

## **SLIDE 1 - PRR TITLE SLIDE**

Moderator,

The place where I minister is a great place – with great people – who have a great - if sometimes corny - sense of humour.

A few years ago - we had a wee thing going - where everyone was telling "light bulb" jokes.

You know the kind of thing:

## **SLIDE 2 - LIGHT BULB**

**Q:** How many Psychologists does it take to change a light bulb?

**A:** Only one – but first the light bulb has to want to change.

or

**Q** How many Scotsmen does it take to change a light bulb?

**A:** Scotsmen don't change light bulbs - it's cheaper to sit in the dark

or

**Q:** How many TV evangelists does it take to change a light bulb?

**A:** Only one - but for the message of light to continue - send in your donation today.

There was one joke however - which stood out for me - and it's this:

**Q:** How many Church of Scotland Ministers does it take to change a light bulb?

**A:** The Answer is... CHANGE?????

## **SLIDE 3 - CHANGE**

Now that's a stereotype – and like all stereotypes it's just not true.

Ministers of the Kirk are well aware of change – we have lived with it our whole ministry.

The Church is no stranger to change.

Ministers, elders and members:

- have instigated change
- led change
- undergone change

and see the need for more change

This was evident - during consultations the Panel has undertaken over the last two years.

As we have gone round the country - speaking with members of Congregations and Presbyteries - we have found a growing awareness within the Church - that we are facing - what Lauren Mead calls – “a serious storm” - which necessitates change.

All of the indicators available to us make this clear:

- declining membership
- an ageing leadership
- a shortage of ministers
- and a disengagement from church by younger generations.

Significantly though - the Panel has also found a growing willingness to address this.

The debate within the Church - is no longer focussed on asking - “is change necessary?”

It has shifted to asking - “what kind of change is required?”

There is further work to be done - regarding what kind of change is required - but one thing is clear to the Panel:

- the majority of people want change to be rooted and shaped locally
- while being resourced and supported by the National Church

rather than driven from the centre.

#### **SLIDE 4 – ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL**

One of the most frequent comments made to the Panel over the last two years - is that ‘one size does not fit all’.

The Panel takes that comment seriously - and seeks to work alongside congregations - as the Church moves forward in meaningful ways - into God's future.

### **SLIDE 5 – PILOT CONGREGATIONS (a church)**

Section 1 of our Report notes that the Panel proposes a Pilot Project - working with 20 congregations – over a period of 2-3 years – supporting those congregations and ministers - in making the changes required - to move from a maintenance model - to a mission orientated one.

Invitations have already gone out to Presbyteries – asking them to nominate suitable congregations to take part in the Pilot – and we are grateful to Presbyteries - for engaging with what is a demanding timescale.

The Pilot Congregations will be mentored - and research will be undertaken - in order that lessons in change and transition might be learned – lessons that will help us think about how we might “be” and “do” church in the future.

It is hoped that the Pilot Congregations will - in time - become a resource for other Congregations.

Since publishing our report - the Panel has worked closely with the Ministries Council to develop the Pilot Project – and more detail is available in the Supplementary Report of the Ministries Council - on pages 48-49 of the Order of Proceedings.

The Panel is grateful to the Ministries Council for its support – and to the Mission and Discipleship Council who will be closely involved with the Pilot Project.

We are also grateful to the Convener and Secretary of the Council of Assembly - for their encouragement - in helping to get this project off the ground.

### **SLIDE 6 – LEADERSHIP (figures holding arrow, one pointing)**

In 2014 the Panel reported that as the number of parish ministers declines - rural presbyteries did not want to see the local church shaped around the number of parish ministers available.

Subsequent consultations with Presbytery Representatives - indicate that this is largely the desire of the whole church.

Rather than retrenching further - through a programme of unions and readjustments – participants expressed a desire that the Church should develop new local leadership - to sustain its reach across Scotland.

This affirms the picture that emerged in previous consultations - of a Church:

- where all who are called to serve - are enabled to serve
- where our ministers of Word and Sacrament - Deacons - and Ministries Development Staff - are used strategically – in roles where their gifts are recognised, valued and affirmed
- while at the same time - encouraging the ministry of all believers.

The Panel will work with others in considering both - the shape of local leadership – as well as the implications and sustainability of such an approach.

The question of how to facilitate the development of leadership within congregations - will also be considered as part of the Pilot Project.

### **SLIDE 7 – VISION STATEMENT (Man with telescope)**

At the consultations with Presbyteries - participants were asked to consider - the wording of a vision statement for the Church.

Section 2 of our report highlights that while participants could agree on the general principles that a vision statement should embody - there was no agreement when it came to a particular form of wording.

We should not be surprised to find this.

### **SLIDE 8 – THE EXODUS (people wandering in the wilderness)**

Through the lens of Change and Transition - William Bridges helps us to see - that where we find ourselves – is similar to where the people of Israel found themselves - as they journeyed from Egypt to the Promised Land.

The people expected to move straight from the old to the new - but instead it took them forty years of wandering in the wilderness - as they journeyed from one reality to another.

As they wandered through the wilderness - they encounter what Bridges calls a “neutral zone”.

Only after 40 years - once they had made the transition from their old ways of thinking - to new ones - could they be ready for their new life.

For Moses and Israel - the transition began when they left Egypt.

The next forty years were spent in a “neutral zone” experience - during which time Bridges says “Egypt was taken out of the people”.

The 'neutral zone' is an uncomfortable time between the old reality and the new.

The old reality has been left behind - but the new destination has not been reached.

This is a place where neither the old way of doing things - nor the new - work satisfactorily.

In the neutral zone – responses to change will vary:

- Some try to rush to the final destination
- Others are more cautious
- Some want to go one way
- others want to go another
- and yet others want to go a different way again.

All are heading for the same destination – the Promised Land:

- but with different ideas of how to get there
- travelling in different directions
- moving at different speeds
- with little degree of certainty.

The neutral zone can be an uncertain and painful time - but it can also be a creative time - a time of renewal and development - in the midst of uncertainty.

And so the Panel recognises - that this is not a time to spend endless hours trying to settle on a form of words for a new vision statement – indeed some of the participants at our consultations said exactly that to us.

This is instead:

- a time to encourage creativity
- a time for renewal and development
- a time for experimentation

that we might discern together - where God is leading us.

And it's those conversations that the Panel will seek to encourage.

Now commissioners might be tempted to think that no vision statement - means no vision – but that's not true – these two things are not the same.

From our consultations the Panel have begun to see the hint of a vision emerge – for local churches across Scotland:

- which are reinvigorated and relevant
- not all looking the same
- or shaped in the same way
- but caught and focussed willingly and joyfully in the mission of Jesus Christ
- as we seek to reach and serve the whole of Scotland - and beyond.

## **SLIDE 9 - A LARGE QUESTION MARK**

As the church seeks to exist in a dynamic and complex society - how do we make decisions - that enable us to move - from where we are - towards the new reality that God is leading us into?

Last year we reported to the Assembly that our work on Consensus and Communication - has led the Panel to look at how we make decisions.

### **SLIDE 10 – CONVERSATION GROUP (figures sitting around a table)**

We engaged the services of Professor Charlie Irvine - an expert in conflict resolution – and held a series of conversations - where participants were invited - to relate their experience of how we make decisions - within the Church.

The outcome of these conversations is reported in Section 3 of the report.

The conversations were balanced - containing as many positive stories as tales of concern or disillusionment – however:

- the content of decisions
  - and the manner of their taking
- came in for criticism.

Little can be done about the content of decisions – but much can be done in the way decision-making is conducted:

- with decision making processes being open, honest and fair
- where all voices are given the opportunity to speak - are listened to - and their views and concerns considered
- where everyone is treated with grace, in a dignified and respectful manner
- and where those who are “in charge” of the processes are even-handed and unbiased.

### **SLIDE 11 – CONSENSUS CARTOON**

The research indicated that many Kirk Sessions already seek consensus - rather than a simple majority.

This is consistent with previous research the Panel has undertaken - which recognised decision-making by consensus often happens informally - across the Church.

The Panel would encourage individual parts of the Church - such as Kirk Sessions, Congregational Boards and Presbyteries - to consider adopting formal mechanisms of consensus-based decision-making - but we are not

making a recommendation that the Church moves wholesale to formal consensus decision making – as we truly believe “one size does not fit all”.

### **SLIDE 12 – LARGE GROUP (of people looking like sheep)**

One specific area of concern the conversations highlighted - is that of **dysfunctionally large groups for some purposes** - with people questioning the suitability of existing structures for the demands of modern life.

Comments about large Kirk Sessions - are consistent with comments made during Presbytery consultations - where participants were of the view - that most Kirk Sessions are not well placed - to provide the kind of leadership required - to carry congregations through a period of change.

The Panel will look at those concerns as part of broader research into strategic leadership. It is hoped lessons will be learned from the Pilot Project I mentioned earlier.

### **SLIDE 13 – ARBITRATION (set of scales)**

A second area of concern - is the perception of lack of voice in the current **arbitration** procedures.

Arbiters make decisions on contentious matters which, by their nature, divide groups into 'winners' and 'losers'.

Their task is unenviable - as they pronounce on the future of buildings – buildings that people are attached to.

In contrast to discussion on other subjects – which was generally balanced - where arbitration featured - the comments were exclusively negative.

Given the small sample - too much significance should not be attached to this in itself...

But it would make sense to look at the way decision-making is conducted in the arbitration process - in order to increase confidence in the process.

The Panel is therefore asking the Legal Questions Committee, along with others, to review the processes used in arbitration.

### **SLIDE 14 – SCENARIO PLANNING (arms with fingers pointing outwards)**

Section 4 of the Panel's report gives a brief update on the progress of our work on Scenario Planning - an initiative that considers what possible futures may look like - aimed at helping the Church understand the missional context within which it operates.

The Panel - working alongside Professor George Burt of Stirling University - is exploring how this material can be presented to the Church.

The Scenarios will be piloted in a few locations - before refining them further for general release. This process will be facilitated by Professor Burt.

### **SLIDE 15 – THANKS**

We are grateful to the many people who have helped the Panel with its work this year - and I would like to thank them all.

In particular, I would like to place on record - my sincere thanks to Professor Charlie Irvine and Professor George Burt - for offering their expertise and enthusiasm to our work.

### **SLIDE 16 – LIGHT BULB**

Moderator I started with "light bulb" jokes and I'm afraid I'm going to start my conclusion with one...

**Q.** How many Church of Scotland members does it take to change a light bulb?

**A.** Only one... but first they have to form a committee - to decide what kind of light bulb to change to.

Frustrating as our structures might be at times...they reflect the distinctive biblical model upon which Presbyterianism is based... the participation of all of God's people - in all of God's work – we are all in this together.

## **SLIDE 17 – IN IT TOGETHER (4 figures holding 4 jigsaw pieces)**

That came home to me recently - when I was reading the book of Ephesians - as translated by Eugene Peterson in "The Message"

Chapter 4 from verse 4 reads:

" You were all called to travel on the same road and in the same direction, so stay together, both outwardly and inwardly. You have one Master, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who rules over all, works through all, and is present in all. Everything you are and think and do is permeated with Oneness.

<sup>7</sup> But that doesn't mean you should all look and speak and act the same. Out of the generosity of Christ, each of us is given their own gift."

We are all in this together – **but ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL**

As together we travel towards God's new future – the Panel believes that even if Bridges is right in his comparison with the Exodus – and we are in a "neutral zone" - this should not be a time of discouragement.

Rather it should be:

- a time for encouraging one another
- a time for experimentation
- a time for creativity
- a time for considering what possible futures may look like
- a time for making decisions together - that will help us make the transition to a new and different future...

...whatever it may hold.

**SLIDE 18 – PRR TITLE SLIDE**

Moderator, I present the report of the Panel on Review and Reform - and as I am not a commissioner - I ask the Principal Clerk to move the deliverance.