

# PANEL ON REVIEW AND REFORM

May 2017

## PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

### The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.
2. Instruct the Panel on Review & Reform to work in partnership with others to enable conversation and discussion across the Church of Scotland on Ecclesiology in a post Christendom context.
3. Instruct the Panel on Review & Reform along with Ministries Council to bring proposals to the General Assembly of 2018 on payment, training and placement of Ordained Local Ministers.
4. Note the ongoing work being carried out on enabling sacramental ministries and, in this ongoing work, instruct the Panel on Review & Reform to consider, alongside other developments, the potential use of Commissioned Local Ministers as outlined by Rev Dr Doug Gay in the 2017 Chalmers Lectures.
5. Instruct the Panel on Review & Reform to work with Ministries Council, Fresh Expressions and outside agencies to ensure that appropriate training for Pioneer Ministry is developed.

## REPORT

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Change – our ministry

1.1.1 Change is always an evocative word but in a rapidly changing world we recognise that change is a necessity for the Church! However, in his book “Change Direction” Dr David Cormack argues that change is more than a necessity and instead lies at the very heart of who we are and are called to be.

*Change is God's way of restoring creation to himself. The Church is called to use the ministry of change in its own pilgrimage and to demonstrate to society the power and willingness of God to transform each and every aspect of His creation. But, somewhere along the road to the third millennium, change got a bad name. ... Whatever the roots, change became bad news for the Church. Consequently the people of God have become less able to fulfil their ministry of change either corporately or*

*personally. For too many Christians their pilgrimage has become one long struggle against change rather than a welcoming embrace of the Lord of change.*

*The counter-conspiracy is anti-Christian in origin. Christians are the people of transformation not conformation. Our real challenge is not to hold some imaginary theological line, or even go back to some old traditional position. Our real challenge is to go forward as leaders and learners and to embrace the transforming power of God which is our unique heritage.<sup>[1]</sup>*

1.1.2 Whatever we might make of Cormack's assertion, considering the changes we need to make as a church lies at the heart of the work of the Panel on Review and Reform - charged as it is by the General Assembly with articulating a clear statement of the long-term vision of the Church, and paths and developments which might be followed by

*congregations, Presbyteries, Councils and Agencies of the Church to make such a vision a reality.*

**1.1.3** In carrying this work forward the Panel has continued to draw on writings from a wide range of sources, which has included re-reading General Assembly reports from previous years. This has brought a growing recognition that much of what the Panel might urge the Church to do – the paths and developments we might follow - has been said before. Not only this, but the paths and developments have often been agreed upon by the GA. For example the GA urged congregations to take seriously their ministry to and with children, ensuring that there are opportunities for children to participate in worship,<sup>[2]</sup> invited all congregations by the year 2020 to begin to establish a new experience of Church in each parish<sup>[3]</sup> and instructed Presbyteries to develop a coordinated strategy to equip congregations to sustain worship, pastoral care and mission.<sup>[4]</sup> However, deliverances like these have not always led to action or at least not the action envisaged by the writers of the GA reports. Given this, the Panel is now less focused on seeking to discover original thoughts or ideas, but to focus on how already articulated ideas might be acted upon in practical ways and worked through in the life of the church.

## **1.2 Changed circumstances**

**1.2.1** One of the things behind this revised focus is recognition that the circumstances of today are different. The awareness that things need to change has grown and the resultant appetite for change has, at least in some places, grown. Ideas and developments that people were at one time resistant to are now being openly spoken of in positive terms, and time and time again the Panel has been asked, “Why are we not doing what we said we would years ago?”

**1.2.2** In this way perhaps the Church has moved on from where it was in the 1950s when William Barclay wrote:

*The Church always runs the danger of condemning a new way of doing things just because it is new. In one sense there is hardly an institution in the world which resents change so much as the Church does.<sup>[5]</sup>*

**1.2.3** However, barriers to change still exist and discovering the barriers to change so that we might deal with them will continue to be important moving forward - ensuring that change is not held back by “mysterious forces” at a local, Presbytery or national level. Indeed, for many the recognition is that time is too short for us to wait longer before implementing change. The time is now!

## **1.3 Working collaboratively with others**

In order to support this, the Panel is seeking to work proactively with other Councils and Committees, including the Council of Assembly, to support the development of work in practical ways. The Path of Renewal represents the most significant piece of work using a partnership approach between the Panel and Councils and the Panel is keen to develop this approach further.

## **1.4 Holding on to the overarching vision**

**1.4.1** In taking this forward it is important not to lose focus on the big picture whilst attending to the detail of individual changes which are needed. The Panel recognises the importance of marrying the two and has continued to hold to the vision reported to the 2016 General Assembly. In that report the Panel suggested that we should be seeking to develop, throughout Scotland and beyond, churches marked by three characteristics:

- a. Working in partnership with others to meet social needs and to bring about change so that justice prevails.
- b. Sustaining authentic, engaging Christian community and worship for all generations.
- c. Encouraging all to become fully formed disciples of Jesus Christ.

**1.4.2** What should not be missed though is the importance of all three strands being developed in all churches – that being strong in one area alone will not be sufficient. This means that each congregation will need to look to develop those strands which are weakest, when our natural inclination will be to work further on the strand or strands which are already relative strengths.

*While they represent different aspects of mission, in the life of a local congregation the three elements flow into one expression of witness, however faltering and imperfect the expression is.<sup>[6]</sup>*

**1.4.3** This represents a holistic approach to developing what has been described as “missional” churches and is based on work by Raymond Fung for the World Council of Churches. This was also central to the recommendations of the Church Without Walls Report to the General Assembly of 2001. The Panel believes that this provides a long term vision for the Church of Scotland, leaving room as it does for churches to be shaped to fit their own particular context.

**1.4.4** The Panel is encouraged that discussion on these three strands formed a key part of the Roadshows organised by the Council of Assembly; is being used with Path of Renewal churches; and that at least two Presbyteries are now actively encouraging all their congregations to consider how well formed they are in these three key areas. In addition one Presbytery has developed material to assist local congregations to ascertain where weaknesses lie in their work and witness and has used this effectively in their Local Church Reviews.

**1.4.5** The Panel is of the view that whilst it might be helpful to expand on what each of the characteristics represents, there is no need for further strands to be added. In fact the simplicity of the three strands is the strength of this approach. The developing of “bigger concepts” that will help to give a framework for local work and witness will remain an important part of the Panel’s work.

## **1.5 Catching the heartbeat of God**

*Tradition is passing on the fire not worshipping the ashes.*  
Gustav Mahler 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> Century composer

**1.5.1** At a time of major change the temptation can be to hold on to as much as we can of what has gone before - imagining that in doing so we are being faithful to our heritage and guarding our future. Yet our heritage as a church in the Reformed tradition is to be “reformed and always reforming” – always in accordance with scripture. This means being clear about our primary calling and there is a firm need for us to recover our “raison d’être”: to catch something of the fire that drove Ninian and Cuthbert and others to come to Scotland, the fire that the Reformers carried for a church which would truly shape our nation in a Christ like fashion; to rediscover a passion for the Gospel and for sharing the Good News throughout this land and beyond.

**1.5.2** The Panel is aware that this is a spiritual issue, not a practical one. We need to be touched and shaped by God in fresh ways, just as the Israelites were in the wilderness. Carefully crafted strategies or changing structures will never supplant this nor bear significant fruit without this. Recognising that this is a work of the Holy Spirit, the Panel is pleased to support the Council of Assembly in inviting the General Assembly to call the Church to pray that God will do fresh work amongst us as his people, restoring in us something of that fire that we see in our forebearers, that we might be reshaped during what are testing times and catch afresh the heartbeat of the Father.<sup>[7]</sup>

## **2. Path of Renewal**

**2.1** Through 2016 and into 2017 the Panel, with the support of Ministries Council and Mission & Discipleship Council, has continued to support 43 congregations and one Area Grouping who started on what has been termed the “Path of Renewal.” One congregation withdrew early in 2017.

**2.2** The main focus in 2016 was on helping ministers and Kirk Sessions to reflect on the changing culture, the

challenges it presents and the change of leadership styles and approaches needed for this. Alongside this, ministers have been encouraged to invest heavily in a few people seeking to disciple them. This reflects Jesus' model of ministry where he invested heavily in his closest followers and supporters and particularly in the inner circle of three (Peter, James and John.)

**2.3** The Panel is convinced of the necessity of doing this initial work with ministers and others, developing a missional mind-set. Early research completed indicates that this has been effective, with ministers able to articulate how it has impacted on their approach to ministry and leadership of the congregation and the way that others have been introduced to missional thinking. A researcher has been engaged to track these changes and their impact in an ongoing way.

**2.4** Recently the Panel has been encouraged to find others using a similar approach, in particular Tod Bolsinger, who has been developing this in the Presbyterian Church USA. He writes:

*Leadership into uncharted territory requires and results in transformation of the whole organisation, starting with the leaders. Only as leaders grow in competence, congruence and adaptive capacity do they have the ability to face the challenges of a new day. God willing, as they do so, the result will be more personal and community transformation.<sup>[8]</sup>*

**2.5** During the first year input was provided in four ways:

- Teaching at overnight or day conferences for ministers \*
- Regular Mentoring/Coaching input for ministers from a designated Coach/Mentor
- Regular meetings of peer learning groups
- Facilitated meetings with Kirk Sessions

\* (For Pilot Team congregations the training has included a wider group from the congregation.)

**2.6** In 2017 the focus on the Path of Renewal will be on developing Path of Renewal groups in each of the congregations. Bolsinger in his work calls them "transformation teams" and says:

*This team needs to be innovative and persistent, cohesive and communicative. The team must be those with the most creativity, energy, credibility, personal maturity and dogged determination. They must be enthusiastic for the idea, resolute about seeing it through and willing to expend relational capital to bring genuine cultural change. Perhaps most important, this team should be ready to disband, giving up their power and influence so that the congregation itself will embrace .. the changes.<sup>[9]</sup>*

**2.7** It is our intention to have such a group in place in each of the congregations on the Path of Renewal by June 2017. Supporting the groups in their thinking and in the work they do will become a fifth strand to the support given to congregations. They will become what we might loosely call the *Research and Development* department of the local congregation, experimenting, trying new things, learning as they go and in time feeding back to the Kirk Session the lessons learnt which will help to reshape the Church as it moves forward.

## **2.8 Rolling it out to other congregations**

**2.8.1** From the very beginning, the idea was that the first group of churches would assist the next tranche of congregations ready to follow a similar journey. Having discussed this with the ministers involved in Path of Renewal we plan to have a second group of churches begin the "Path of Renewal" in January 2018, with applications from congregations to be completed by May and an ongoing process of assessment/discernment over the Autumn.

**2.8.2** The teaching input for the new group of churches will be given primarily by the current team with coaching/mentoring support and input to congregations provided by ministers already involved in Path of Renewal. They will be supported in this by the existing coach/mentors. The expanding of the work in this way should be possible

within the current budget, which is included within the Ministries budget until December 2018.

**2.8.3** It is proposed that an interim review into the impact of the work with the existing congregations be completed by Ministries Council with a view to extending the funding for a further two years to give time to develop the approach being used. If supported, this would create a five year timescale for the pilot, in line with other pilot projects supported by the Church. Long term funding for this work will be dependent upon the findings of the research being completed and evidence of its effectiveness.

### 3. Empowering Local Leadership

**3.1** Presbyteries were instructed to consider the section of the Panel's General Assembly report of 2016 on Empowering Local Leadership and to report their reflections on this to the Panel by 31st December 2016.

**3.2** From those responses there is strong evidence of a growing understanding that ministry belongs to the whole people of God and that the role of those in leadership is to release and develop the gifts of others. However there was recognition that not everyone owns this thinking – one comment which reflects others was that: *there is a gradual change occurring, but it still has a long way to go until a majority would agree with the statement that "ministry is for everyone."*

**3.3** Whilst some Presbyteries were able to cite examples of places where this principle was being worked out in congregational life and mission, others cited examples of ministers or others who wished to perpetuate the older patterns of leadership thus preventing the gifts of all being fully developed and exercised. Responses from those who attended the Roadshows show a similar awareness and this is reported on elsewhere. Of further note is the following:

- Negativity within Presbyteries to Auxiliary Ministry noted in a GA report of 2001 appears to have

dissipated and Presbyteries now seem anxious to appoint more Ordained Local Ministers. In measure this acceptance has been driven by necessity but also in seeing the positive contribution made and brought by Ordained Local Ministers.

- A number of Presbyteries expressed concern that the expectation that elders will take on more may be misplaced – not because of gifting but simply because they do not have the time or energy to do so.
- There were significant comments about the need for appropriate training to be provided for those taking on additional leadership responsibilities.
- The Panel report failed to highlight the range of ministries exercised and recognised within the Church of Scotland, in particular Readership, and this was a shortcoming in the report.

### 4. Local Leadership Roles

**4.1** In 2015 the General Assembly instructed the Panel *to consider the shape of new local church leadership roles which might be developed to sustain and build the Church in the future.*

**4.2** A planned two year pilot to develop something new with congregations who found themselves without an inducted parish minister and who saw no realistic prospect of appointing one did not find traction. This was mainly because the Panel could not find congregations willing to forego their right to call a minister.

**4.3** Through this exercise, what became clear to the Panel was that the vast majority of local congregations continue to perceive a need for a Minister of Word and Sacrament to provide leadership and continuity in each parish as well as sustaining Sunday worship. This stood in stark contrast to the argument presented to the Panel during consultations in 2014 that the number of congregations should not reduce as ministry numbers reduce, nor further links and unions be imposed, but that some congregations should continue without a Minister

of Word and Sacrament. Faced with the reality of making such a decision for their own congregation there is significant reluctance to follow this course of action.

**4.4** This conundrum is a difficult one to resolve and the Panel was left with the question of whether the perception that congregations require a Minister of Word and Sacrament to develop in appropriate ways is correct. Or is it simply based upon a desire to maintain the patterns of previous generations aligned with a fear of taking on what is yet unproven?

**4.5** The initial inclination of the Panel was to challenge preconceptions and urge congregations to embrace new ways of moving forward with local leadership. However on deeper reflection the Panel was aware that theological education is crucial for those exercising a main leadership role in a congregation, helping to ensure that decisions made and directions set have a firm theological and scriptural foundation. The Panel also considered that there is good reason for holding together the exercising of this leadership with the preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments.

**4.6** This has brought the Panel full circle to conclude that we should aim to have a Minister of Word and Sacrament serving in each charge. However, this has two caveats, as follows.

Firstly that we understand that an essential part of their role in the local church is to enable the people of God to recognise, develop and exercise their God given gifts. This focus was underscored by the report of the Panel and others to the General Assembly in 2016. *The minister's role, therefore, becomes less one of 'doing everything' but of equipping others to carry out 'works of Christian service.'* (Ephesians 4:12)<sup>[10]</sup>

Secondly that 'Minister of Word and Sacrament' should not be equated with stipendiary ministry and that ways need to be found to open up fresh avenues for people of different ages and backgrounds to be ordained and serve as Ministers of Word and Sacrament. In particular that we

should allow people to train and serve as Ordained Local Ministers in their own home congregation, with flexible and adaptable education and training offered to facilitate this and consider paying OLMs. This is raised in the section below in more detail.

**4.7** More recently, however, Rev Dr Doug Gay in his 2017 Chalmers Lectures, promoted a more radical step with the introduction of Commissioned Local Ministers.

*I believe the time is right for the Church of Scotland to change tack on this question and to introduce provisions to allow elders to assume new responsibilities. If we compare ourselves to other sections of the Reformed family of churches, this is not such a drastic step to imagine ourselves taking. We would be joining the United Reformed Church and the PCUSA if we enabled presbyteries to authorise suitably trained and experienced elders .. to preach, baptise and preside at communion. .. we might prefer to opt for Commissioned Local Minister (CLM) to sit alongside OLM? In the PCUSA, they are commissioned for up to three years at a time and can conduct worship, including sacraments, weddings and funerals - working, as OLMs do, under the oversight of an ordained minister. They could work either in a vacant charge or alongside an existing minister within their congregation. If we followed the US model, then CLMs could also be paid.<sup>[11]</sup>*

**4.8** This helps to highlight the potential options to the Church of Scotland at this juncture:

- To struggle on with a shortage of Ministers of Word and Sacrament
- To open up Ordained Local Ministry to a much wider group of people
- To introduce Commissioned Local Ministers or something similar

## 5. Ordained Local Ministry (OLM) and Readership

5.1 The Panel was specifically asked to consider the second of these by the General Assembly in 2016 and, *working in partnership with the Ministries Council, to consider ways in which the scope of Ordained Local Ministry and Readership can be developed and broadened to meet the needs of the Church as it considers the future of ministry, and report to the GA of 2017.*

### 5.2 Gathering information

5.2.1 In order to learn from those already in Ordained Local Ministry, Auxiliary Ministry and Readership, online questionnaires were distributed. One survey went to all OLMs and Auxiliary Ministers (AMs), with 46 responses (from a possible 99). Another went to Readers, with 124 responses from 267 Readers. A further questionnaire was distributed to Presbytery Clerks with 24 responses from a possible 54.

5.2.2 The range of current placements and roles for OLMs is very broad and that breadth is in keeping with the intention of the 2011 Ministries Council report which suggested potential placements in urban and rural contexts; as presbytery-wide support; and in pioneer ministries and chaplaincies.<sup>[12]</sup> The most significant issues raised by the questionnaire responses were:

- payment of fees, particularly for OLMs
- the desire of many Readers to administer the sacraments
- a perception that people undertaking these ministries, though recognised by the Church, are not valued as ministers

5.2.3 In addition to the questionnaire responses, some of the feedback from the “On the Road” events of autumn 2016 was also relevant to this review:

- there was an ongoing interest in reviewing and promoting the role of OLMs

- there is a need to consider paying OLMs and lay leadership (this was raised at half of the roadshows)
- the challenges of recruiting OLMs were raised at 11 of 16 roadshows, with concerns about the amount of time, training and money required, plus geographical challenges
- alongside the above concern about training being too arduous there was a concern to maintain adequate theological training for ministries
- at half the roadshows, the administration of sacraments by Elders and Readers was raised, though opinion was divided on this matter

### 5.3 Responses: Payment of OLMs

5.3.1 The General Assembly of 2011 stipulated that the first ten hours plus a Sunday of any work that an OLM does must be unpaid,<sup>[13]</sup> but commitments beyond that can be paid. 34% of the OLMs and AMs who replied to our questionnaire are already undertaking duties for which they are paid.

5.3.2 However, 70% of OLM/AM respondents thought that they should be paid for some or all of their ministry duties. This is despite the concept of OLM as primarily unpaid (with expenses covered and a grant offered for the purchase of resources) being clear since its inception. There are some Readers who could not afford to transfer to OLM when the opportunity was offered, as they would lose the income from pulpit supply fees.

5.3.3 The Report of the Panel on Doctrine to the General Assembly of 2001 on “Ordination in the Church of Scotland,” suggested that “non-stipendiary” should not mean that no payment is given. It stated, “there are many forms of payment which are not stipends.” For example, fees are not stipends.<sup>[14]</sup> However payment of fees to OLMs for more or all of the work they undertake would be an increased financial cost to congregations and Presbyteries.

5.3.4 Beyond such financial considerations, the responses about payment of OLMs and AMs also raised issues of perceived status and value within the Church.

Questions of being considered “professional” were raised, as were issues of fairness and consistency between OLMs and Readers in pulpit supply; and between OLMs and full-time Ministers of Word and Sacrament in workload. This will be discussed further below.

#### **5.4 Responses: Administration of sacraments**

**5.4.1** The majority of OLMs and AMs who responded said that the most important aspect in their call to that ministry was its completeness, being able to celebrate the sacraments and share in the full life of a congregation.

**5.4.2** There were two main contexts where Readers felt it would be beneficial to be able to administer the sacraments (and 68% wished to be permitted to do so). One was congregations without an ordained minister. The other was Fresh Expressions of Church. In both contexts, where there is a long-term relationship built up, through placement or locum-ship, it was felt that having to wait or arrange to bring an ordained minister in was damaging to the relationships built up within that community. There is also a strong desire and willingness to expand the role of the Readership to help further in the current shortage of ordained ministers, which some would like to include administering the sacraments and conducting weddings.

#### **5.5 Responses: Perceptions of value and status**

**5.5.1** Throughout the responses of OLMs, AMs and Readers, there was a feeling that they are not always recognised as ministers, whether of Word and Sacrament or of Word. Nor do they always feel valued by congregations or Presbyteries. This is part of the issue around payment of OLMs.

**5.5.2** Even within the questionnaire responses, there are hints of a hierarchy of ministries in the Church of Scotland. In one Reader’s response, there is a distinction in one sentence between “an OLM” and “a minister.” One Presbytery Clerk (asked about OLMs and Readers) refers to Readership as the “lesser role” in contrast to “ministers.” These are incidental examples of a wider issue within a Church that claims that ministry is the calling of the whole church. From reports from the Panel on Doctrine in the

1960s, the Report of the Committee of Forty in 1978, the Ministers of the Gospel Report of 2000, the Church Without Walls report of 2001, and in any discussion of “ministry” since, the Church of Scotland has affirmed the ministry of the whole people of God. Yet even for those in ministries recognised by the Church - assessed, trained and placed by the Church - there are occasions when they are made to feel that only full-time Ministers of Word and Sacrament are “proper” ministers.

**5.5.3** As the Church encourages missional congregations to find where God is at work and join in, and develops Pioneer ministries, it is to be hoped that more ministries will develop around the Church of Scotland that do not fit conventional expectations of “what ministers do.” Therefore, this issue of recognition and affirmation of different callings and roles will grow.

#### **5.6 Other issues: Training**

**5.6.1** At present, after the Church discernment and assessment process is complete (three to twelve months), the training requirements for OLM and Readership are for a certificate-level academic training (distance-learning through the University of Aberdeen or Highland Theological College UHI), followed by a probationary placement. This would normally take two years’ study, plus the placement, though it can take longer. This is in keeping with a desire for an educated ministry.

**5.6.2** All the OLMs and AMs who responded to our questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about the training they had received, including its content and flexibility. However, feedback from the “On the Road” events suggests that the training requirements are a block to people entering OLM, alongside work and other commitments.<sup>[15]</sup> The group set up by Ministries Council a number of years ago to look at ministry for the under-45s also suggested that the training process was not suitable for those with family commitments.

**5.6.3** A related concern raised with the Panel is that those who would like to serve as Ordained Local Ministers in their own congregation and to undertake their training

within that context, have been precluded from doing so. In contrast, the call and ministry of ordained elders is assessed more locally, and training also provided in a much more local context. The Panel recognises that if ordination is recognised as an act of God and of the Church, it needs communal assent, and therefore a visible assessment of someone's calling and approved training to equip for that ministry.

### 5.7 Other issues: Local or Regional

**5.7.1** In this regard, some questions have been raised about how "local" OLM has become. In the questionnaire to Readers, one reason given for not transferring to OLM was a perceived limitation of being placed by Presbytery, rather than having freedom and flexibility. As noted above, some roadshow responses and comments of individuals to the Panel suggest others wish to serve very locally – within their own congregation – but that OLM does not seem to enable that.

**5.7.2** Has the Church of Scotland created "Ordained Regional Ministries" in our OLMs, with the Presbytery-level placement? Have we moved away from an intention and model that would enable ministries to be recognised, affirmed and equipped within the very local context of congregations? The Panel would suggest that this is an area which needs further consideration.

**5.7.3** The Panel intend to do further work on the following areas in consultation with Ministries Council and to bring a Joint Report to the General Assembly of 2018:

1. To bring guidelines regarding payments for Ordained Local Ministers and Auxiliary Ministers with a view to removing the stipulation that they must give 10 hours unpaid service before payment can be considered.
2. To consider how training and guidelines for placement after ordination might be changed to allow those who wish to train and serve as Ordained Local Ministers in their own congregations to do so.

### 5.8 Enabling Sacramental Ministries

**5.8.1** General Assembly also instructed the Panel *to explore further, in consultation with the appropriate Councils, how best to enable sacramental ministries in areas of work such as Fresh Expressions where, at present, an ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament may not have direct involvement, and in so doing consult with the Theological Forum to consider whether those who are not Ministers of Word and Sacrament might be authorised to administer the sacraments and in what circumstances.*

**5.8.2** Given the emphasis in the remit on sacramental ministries within Fresh Expressions, initial discussions have taken place with David McCarthy, the Church of Scotland Fresh Expressions Development Worker. Some Fresh Expressions involve ordained ministers enough to have strong relationships for sacramental ministry, but other gatherings are facing the issue of having to "bring someone in." While some OLMs are actively involved in Fresh Expressions, this recognised ministry is not the only model that will fit within these contexts.

**5.8.3** At the time of writing this report, initial contact has been made with Fresh Expressions staff in other denominations, who are further on this journey than the Church of Scotland. We will listen to what our sisters and brothers have already learnt.

**5.8.4** The other context in which administration of the sacraments may need to be enabled is in congregations without an ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament. Again, ecumenical partners may offer insights into approaches that have worked (or not), for example, the PCUSA Commissioned Ruling Elders model which Rev Dr Doug Gay has suggested we might use and "re-brand" as Commissioned Local Ministers. We may also be able to learn from our own history - the Free Church of Scotland passed an "Ordained Preachers Act" in 1895 to enable those without full training in the ministry to nevertheless administer the sacraments in areas where there was an insufficient pool of ministers available. This form of ministry was carried over into the Church of Scotland after

the Union of 1929, though recruitment for it stopped in 1932 and it had ceased completely by the early 1960s.

**5.8.5** This leads to overlapping theological discussions of ordination and sacraments. This takes place in the context of the one apostolic Church, while addressing real and particular needs of churches in their local contexts. The importance of both Word and Sacrament as gifts of God, the growing of community through sharing those gifts, the broad range of understandings of sacraments across the Church of Scotland, and the very practical issues of finding an ordained person to administer them all need to be considered. Resources for this ongoing discussion include the Panel on Doctrine reports of 2000 and 2001 on Ordination; and the World Council of Churches “Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry” and “The Church Towards A Common Vision.” The wisdom of the Theological Forum will also be needed.

**5.8.6** The Panel intends to do further work with Ministries Council, Fresh Expressions, Ecumenical Relations and the Theological Forum before bringing a final report on sacramental ministries to the GA of 2018. This will include recommendations on how to appropriately train and equip more people for ordination to Word and Sacrament, potentially broadening Ordained Local Ministry to recognise practical experience in Fresh Expressions, and the particular needs of Pioneer Ministries.

## **6. Local Corporate Leadership**

**6.1** During consultations in 2015 the Panel asked the question “How well placed are Kirk Sessions to provide the strategic leadership needed just now.” Almost universally the answer to that question was, “not well.” This highlighted the need for consideration to be given to the role and membership of Kirk Sessions.

**6.2** One quote used widely in Healthcare reform and often attributed to Edwards Denning says: *Every system is perfectly designed to get the result that it does.*<sup>[16]</sup>

The inference is that different results require a change to the system not just a new directive (or deliverance.) The

Panel is not suggesting that we should disband Kirk Sessions, but they may need to be reconfigured or a small group put in place who will take responsibility for strategic planning. Consideration of how to achieve a better balance of ages is also needed, the thought being that a multigenerational church needs a multigenerational Kirk Session.

**6.3** The Eldership Working Group is considering the role of elders and the Panel is represented on that group. However, alongside that, the Panel has been considering the structure of Kirk Sessions. As a first step, the Panel has been researching Presbyterian churches in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, USA, South Africa and elsewhere in the UK to ascertain whether the same issues pertain in other places – and if so, what they have done to address this issue. The early indications from this research are that Presbyterian churches in these countries face similar issues to those faced in the Church of Scotland and have no obvious answer to offer into how we might enable Kirk Sessions to become creative agents of change.

**6.4** This work will continue as the Panel looks at developments within Scotland and at churches which would either say that their Kirk Sessions are well placed to carry out strategic planning or that they have developed a different way of working to allow for this.

## **7. Younger People in Leadership**

**7.1** Consideration of the above led the Panel to consider more widely the theme of leadership within younger generations. As part of its work the group considering this area sought to look for good practice and looked at a mentoring/discipleship approach for investing in next generation leaders at Gorebridge. This is a very strong statement of what can be developed within a Church of Scotland congregation. This case study is included as Appendix 2 to the Panel’s report

**7.2** Yet this investment in young leaders is far from the norm across the wider Church. Few of our congregations are intentionally investing in next generation leaders. The

question emerged *how might the Panel encourage the wider Church to invest in next generation leaders?* In seeking to respond to the question, the group offered two modest observations and proposals, as follows.

**7.3 Observation 1** - The Gorebridge story has many similarities with the Path of Renewal. Both approaches have quite naturally focused on discipleship. This reflects a pattern which seems to be emerging in which God's word to today's Church is "go and make disciples" and this can be seen in a number of places across the Church in Scotland. Perhaps the reason this is coming through so freshly to us now is because somewhere along the way we forgot how fundamentally important this command is to the life of the Church.

**7.4** The first proposal of the group, accepted by the Panel, is that the Panel ensures that in shaping the work they are most closely associated with - the Path of Renewal - that, they encourage an explicit emphasis on next generation leadership amongst the participant congregations. In addition, the Panel will look at churches outside the Path of Renewal congregations where younger leaders are being encouraged and highlight good practice or examples which others might learn from. The Panel is also aware of the work being carried out by the Eldership Working Group which is relevant in this regard.<sup>[17]</sup>

**7.5 Observation 2** - There are severe impediments to next generation leadership that are deeply embedded within the local structures and culture of congregations. Research on generational characteristics suggests that younger generations (within and without the Church) are not sympathetic or attracted to the idea of accepting roles and responsibilities for life (e.g. eldership). Yet that is precisely the structure, tradition and expectation for leadership in the vast majority of congregations. The Church Without Walls Report recommended (A.4.3) that the Church move to having terms of service for elders. It also recommended that the 'one size fits all' model of pastoral eldership should be replaced with a focus on enabling elders to use their gifts. Over the years, we have

made very little progress towards these goals. But perhaps it is only now that we are feeling the pain of our failure to pay timely heed to wise words.

**7.6** The second proposal, again accepted by the Panel, is to remind the wider Church of the recommendations from the Church Without Walls Report and to urge congregations to revisit and review their practices and cultures in regard to eldership and leadership patterns at a local level. Recognising that presenting a deliverance to this effect is unlikely to achieve the desired effect, this work will be taken forward as part of the ongoing review on local leadership structures.

## 8. Ecclesiology

Following attendance of some Panel members at a conference on "The future of Protestantism", the main speaker at that conference, Professor Stefan Paas, was invited to be the keynote speaker at a conference in Scotland. Stefan is Professor of Missiology and Intercultural Theology at Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam. Sharing in partnership with Trinity College, Glasgow University, the focus for the conference was on the history of Renewal in Europe and on developing an Ecclesiology in a secular environment. Over 100 attended the conference and it is clear that further theological reflection on the place of the church in a post Christendom context would be helpful. The Panel is in discussion with other partners about how this might be developed further.

## 9. Pioneer Ministry

**9.1** Stefan Paas is experienced in church planting and in providing training for Pioneer Ministers. The Panel therefore organised a second conference during Stefan's visit to Scotland, looking at Pioneer Ministry. This was organised in partnership with Trinity College, Fresh Expressions, Forge Scotland and the Cairn Network. The focus of the conference was "Pioneer Ministry - how do we do it well?" This gave opportunity for those involved in or interested in this area of work to share together, including the newly appointed Pioneer Ministers within the Church of Scotland.

**9.2** Through these discussions the Panel became aware that the instruction given by the General Assembly in 2015 to develop training for Pioneer Ministry has not yet borne fruit and has committed to work with Ministries Council, Fresh Expressions and outside agencies on this.

## **10. Discipleship Stories**

**10.1** The Panel was instructed to work in collaboration with the Mission and Discipleship Council, to produce an online resource of stories of churches where new approaches are being developed.

**10.2** Aware that there are many video stories already available for community projects which have developed, the Panel has sought in their early work to create short videos on small, achievable projects which focus on developing opportunities for people to explore and deepen faith. These draw on experiences from a wide range of congregations, with the hope that watching the videos will stimulate others to think creatively about how they might create similar opportunities for people to explore faith in their contexts.

**10.3** Looking forward it is hoped to create a "library" of videos in a readily available online format, drawing not only on those produced by the Panel but on others too.

## **11. Administrative Burden**

**11.1** *Urge Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions to discuss and make suggestions of how to alleviate the administrative burden on local congregations and instruct the Panel to gather these suggestions and report to the Council of Assembly by December 2016.*

**11.2** A sub-group took feedback from a small focus group of Session Clerks. Based on the suggestions of the focus group, a questionnaire was issued on a variety of topics ranging from finance to fabric, and figures to fuel. The Panel is happy to report a 34% response rate from Session Clerks, representing a response from 458 Kirk Sessions. A full report with all comments and suggestions has been transmitted to the Council of Assembly and is available on the Panel's webpages.

**11.3** It was clear from the responses that this is a growing issue, with a number of congregations already experiencing difficulties in completing the administrative work required at a congregational level and others indicating that they could foresee difficulties in the future. Whilst the Panel recognises that many of these are caused by statutory regulations rather than the Church, the returns showed a desire for support from Presbyteries and the national Church to alleviate these issues.

**11.4** Appreciation was shown for the work done nationally to negotiate rates for churches for gas and electricity and scope may exist for this to be extended to other services.

**11.5** Assistance from Presbyteries in running Food Hygiene Courses was highlighted. Comments were also made in regard to duplication of information requests, and how this information might be centrally stored and updated by congregations on an ongoing basis.

### **11.6 Accountancy**

One very significant feedback was the extent to which congregations are struggling with the preparation of accounts to meet regulation standards and OSCR requirements. Over 43% of returns indicated that they would make use of a Presbytery facilitated accountancy service if offered, however a considerable number of others indicated that the likely cost might be off-putting.

### **11.7 Property Management**

There was a mixed response to the suggestion that a factoring service for buildings might be established nationally or regionally. It seems that if such a system was to be implemented, respondents would prefer it to operate at a Presbytery level and on an optional rather than mandatory basis. Use of the service would also be dependent on cost.

*In the name of the Panel*

GRAHAM DUFFIN, *Convener*  
DAVID C CAMERON, *Vice-Convener*

**APPENDIX 1**

**Path of Renewal – Key Transitions**

Focus on the needs of members and getting more people in – expecting them to fit in with what we do



Focus on walking with people where they are and we try to shape things round them

Minister is expected to do everything & drive everything on, being available for everyone



Minister enables others, encouraging them to listen and be obedient to God, working most closely with a small group

Personal faith is kept “private” and becoming a member is the key thing



Personal faith is openly spoken about and making disciples is key - encouraging one another in our walk with Christ

Main responsibility is being there on a Sunday and help out with church work



Members understand that they can serve Christ in all areas of life & look for ways to do that

Only concern is ensuring stability and planning accordingly



Creating space for experimenting is crucial in reshaping church for the future

Mission is all about getting people to come to church



Mission is about going into the world to share God’s love - and discovering that God is at work ahead of us

**APPENDIX 2**

**Next Generation Leadership: the story of Gorebridge Parish Church**

The youth ministry at Gorebridge Parish Church has been developing for just over seven years. When I first started at the church we had a youth group of three young people, two being the Minister’s kids and one bringing a friend. The usual trap is to seek numbers and growth quickly but we made a conscious decision that our priority was to disciple (Matthew 28). So over a period of around a year, there was a lot of prayer and Bible study, talking through

questions and just generally “doing life” together with these guys and at the end of one year, our youth group had grown to four.

However, as these young people started to understand the church was to be missional (the importance of Jesus and therefore the genuine need for their friends to come to know him) we set up once weekly drop ins for them to bring friends to. This is where relationships could grow with a view to starting discipling relationships with their friends. Over a period of four years, alongside summer camps and working in Gorebridge Opportunities (a secular

youth charity set up by the church in 2003), the church youth group had grown to around 15 - 20 people and we had regular contact with around 100 young people in the local community.

Instead of success, we viewed this as a potential problem. You cannot successfully disciple that many people and we did not want the youth group set up to end up a mile wide and an inch deep - we are called to make disciples. Knowing this and having worked with many young people for three years plus, we took the step of setting up a mentoring structure whereby our older young people with leadership potential (not defined by age but by Christian maturity) would take on responsibility in discipling three young people they had a heart for. This would involve trying to do Bible studies as a group once every couple of weeks, praying for those guys and being the one responsible to check in on them if they hadn't been around for a week etc. Also, they had to let the young people know they were taking on this role, so if the young people had any questions they knew which leader to ask.

As a result we unintentionally started to train people for leadership and we now have two students studying youth ministry on placement with us with another hopefully joining the course next year. We have also seen church attendance among young people head to anywhere

between 30 - 50 on any given Sunday, as they have become part of a caring Christian community that loves them very much. The youth ministry is also a valued and loved part of the church, with our youth team even praying over our Kirk Session to be filled with the Holy Spirit on what was a very impactful and emotional night.

We are definitely on a journey and still making mistakes but we believe life to the full can only be found in Jesus. Our job is not to entertain and babysit young people, but to disciple them into a life of following Jesus. This is so important as 70% of people who choose to follow Jesus for life in the West make the initial decision in their teenage years.

Currently we have just over 50 young people being actively disciplined by around 15 leaders. We hope for this number to continue to grow and to see many of our young people who are currently being disciplined, to start to disciple others in the near future.

*Ross Watters  
Youth Pastor  
Gorebridge Parish Church*

- [1] David Cormack: Change Direction – New ways forward for your life, your church and your business Monarch 1995
- [2] Mission & Discipleship Council report 2009, deliverance 13,
- [3] Ministries Council report 2013 deliverance 14
- [4] Special Commission anent Review & Reform 2001, deliverance 15
- [5] William Barclay: The Gospel of John Vol 1, The Saint Andrew Press 1955 p59
- [6] Fung, Raymond, The Isaiah Vision: an Ecumenical Strategy for Congregational Evangelism, WCC Publications, 1992 p3
- [7] Council of Assembly Report to the 2017 General Assembly, deliverance 2
- [8] Bolsinger, Tod: Canoeing the Mountains – Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory IVP 2015 p 45
- [9] Ibid p 166
- [10] Panel on Review & Reform Report to the 2016 General Assembly, Section 3.4
- [11] 2017 Chalmers Lectures, lecture 2 p11
- [12] Ministries Council Report to the General Assembly 2011, section 1.8.3.2
- [13] Act 9, 2011 Section 24
- [14] Panel on Doctrine Report to the General Assembly 2001, paragraph 5.4.4
- [15] Council of Assembly Report to the 2017 General Assembly, section 2.2.8
- [16] <http://www.health.org.uk/blog/every-improvement-system-perfectly-designed-deliver-results-it-gets> last accessed Feb 2017
- [17] Mission & Discipleship report to the 2017 General Assembly section 16