instruct the Panel, working in collaboration with the Ministries and Mission and Discipleship Councils and the Council of Assembly, to secure adequate resources to support the pilot congregations in their development, as proposed in Section 1.7 of the Report.
 5. Instruct the Panel to conduct appropriate research on the work undertaken within the pilot congregations proposed in Section 1.7 of the Report and report its findings to the General Assembly of 2018 with an interim report in 2017.
 6. Note the difficulty of creating a simple vision statement for the Church of Scotland, and:
 - (a) affirm the current vision statement; and
 - (b) instruct the Panel to find ways of stimulating conversations about the vision of the Church at local, Presbytery and national level.

7. Instruct the Legal Questions Committee, in consultation with the General Trustees and the Central Properties Department, to review the processes used in arbitration in light of this report and particularly with reference to sections 3.2.2 (Procedural justice) and 3.4.5.1 (Arbitration).

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the Deliverance:-

Add a new Section 4 and renumber:

Instruct the Panel to liaise with the Priority Areas Committee of the Ministries Council, recognising the work already done to use Asset Based Community Development methods to uncover 'hidden treasures' and good practice which can be shared across the whole church.

It was moved and seconded as an amendment of the Deliverance:-

Add a new Section 7 and renumber:

Encourage Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions to consider using consensus decision making and invite Presbyteries to review their Standing Orders to allow consensus decision making to take place as and when appropriate.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of the proposed amendment of the Deliverance:-

Add at the end ', and instruct the Legal Questions Committee to consider how this may be achieved to result in effective and clear decisions and bring forward recommendations to a future General Assembly.'

On a vote being taken For or Against the amendment as amended, it carried For.

It was moved and seconded as an amendment of the Deliverance:-

Add a new Section 7 and renumber:

Instruct the Panel to consider inviting the General Secretaries of Blantyre, Livingstonia and Nkhoma, CCAP Malawi, to Edinburgh, to meet and discuss in depth with the Principal Clerk and the Conveners of the Ministries Council and the Council of Assembly as to how the CCAP experience may assist and be meaningful to reform in the Church of Scotland.

On a vote being taken For or Against the amendment it carried Against.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of Section 7:-

After 'General Trustees' add ', the Ministries Council'.

It was moved, seconded and agreed as an amendment of Section 7:-

Add at the end 'and report to the General Assembly of 2017.'

The Deliverance as amended was then agreed.

Mr Campbell on his retiral as Convener was thanked by the Moderator for his noteworthy service to the Panel and the General Assembly.

The General Assembly adjourned at 4.34 pm to meet again in this Hall tomorrow at 9.15 am for business, whereof public intimation having been made, the Sederunt was closed with prayer.

ASSEMBLY HALL
EDINBURGH, 18 May 2015, 4.34 pm