

# JOINT REPORT OF THE COUNCIL OF ASSEMBLY, LEGAL QUESTIONS COMMITTEE, MINISTRIES COUNCIL, MISSION AND DISCIPLESHIP COUNCIL AND THE PANEL ON REVIEW AND REFORM ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TENURE COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

May 2015

## PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

### The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.
2. Commend the Councils and Committees for their integrated approach to this important work and note progress.

## REPORT

1. The General Assembly of 2014 received the final report of the Special Commission Anent Ministerial Tenure and the Leadership of the Local Congregation and instructed a number of Councils and Committees to work together to ensure an integrated approach to the implementation of a number of recommendations. The Assembly asked for a final report to be presented in 2016 with an interim report in 2015.

2. The Council of Assembly set up a joint working group with representatives from Ministries Council, Mission and Discipleship Council, Legal Questions Committee and the Panel on Review and Reform. The group identified the tasks that required to be done and assigned responsibility to the appropriate body. The Council of Assembly has monitored progress. This report brings together interim reports on the various sections of the Deliverance and describes the work that remains to be done.

### 3. Local Church Review

3.1 The Mission and Discipleship Council and the Panel on Review and Reform assumed lead responsibility for the implementation of the first section of the Deliverance:

- i) *(to deliver) a national template for Local Church Review training and implementation, modelling good practice and consistency of approach.*

3.2 As part of a wider series of consultations with Presbytery representatives during the autumn of 2014, the Panel on Review and Reform explored the degree to which Presbyteries have implemented the Local Church Review process and how effective it has been in encouraging congregations in their development. The picture that emerged was, at best, patchy with some Presbyteries having made substantial progress while others have not started the process. In particular, the Presbyteries of Edinburgh, Lothian, Kirkcaldy, Ayr and Aberdeen reported substantial progress. In each of these Presbyteries there is

a person or team dedicated to completing Local Church Reviews and, in some, to following up afterwards. In discussion with the Council of Assembly, the Panel noted that Presbyteries are free to use their Presbytery allowance on Ministries and Mission Contributions (currently 4%) to employ staff. This might include employing someone on a part-time basis to take responsibility for Local Church Reviews, to encourage good practice and consistency of approach across a Presbytery. Presbyteries are encouraged to consider whether this use of their funding might be helpful.

**3.3** Where Local Church Review has been implemented it is generally found to be an effective tool for the encouragement of congregations. For many Presbyteries, however, the whole process feels daunting. There were two specific requests from Presbytery representatives:

1. Training for those involved in carrying out Local Church Reviews.
2. Concise reporting forms to gather the salient information.

**3.4** The Mission and Discipleship Council believes that the best way of implementing Local Church Review is to embed the training at a local level and that Presbyteries are best placed to choose or adapt a template appropriate to their local setting. As reported to the 2014 General Assembly, the Council has developed three templates for Local Church Review and has made them available on its website at [www.resourcingmission.org.uk/resources/local-church-review](http://www.resourcingmission.org.uk/resources/local-church-review), together with a theological introduction to the process and guidance on facilitation and goal-setting. The Council continues to give thought to its capacity for developing a template for national training and will report further in 2016.

## **4. Review of Vacancy Processes**

**4.1** The Ministries Council is working with the Legal Questions Committee and the Finance Group of the Council of Assembly on the implementation of the second section of the Deliverance:

- ii) a review of vacancy processes, including a revision of the Vacancy Procedure Act (Act VIII 2003), to provide resources for Nominating Committees and appropriate training of Interim Moderators and Advisory Committees so that there may be some consistency of approach.*

The various bodies have had initial conversations about the matter. Ministries Council started consulting Presbytery Clerks at their conference in February 2015 and will give consideration, in partnership with others, to the need to provide resources and training for those involved at congregational and Presbytery level in vacancies. The Legal Questions Committee will undertake a revision of the Vacancy Procedure Act in the course of the next year once the options and proposals are clearer. Legal Questions will consider revising other aspects of vacancy procedure at the same time. The Finance Group of the Council of Assembly will work with Ministries on the implications for the budget of any change in the vacancy arrangements and allowances.

## **5. Training and Resourcing for Ruling Elders**

**5.1** The Mission and Discipleship Council is taking the lead on the implementation of section 3 of the Deliverance:

- iii) a contextual training and resourcing programme for ruling elders.*

This Council reported to the 2014 Assembly the findings from its extensive consultation with the eldership. Its Eldership Working Group had organised a series of regional consultations and had also invited every Kirk Session to contribute through a questionnaire. The Council was keen to find out, among other things, what elders themselves thought would be the most effective form of training delivery for their roles. That process identified that a flexible local group-led approach was the most appropriate model of training ruling elders. While there was a real appetite for learning and development provision, elders asked that the training should be adaptable to the local context.

5.2 In response, Mission and Discipleship has developed the very popular *Learn:Eldership* publication for use by individuals or groups. The Council is aware that many congregations are buying multiple copies for use by their Kirk Sessions. In addition, the Council hosted a very successful conference for Session Clerks and elders in October 2014; that too gave useful insights into the training and resourcing needs of these key individuals in our church life. The Council intends to commission a researcher to review further the findings from the consultation exercise and to help identify other effective ways of training and resourcing ruling elders. A full report will be brought to the 2016 General Assembly.

## 6. Ministry Development Review and Continuing Ministry Development

6.1 The Ministries Council is taking the lead on the implementation of section 4 of the Deliverance:

- iv) *a fully costed scheme of Ministry Development Review and Continuing Ministry Development.*

This work is even more relevant in the context of the Decade for Ministry which the Council believes demands first and foremost the affirmation and support of those currently in service. Engaging with the task of devising a plan for MDR and CMD have been those Council members and staff involved in ministry training and pastoral support. It seemed clear from the outset that the Council was not simply looking to provide personal plans for academic study or professional development but was concerned to create a learning environment that cares for and supports the spiritual, intellectual, emotional and physical wellbeing of ministers. It was also clear that it was not providing a system of appraisal but was focussed instead upon creating opportunities for the development of skills and gifts appropriate to the challenges of ministry today. Giving ministers space through a Development Review to examine their current role and the attendant training needs can also raise questions of vocation and whether God may be calling them to pastures new. Therefore, sensitivity to the pastoral needs of the minister

goes hand in hand with a review of work and potential development.

6.2 Following preliminary meetings there was then opportunity to meet with representatives of other denominations who are further down the road of MDR and CMD. It is unnecessary to reinvent a wheel that is running well in other contexts and the Council expresses its thanks to those who have shared their wisdom and experience from the Church of England, United Reformed Church and those they are yet to meet at the time of writing. The Council also wishes to express its thanks to those who attended the Ministries Council Presbytery Conference in January and engaged in helpful debate around some of these questions. What follows are some pointers along the way for future discussions prior to reporting in 2016 with detailed plans.

6.3 Turning first to MDR, a visit to the Church of England Diocese of London, which has years of experience in this area, revealed an embedded and appreciated process of review. A system of three year curacy does mean that clergy are accustomed to a lengthier period of compulsory training and to learning together in community. A process of continued development is set in that context and the Diocese has created a three year cycle of MDR. Crucial to that process is the selection of a reviewer or consultant, who will be chosen by the clergy person from a list of about 50 biographies (half of whom are clergy, half laity). A form is filled out and discussed with the consultant, leading to action points and objectives for the coming year. Over the next two years training is put in place either from a portfolio of what is already available or tailored to the individual and again over the next two years it is possible to meet with the consultant and keep under review those identified needs and some core competencies for ministerial practice.

6.4 The United Reformed Church has two systems of review, namely Local Ministry and Mission Review (LMMR) which reviews the work and life of the congregation and Ministerial Accompanied Self Review (MASA). A pastoral consultant sits with the minister to work through a series

of questions in order to explore that which is fruitful and enjoyable in the minister's work and to agree together training and development needs.

**6.5** Both denominations employ staff to act as Directors of Ministry or Training Officers to ensure that following the review processes there is proper provision for the desired development and training.

**6.6** Turning secondly to CMD it is clear that sister denominations do as we do in offering a sum of money for each minister each year to undertake some study or personal development. That resource is, however, linked to the outcomes of the MDR. Others also offer sabbaticals every ten years with the option to have three months off to study and have some rest and relaxation. Stipend continues to be paid and there is an additional financial resource given. Further degree study is supported by paying a proportion of academic fees. We found in the Diocese of London a strong commitment to coaching and mentoring with all senior clergy being trained in mentoring and all new clergy to the Diocese having a mentor whether or not they are new to ministry.

**6.7** CMD further provides for learning together in day or residential conferences especially at critical stages and transition points such as entering a new charge. Of particular interest is a course offered by the London Diocese for experienced ministers in their 50s questioning what the next years of ministry may hold for them. A conference called Renewing Vision-Renewing Ministry will be audited by the Council this year with a view to exploring whether that could be adapted for the Church of Scotland context. We are clear that the decade leading up to retirement can be a time of much uncertainty for ministers, but can also be a time where the experience gained over the years in ministry can act as a catalyst for reinvigoration and renewal of vision.

**6.8** In the coming year the Council will continue to meet with representatives of other denominations to understand better potential MDR and CMD processes, while also reviewing its own systems of Study Leave and Accompanied Review. It will examine whether or how

MDR may relate to Local Church Review. It will consider how best to carry out a review process in terms of paperwork and personnel. It will consult within and outwith the Church of Scotland on the kinds of development opportunities that should be made available. Ministries Council recognises the staffing commitment that will be part of the costing of these processes. In all of this the Council will be guided by a strong commitment to the spiritual, intellectual, emotional and physical wellbeing of ministers as it looks towards their personal development and their opportunity to be part of a supportive learning community.

**6.9** The Legal Questions Committee is aware that the proposals which may emerge from this lengthy and complex exercise are likely to require significant new legislation and also the revision of some existing legislation. It expects to work closely with Ministries Council on shaping this over the next year. The Council of Assembly, through its Finance Group, stands ready to assist Ministries Council in the costing and resourcing of its proposals.

## **7. Capability Procedure**

The Ministries Council is also taking the lead on the implementation of section 5 of the Deliverance:

*v) a Capability Procedure for inducted parish ministers.*

Ministries Council is aware that an effective Capability Procedure needs to be carefully crafted and well thought through. The Council is grateful to the Church of England for providing a copy of their Capability Procedure. The Council believes that this offers a useful starting point, albeit one requiring significant reworking to ensure that it would fit both the Scottish context and our Presbyterian polity. This work has begun and has included fruitful conversations with the Legal Questions Committee. The Council has also taken the opportunity to learn from colleagues in the Diocese of London on how their Capability Procedure has worked in practice. The Council

intends to reflect further on what it has discovered and will report fully in 2016.

## 8. Legislative Framework

The last section of the Deliverance calls for:

- vi) *a legislative framework which enables Presbytery, Regional and National structures to cooperate on the training, administration and delivery of Local Church Review, Ministry Development Review, Continuing Ministry Development and Capability Procedure.*

This is clearly the responsibility of the Legal Questions Committee. The Committee has appointed a working group to consider all of the issues and will be working closely with the other Councils and the Panel on Review and Reform over the course of the next year. The Committee has recognised that there will be some overlap between this work and the review of ministerial Practising Certificates, which was instructed by the 2013 Assembly. Legal Questions is currently taking the lead on the latter,

with a view to ensuring that any new system of ministerial registration will be compatible with the other work being undertaken. This matter is covered in more detail in the Report of the Legal Questions Committee.

*In the name of the Council of Assembly,  
the Legal Questions Committee, the Ministries Council,  
the Mission and Discipleship Council and the Panel on  
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