

## PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

### The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.

### A Vision for Change

2. Affirm that the purpose of presbytery reform must be to enable the mission of Christ.
3. Affirm the vision begun at the Reformation and expressed in the *Church without Walls (CWW)* report<sup>1</sup> that the Church of Scotland's foundation for mission is rooted in the local church, through the ministry of all God's people.
4. Affirm that local mission planning is a priority for the Church and the presbytery is the church community which should resource and support the local gospel imperative.
5. Agree that presbytery planning should take place within the wider context of presbytery reform and be conducted in partnership with presbyteries to ensure the strategic distribution of the Ministry and Mission allocation.
6. Note with concern the present situation in many presbyteries where compliance with governance, planning and finance cannot be fully achieved.
7. Affirm the need for a mechanism of devolved authority to reform the present presbyteries so that they may become the regional areas of proclamation, support and oversight as envisaged in the report.

### A Model for Change

8. Affirm that Local Area Groupings and Presbytery Assemblies would present the Church with an exciting opportunity to develop and strengthen its capacity to celebrate and collaborate.
9. Agree the principle of the creation of Local Area Groupings, Presbyteries, Presbytery Assemblies and Presbytery Councils.
10. Welcome the formation of Local Area Groupings as the place where presbyteries encourage, support and resource missional initiatives of congregations and promote the core commitment contained in the Church of Scotland's *Vision Statement*.
11. Call upon Presbyteries to become the primary levers of change for their own re-formation.
12. Instruct Presbyteries to establish dialogue groups as set out in Appendix 7 to facilitate the implementation of the proposed presbytery structure.

### Resources Necessary to Facilitate and Sustain Such Change

13. Welcome the commitment of the Ministries Council to devolve a ministries budget<sup>2</sup> to a reduced number of better-resourced presbyteries and note the intention of the Council of Assembly and the Ministries Council to develop pilot schemes for this purpose.

<sup>1</sup> Special Commission on Review and Reform report to the 2001 General Assembly

<sup>2</sup> Ministries Council report to the 2010 General Assembly, 3/25, s 1.4.4

14. Note with approval that the Panel on Review and Reform and Ministries Council will work in partnership to facilitate and monitor all aspects of the process of transition towards a reformed presbytery structure through the creation of an Implementation Management Group, chaired by a member of the Panel.
15. Welcome the commitment of the Ministries Council to allocate staffing resources within the limits of the current five-year rolling budget and to support those presbyteries which achieve the capacity to create an alternative presbytery structure based on the principles contained in the Panel's report.

### Realising the Vision

16. Instruct the Panel on Review and Reform:
  - (i) to continue to consult with Kirk Sessions and Presbyteries on the process and transition for reform of presbyteries proposed in the report.
  - (ii) to develop, in conjunction with the Legal Questions Committee, a clear framework of accountability, appeals and working practice for the new presbyteries and to report to the General Assembly of 2012.
17. Instruct the Legal Questions Committee, in consultation with the Panel on Review and Reform, Presbyteries and Councils, to bring to the General Assembly of 2012 such amendments to the Acts and Regulations as may be required to reflect a restructuring of presbyteries as envisaged in this report.

## 1 The Need for Change

### 1.1 Pathway to Reform

*The church shaped by the coming kingdom will live less by historical precedent and more by the future expectation of becoming part of God's new creation. We participate in God's mission for a redeemed planet and people, and the church is created on the way. It is not that the church 'has' a mission, but the very reverse: the mission of Christ creates his own church.*

Special Commission on Review and Reform report to the  
2001 General Assembly, 36/10

When the Panel on Review and Reform was formed in 2004, one of its remits was to present a vision of what the Church might become and offer paths by which the Church might travel towards that vision. In 2008, the General Assembly instructed the Panel to focus that vision on the role of presbyteries.<sup>3</sup> What was the reasoning behind this instruction?

In 2001, the Special Commission on Review and Reform encouraged the Church to return the ministry of the Gospel to the people of God.<sup>4</sup> The Commission's aim was to provide the Church with a vision for the Church of Scotland which reflected the rich diversity that exists within it.

The Commission's report asserted that the Church needed a clear vision of the future, accompanied by a change in mindset, the outcome of which would be a Church that was more mission-focused. It was recognised that congregations need the space and opportunity to develop their own patterns of ministry, mission, worship and leadership which best suit their own communities. This required structural changes in what the Commission called "the central and regional church" in order to support local churches in their mission. The regional church, it said, should provide relational support for local strategy, regional centres of worship and inspiration, and a more comprehensive oversight of resources. The report asserted that although there was a willingness to serve the local

<sup>3</sup> Special Commission on Structure and Change report to the 2008 General Assembly, Deliverance, s 4

<sup>4</sup> Special Commission on Review and Reform report to the 2001 General Assembly, 36/8 ff

church, there still existed an element of false expectation and often paralysis of action at all levels.<sup>5</sup>

Also in 2001, the Board of Practice and Procedure, fulfilling a remit handed down to it by the 1999 General Assembly, published a consultation paper entitled, *Tomorrow's presbyteries* proposing seven, ten and twelve presbytery models for the Church. The outcome of the consultation process was very clear. The 2002 General Assembly found little enthusiasm for these "super-presbyteries". Nonetheless, there remained a concern about the functioning of presbyteries and an acknowledgement that change of some sort was needed though not the configuration proposed in the Board's report.

In response to the recommendations made in the Special Commission anent Review and Reform's report, the 2004 General Assembly accepted the Assembly Council's proposals for the restructuring of the central administration of the Church. This was intended to address the perceived top-down pattern of governance, replacing it with one which was more appropriately structured to resource the local church. In reality, because presbyteries had not been similarly reviewed and restructured, some felt that in terms of governance, nothing had really changed: the power balance between the three parts of the church – local, regional and central – had simply shifted, so it seemed that more power had been concentrated in the central administration.

There was also the question of whether or not the fundamental constitutional character of the Church remained truly presbyterian. As a result, the 2006 General Assembly accepted a petition to appoint an independent commission to examine the effect of the changes that had taken place. The Special Commission on Structure and Change reported to the 2008 General Assembly, and with respect to presbyteries offered the following conclusion:

*It has occurred to us that at least some of the disquiet that we have encountered about the centralisation of decision-making may have less to do with changes that have occurred and more to do with changes that have not occurred. Change at the centre has not been paralleled by change at presbytery level.<sup>6</sup>*

The Special Commission asked the question, "Where is the Church of Scotland heading to if we maintain our present course?"<sup>7</sup> and concluded that the responses they received did not suggest a coherent vision. The Commission asserted that decision-making needed to be brought nearer to the local church and was not convinced that the present structure achieved that.

*The restructuring undertaken since 2001 has been unevenly implemented. There is unfinished business when it comes to the regional church. At present a considerable degree of power is concentrated at the centre because there is no adequate repository for it elsewhere. Determining the best structure at the regional level will be for the Church as a whole to decide. We do not suggest that it will be simply a matter of putting five or six presbyteries together in a larger grouping in order to do the same old things.<sup>8</sup>*

The Commission suggested that the regional church should be the place for strategic thinking and missional planning and that steps should be taken to determine how that could be achieved. This was accepted by the 2008 General Assembly which gave a clear instruction to the Panel on Review and Reform:

<sup>6</sup> Special Commission on Structure and Change report to the 2008 General Assembly, 25/10, s 6.1

<sup>7</sup> Special Commission on Structure and Change report to the 2008 General Assembly, 25/10, s 6.2

<sup>8</sup> Special Commission on Structure and Change report to the 2008 General Assembly, 25/11, s 6.2

<sup>5</sup> Special Commission anent Review and Reform report to the 2001 General Assembly, 36/16 ff

*Instruct the Panel on Review and Reform to bring to the General Assembly of 2010 proposals for an alternative presbytery structure, including size, devolved powers, staffing, and appropriate budgets, along with the resources necessary to facilitate and sustain such changes.<sup>9</sup>*

## 1.2 What's Wrong with Presbyteries?

In trying to answer this question, we must not lose sight of much of the good work that is done in presbyteries as they carry out their functions (as outlined in Appendix 1). From the outset, therefore, the Panel has acknowledged the commitment to service that we have seen from many of those who work tirelessly for our presbyteries. Undoubtedly, there are many aspects of presbytery life that work well – and some presbyteries work very well. Many congregations, however, consider presbytery to be a necessary irrelevance: necessary for maintaining the system as we have it, but irrelevant to congregations unless they are experiencing a vacancy or readjustment. There is a growing consensus that something needs to alter in the way presbyteries function. As the Panel's church-wide consultations discovered, problems were identified in a number of areas of presbytery responsibility.

## 1.3 Mission

It is a matter of significance and concern that the presbytery is not generally considered to be the source of inspiration, support for worship, witness and mission of local congregations that it should be. Nevertheless, encouraged by the vision of the CWW report, some presbyteries have organised large-scale mission-oriented events and this is to be commended, for example, Christfest 2004 (organised by Dumfries and Kirkcudbright), Big Saturday in 2005 and Nexus in 2007 (organised jointly by Glasgow, Hamilton, Lanark, Greenock and Paisley and Dumbarton). Presbytery planning has introduced a degree of strategic thinking into presbyteries' approach

to the deployment of ministries but, even where the responsibility to encourage and support mission is in the consciousness of individual presbyteries, there is little evidence that presbyteries in general have strategies for sustainable mission. This is partly to do with mindset and partly because of the way presbyteries are currently structured.

## 1.4 General Comments

Over the past three years, the Panel has held extensive consultations and has spoken to a variety of people. What follows below is what you have told us about where some of the problems within presbyteries lie.

### 1.4.1 Commitment and Process

- "I do not feel wanted, they do not welcome new faces, same old faces year in year out."
- "We spend hours on dreary business, which may not be necessary or could be handled better in other less formal ways."
- "Presbytery does less than either the parish or the central administration, why should I spend time on Presbytery business?"

### 1.4.2 Role

- "I think there is some uncertainty over the role (this is manifest in the reporting of tedious meetings, or of meetings not having enough to do), despite presbyteries having enormous capacity for initiative."
- "Some key functions *eg* superintendence and forward planning, are proving difficult to achieve in some areas."
- "The role of presbyteries has been diminished since the abolition of direct representation on National Councils and Committees."

### 1.4.3 Resources

- "We have a shortage of ministers and too many long vacancies. Ministers in post are fully stretched and unable to undertake additional Presbytery duties."
- "There is only so much time that folk can spare and only so much money, and the Presbytery functions suffer."

<sup>9</sup> Special Commission on Structure and Change report to the 2008 General Assembly, 25/1 Deliverance, s 4

- “Not many people are prepared to give the time and effort necessary to make it work.”

#### 1.4.4 Size and Skills

- “There are not enough people with the skill and competence in the process; we now have to handle OSCR (Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator) and child protection (Safeguarding) and it is a nightmare.”
- “It is difficult to exercise discipline or superintendence when everyone knows each other.”
- “We are small and all think the same way, there is no outside view to challenge how we operate.”
- “We need groups of people locally who are close to the ground and know their own area – people who can struggle with a decision for their own community and then feel that they own that decision.”

#### 1.4.5 Presbytery Meetings

- “The Presbytery agenda is taken up with routine matters of administration leaving little time for fresh thinking in terms of mission and outreach.”
- “The way Presbytery currently works often leads to much routine business being brought to the floor of Presbytery simply to be ‘rubber stamped’ or ‘noddled through’ with no sense of engagement with the issues because they are simply routine.”
- “The time spent on routine matters disables Presbytery from thinking more creatively about mission and how this court might support congregations.”
- “The present system of committee meetings makes it difficult to circulate full information and gives presbyters little time to digest information presented. This means that often presbyters are not as informed as they might be or have not had time to sufficiently reflect on the issues presented. This can make presbyters feel unable to contribute to discussion and debate.”
- “Time spent in meetings is time not spent doing.”

Such comments reflect a general frustration with the working of presbyteries.

### 1.5 Specific Issues

As well as the general perceptions and the reality of how presbyteries operate, the Panel found there were difficulties with a number of particular issues.

#### 1.5.1 Superintendence

Some presbyteries within the current set-up fail to demonstrate that they can exercise proper authority. Many presbyteries are finding it more and more difficult to carry out the process of superintendence in an effective manner. There is certainly no consistency of practice.

In some cases, there is next to no oversight of congregational and ministerial functions, and pastoral support is, at best, patchy. In the worst cases, congregations with inadequate financial procedures and ineffective safeguarding measures are unchallenged by presbytery.

One presbytery is embarking on its fifth disciplinary enquiry in a year and has run out of people to appoint to this type of work. Another has recently reported that it cannot find anyone to serve as Clerk and where smaller presbyteries are unable to fulfil the main offices of service, the means of regional supervision has broken-down completely.

#### 1.5.2 Presbytery and the General Assembly

Despite the number of remits sent down by the General Assembly to presbyteries and kirk sessions, there is little evidence that the flow of information is helpful to the work of the Church. At kirk session level, most General Assembly remits are often simply glossed over. At presbytery level, presbyters are prepared to vote with the view adopted by a small committee or advocated by a strong convener. Of course, this is not new. Recently, a number of presbyteries have failed to make any returns despite the request to do so. If remits are to remain the means by which the Church discerns the mind of its members, the General Assembly and councils have to consider more effective ways of communicating and consulting on the issues that they are asking people to make decisions about.

### 1.5.3 Governance

Governance is about ensuring that an organisation runs effectively, follows good practice, and is accountable in ways which are transparent. The Church of Scotland and its constituent bodies (including its presbyteries) have to comply with numerous civil laws. Under charity law, the Church has been accorded Designated Religious Charity status which means that it is not required to comply with a number of the charity law regulatory controls exercised by OSCR, nor is it answerable to the civil courts in the way that other charities are. To maintain this status, the Church has to demonstrate that its own system of governance functions efficiently. Presbyteries must demonstrate effective supervision of congregations. Similarly, presbyteries should be subject to the same level of scrutiny. Any devolution of additional powers and responsibilities means that new procedures and strategies will have to be in place to ensure accountability on the part of presbyteries so that they operate effectively and in compliance with Church governance and civil law requirements. They must develop a clear picture of accountability, appeals, and working practices.

### 1.5.4 Property

Where property is concerned, although presbyteries have numerous powers, the efficiency of dealing with these issues is variable, often reflecting the skills and diligence of particular presbyters rather than good governance within the presbytery as a whole. Of particular concern is the lack of monitoring of congregations in the carrying out of urgent and/or necessary work identified in professional property surveys and required under the terms of the Act anent the Care of Ecclesiastical Buildings.

Some presbyteries permit congregations to call a new minister where the manse is not in a fit state, notwithstanding the specific provisions designed to prevent this in the Vacancy Procedures Act (Act VIII 2003). This puts the incoming minister, congregation and the General Trustees (who will often receive a plea for financial help) in a difficult situation.

Presbyteries are required to approve the acquisition of all property and in particular to inspect all potential new manses before acquisition. A small group should be given delegated powers and clear lines of authority to do this on behalf of presbytery where permissions can be obtained at short notice when required. Each presbytery, therefore, should have at least one official with a grasp of the ecclesiastical rules applying to church property.

### 1.5.5 Stewardship and Finance

The General Assembly's Regulations for Congregational Finance require presbyteries to inspect congregational accounts and ensure that these comply with the Church's Regulations. This is an important function in terms of our Designated Religious Charity status, yet presbyteries vary in their diligence in carrying out this responsibility. There are recorded instances where, for example, some presbyteries have failed to take appropriate action, demonstrating that they:

- are reluctant to investigate or to report financial irregularities within congregations;
- tolerate congregations not submitting proper accounts, in some cases allowing this to continue for years: one congregation did not submit proper accounts on time for six years;
- often take no action when congregations are repeatedly late in submitting accounts, in one case by fourteen, two and three months in successive years;
- do not rigorously enforce the regulation for congregations to obtain an annual dispensation in situations where they are not able to pay their Ministries and Mission contributions by monthly standing order;
- do not provide sufficient training and support for congregational treasurers and independent examiners even though there is assistance available from Stewardship and Finance Department staff;
- do not provide an effective channel of communication to congregations for basic information about how finance in the Church is managed at a national level and how it affects individual congregations;

- are often reluctant to ask for help from the Stewardship and Finance Department when they encounter difficulties: there are cases where despite the Department being aware of difficulties with congregational accounts, the presbytery return states that the accounts for every congregation within the presbytery are perfect with not even minor errors reported.

### 1.5.6 Accounts and OSCR Compliance

Presbyteries are the bodies charged with ensuring financial probity and accounting compliance within congregations. This responsibility has increased with the need to ensure that each congregation – and indeed the presbytery itself where it has charitable status – lodges its accounts and annual return timeously with OSCR and with '121'. There have been cases of embezzlement in recent years where the delay by the presbytery to monitor accounts has allowed the situation to 'fester' with a resultant increased loss. There are presbyteries where the essential experience required to expedite the basic accounting function of the Church is simply not available. In one instance, the Minister holds the positions of both Presbytery Clerk and Stewardship and Finance Presbytery Representative. This imposes an unacceptable burden of work and a conflict of interest when a disciplinary matter has to be addressed.

If congregational returns and accounts are outstanding, it is very difficult for a presbytery, as the first level of supervision and discipline, to exercise these functions if the presbytery itself has not complied with the statutory requirements.

At one end of the scale, there is a lack of consistency in the standards of administration within presbyteries, and at the other, a complete inability to carry out to an acceptable minimum standard the basic functions of supervision and governance. Should OSCR conclude (following upon a complaint or in regard to unacceptably and frequent late submissions of accounts) that the Church of Scotland is failing to exercise supervisory and disciplinary functions, the Church's Designated Religious

Charity status and reputation could be at risk and the congregations concerned could forfeit their charitable status with a loss of tax and other benefits.

### 1.6 Why Do Presbyteries Struggle?

It is clear from the Panel's review of presbyteries that many struggle due to a variety of factors:

- Many ministers are fully stretched at parish level and unable to take on presbytery responsibilities.
- Presbyteries have limited resources in terms of staff and finance.
- There are not enough people with relevant skills to do the work.
- There is an over-reliance on retired ministers to fulfil the ever increasing demand of a heavy bureaucracy.
- There are too many vacancies.
- There are ministers and elders who contribute little to presbytery simply because they lack confidence in presbytery itself. Presbyteries have been described as places of "institutionalised distrust".<sup>10</sup>
- It is difficult to exercise superintendence and discipline in situations where everyone knows everyone.
- There is huge disparity in the size of presbyteries which, when the current round of presbytery planning is complete, will range in size from 133.6 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) charges to 2.4 FTE charges. There will be 13 presbyteries with 10 or fewer FTE charges.<sup>11</sup>

The ever-increasing demand of a heavy bureaucracy and fewer people either willing or with the necessary skills has disabled presbytery from fulfilling its core functions and from becoming a place which drives the mission of the Church.

<sup>10</sup> Special Commission on Review and Reform report to the 2001 General Assembly, 36/16 ff

<sup>11</sup> Ministries Council report to the 2010 General Assembly, Table of percentages of Ministries for presbytery planning, 3/35

## 1.7 Conclusion

The fact that there have been previous attempts at reforming presbyteries indicates that, for many years, there has been a conviction that something needs to alter in the way presbyteries function. Earlier attempts have failed, mainly because presbyteries have not been convinced that the most obvious solution – decrease the number of them and increase the size – will make anything better. The mindset of the role and function of presbyteries remained the same: meet the same way; do the same things, only across a larger geographical area. Larger presbyteries meeting the same way, doing the same things is not the answer. **The status quo is neither the place to be nor to remain.** The answer lies in embracing a vision for change that focuses the Church of Scotland in all its parts on the one who calls her – Christ himself. The need for reform has been identified. The Panel appreciates the challenge the Church faces and the anxiety that proposals for reform bring but it is also persuaded that the process of presbytery reform is a vital piece of the jigsaw if the Church is to be equipped to realise a vision for change.

## 2 A Vision for Change

*The vision of the Church of Scotland is to be a church which seeks to inspire the people of Scotland and beyond with the Good News of Jesus Christ through enthusiastic, worshipping, witnessing, nurturing and serving communities.*

Panel on Review and Reform report to the 2006 General Assembly

**2.1** The vision of the modern Church of Scotland began with the Reformation of 1560. It has always been a vision whereby the Church has sought to inspire the people of Scotland, and beyond, with the Good News of Jesus Christ through a model of church governance which affirms the primacy of the local Christian community.

Within the first decade following the Reformation Parliament, the Church of Scotland recognised clear and distinct roles for the local court (Kirk Session), the regional court (Superintendent's Synod), and the national court (General Assembly). This was operated as a bottom-up model with the regional synods being the key court.

The role of the synods was to “consult upon the common affairs of these dioceses.”<sup>12</sup> The General Assembly repeatedly refused to discuss matters which could be determined at the regional level.<sup>13</sup> Only those issues that a synod felt unable to resolve could be raised at national level.<sup>14</sup>

This ‘bottom-up’ model gave primacy to the local church, with its local needs and solutions, and in the light of these, the regional determination of staffing requirements and financial allocations. Indeed, even those matters which were determined at a national level acknowledged the primacy of the regional level and it was not uncommon to see General Assembly deliverances modified as Synods took local factors into account when implementing national policy.<sup>15</sup>

The General Assembly of 2001 reaffirmed that vision when it accepted the recommendations of the Special Commission on Review and Reform that “the shape of the Church be turned upside down to affirm the primacy of the local Christian community ...”<sup>16</sup> This recommendation mirrored the original vision of the reformers and so what became known as the *CWW* report pointed the Church back to its roots and painted a picture of what a church that was “the right way up” should look like.

<sup>12</sup> Thomson, T, ed, *Acts and Proceedings of the General Assemblies of the Kirk of Scotland from the year MMCLX, I*, p 29, (Edinburgh, 1939-1945)

<sup>13</sup> Thomson, T, ed, *Acts and Proceedings*, pp 52 and 132

<sup>14</sup> Thomson, T, ed, *Acts and Proceedings*, pp 191-92

<sup>15</sup> St Andrews University Muniments, manuscript MS30415

<sup>16</sup> Special Commission on Review and Reform report to the 2001 General Assembly, s 2, 36

As a consequence, the Church has undertaken a new journey in the last ten years as it has sought to fulfil its core calling. The national councils and committees of the Church reorganised in an attempt to help realise and enable that vision while many congregations have attempted to reform and reenergise.

## 2.2 Called by Christ

The *CWW* report articulated the core calling of the Church in two words "Follow me". That core calling takes us beyond the secondary identities of denomination or tradition and calls us to turn again to be people with Jesus Christ at the centre.

A church which responds to this call will be shaped by:

- the Gospel – a rediscovery of the grace of God;
- the locality – responding to the varieties of our changing contexts;
- friendship – with fellow members, the next generation, the searcher, the community, other churches, rich and poor, the world church, God's creation;
- the gifts of God's people – growing the church around the gifts we have been given.

At the heart of *CWW* is the move to change mindsets. These are:

- *from church focus to Christ focus* – following Jesus to see what church forms round him;
- *from settled church to church as a movement* – going where people are rather than waiting for people to come;
- *from a culture of guilt to a culture of grace* – freeing people to love and be loved while not counting the cost;
- *from running congregations to building communities* – working towards a relational reformation;
- *from isolation to interdependence* – encouraging churches to work together;
- *from individualism to teamwork* – seeing teamwork as essential to all ministry;
- *from top down church to upside down church* – putting the local church at the centre of the agenda;

- *from centralised resources to development resources* – releasing funds to encourage local vision;
- *from faith as security to faith as risk* – looking for new courage to break out of old routines.

## 2.3 The Third Article Declaratory

The Special Commission on Structure and Change articulated in May 2008 that the examination of structure, finance and the allocation of resources flows from the imperative contained in the Third Article Declaratory of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland and, in particular, its third sentence which determines that congregations must be maintained, irrespective of their ability to support themselves and therefore that other congregations must take on the responsibility for that support.

The 2008 General Assembly set up a Commission to appraise the Third Article Declaratory and investigate its relevance for the Church in today's Scotland. The article declares:

*This Church is in historical continuity with the Church of Scotland which was reformed in 1560, whose liberties were ratified in 1592, and for whose security provision was made in the Treaty of Union of 1707. The continuity and identity of the Church of Scotland are not prejudiced by the adoption of these Articles. As a national Church representative of the Christian Faith of the Scottish people it acknowledges its distinctive call and duty to bring the ordinances of religion to the people in every parish of Scotland through a territorial ministry.*

In the four hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Reformation, the 2010 General Assembly reaffirmed the principles enshrined in the Third Article Declaratory and declared anew its commitment to be a national church with a distinctive evangelical and pastoral concern for the people and nation of Scotland. The General Assembly committed the Church to maintaining worshipping, witnessing and serving Christian congregations

throughout Scotland and affirmed the key role of presbyteries in delivering this commitment. The General Assembly also instructed presbyteries to reengage with the process of the reform of presbyteries to manage more effectively the deployment of the Church's ministerial and other resources.<sup>17</sup>

The Church has faced similar challenges in the past. Soon after the Reformation the need to match resources to mission was apparent.

*And because it will be thought hard to find out Pastors or Ministers to all the parish churches of the realm, as well in landward as in townes, we think that ... parishes in landward or small villages may be joined in some places, two, or three, or more together, and the principal and most commodious churches to stand, and be repaired sufficiently, and qualified Ministers placed thereat; and the other churches which are not found necessary may be suffered to decay ...*

Second Book of Discipline 12:3

If we are to fulfil the core calling of the Church with its strong commitment to the Third Article Declaratory, it is clear that we will have to do so with fewer full-time paid ministries. The report of the Ministries Council to the 2010 General Assembly presented both a plan for a sustainable number of ministries in the future based on the likely financial resources available to the Church and a vision of the type of ministries we will require if the Church is to realise its vision and core calling. This vision of a variety of ministries has been a consistent theme of the Ministries Council over the last few years and again realigns the vision of the Church with the vision for reform set out in the *CWW* report.

<sup>17</sup> Panel On Review and Reform report to the 2010 General Assembly, Deliverance, s 3 and 4, Special Commission on Third Article Declaratory report to the 2010 General Assembly, Deliverance, s 4, 25/1 and 25/10, s 7.5.2

In this time of transition for the Church, a presbytery will have to take account of differing strengths, and of the potential for different types of ministries, which are beyond the capacity of an individual congregation. The Priority Areas Action Plan takes this even further by offering a strategy for presbyteries effectively to support faith communities and congregations working with particularly poor and marginalised groups throughout Scotland:

- by engaging with the wider church and society;
- by enabling new models of church;
- by encouraging new models of community.<sup>18</sup>

This creative initiative and the principles behind the Priority Areas Action Plan should be embedded in any new model of presbytery.

Because the challenges cross parish boundaries, and because there are non-Church of Scotland congregations also seeking to extend God's kingdom, it makes sense that planning is best undertaken in a co-ordinated way, taking account of and involving local ecumenical partnerships for mission work, or by seeking links with community bodies. The Church is rediscovering what it always believed – that the call of Jesus to "Follow me" is a call to every Christian to share universally the ministry of Christ through his Body, the Church.

## 2.4 A Vision for All God's People

The model the Church currently operates in the areas of structure, finance and the allocation of resources assumes a top-down pattern of governance – from national church to presbytery to local congregation. The vision that has driven the Church since 2001 is that of a church turned upside down to affirm the primacy of the local Christian community, supported appropriately by presbytery and the councils of the Church.

A presbytery, which is well structured and resourced and

<sup>18</sup> Ministries Council report to the 2010 General Assembly, 3/19, s 1.3

is mission focused, is **the** body that can be a creative force for more local decision-making and mission. If presbyteries are to undertake the key role of delivering the vision of the Church, power has to be devolved to them from the councils. Presbyteries need to drive what has become, and will further develop, as the central hallmark of the Church of Scotland: releasing all God's people to use their gifts in ministry. In the Panel's alternative presbytery structure, most people will not be involved in the administration of the Church at a regional level but in Local Area Groupings which will be new, creative and dynamic.

### 2.5 What is Presbytery?

It was clear from the Panel's consultations that many people in the Church define 'presbytery' as the court or meeting that takes place in a prescribed place and at a prescribed time. This is a rather narrow definition of 'presbytery'. For the principle to be affirmed and promoted that all God's people are involved in the mission of God, a presbytery should encompass the whole geographical area for which the Presbytery Court is responsible. 'Presbytery' is not simply those presbyters who meet together from time to time to administer the work of the Church, but includes the whole people of God who live within the bounds served by the presbytery.

### 2.6 What is Presbytery for?

Today's presbytery is far removed from its origins which lay in the "weekly exercises" for ministers, offering spiritual support for ministry and mission in the local area. Now, presbyteries have become administrative units for servicing the system of committees and regulations rather than a fellowship of mutual encouragement and inspiration.

At present, presbyteries are expected to fulfil a number of functions, a list of which can be found in Appendix 1. Each of these functions developed as the work of presbyteries was expressed through the legal framework of the Church and, as a result, presbyteries became more business-like and administratively focused. Yet underlying all these tasks, with mission as the priority, there are

three key functions around which presbyteries should be structured and resourced:

- proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ through worship, witness, nurture, and service;
- encouraging, strengthening and supporting the people of God;
- supervision of the work of the Church within its bounds including appropriate oversight of congregations and ministries.

### 2.7 A New Mission Strategy

Despite the vision outlined and accepted by the General Assembly in the *CWW* report, the Church of Scotland's mission strategy still largely relies on one minister of Word and Sacrament based in one parish with a building or set of buildings. A new mission strategy is required, however, if the Church is to address the continuing spiral of decline. In Christ, God has called the Church and sent her out into the world. The way in which the Church carries out her ministry and mission varies with changing circumstances but her calling does not change: it is always to go into the world and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. Decreasing resources do not justify the Church modifying her calling. The traditional territorial organisation of the Church of Scotland assumed a Christian country and a comparatively static and uniform society. That is no longer the case and in future we must expect more varied forms of ministry throughout the Church.

Ordained ministry of Word and Sacrament is the primary means for fulfilling the Church of Scotland's distinctive call and duty to bring the ordinances of religion to the people in every parish across Scotland and beyond. However, to complement the ordained ministry of Word and Sacrament and to engage with the challenges of an increasingly secular and fragmented society, we need new and more diverse patterns of ministry. The Ministries Council's *20:20 Vision* encourages presbyteries to plan with variety in mind. The Panel believes that the mission of the local church should be a fundamental part of a

presbytery's mission. Accordingly, the Presbytery Plan should reflect the vision, capacity and resources of its congregations and communities to enable them to fulfil that mission. In developing the plan, it is expected that the full mission and ministry needs of the whole presbytery would be identified and considered. The Local Church Review process proposed by the Panel in 2010 will enable congregations to inform and agree the plan which will then become the presbytery's responsibility both to develop and to implement. Congregations, too, will be expected to work collaboratively across parish and presbytery boundaries.

### 2.8 A New Way of Working – Releasing People's Gifts for Mission

George Carey, a former Archbishop of Canterbury said, "It is not the Church of God that has a mission, it is the God of mission who has a church."<sup>19</sup> One of his predecessors, Archbishop William Temple, more than 60 years ago, reminded the Church that it was the only body which existed for the benefit of those who are not yet its members. He saw its calling as an evangelical imperative. For at least a generation now, the Church of Scotland has been articulating a way of working that has been called the "ministry of all believers." Responding to this, some congregations have identified, nurtured and released for service the God-given gifts of their members. In presbyteries, however, there is still some way to go in articulating a ministry of all believers in a way that realises the full potential of its members for mission.

*Presbyteries are places where people do their presbyterian duty, but gain little inspiration or support. Local congregations with the desire for vision and change sense a culture of inhibition that limits initiative for all except the boldest.*

Special Commission anent Review and Reform report to the  
2001 General Assembly, 36/14 ff

We know that all God's people are called to mission and are given gifts by God "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:12 NIV). We also know that one of those gifts is that of administration (1 Corinthians 12:28). Presbyteries as they currently operate, however, are often focused on administration in a way that is detrimental to the development of other spiritual gifts so that those who are gifted in other ways by God do not feel affirmed under the current structure. The Panel is asking the Church to move to a structure which recognises the wide range of gifts and the potential for all to contribute to the mission of the presbytery.

### 3 A Model for Change

*Structures require to be flexible, not rigid. It means that nationally and as presbytery we require to listen to the local voice and to serve the local church. This may mean a U-turn, so that the local church dictates the agenda and is served by presbytery and '121'. At present many perceive things to be the other way round.*

Special Commission anent Review and Reform report to the  
2001 General Assembly, 36/8

**3.1** The alternative presbytery structure detailed here is designed to support the presbytery in achieving its purpose. The structure of a presbytery, like that of the substructure of a building, should remain largely unseen. Structure in our presbyteries is essential for their proper functioning but it should not get in the way of the core purpose of their being. The Panel envisages a presbyterian system large enough to take responsibility for governance, planning and finance, yet flexible enough to operate at smaller district levels – large enough to achieve its necessary goals, but with a substructure of groups small enough to allow the fellowship which is the core of being Christ's church. The size and shape of the smaller units or groupings will take account of natural functional and regional characteristics particular to each presbytery.

<sup>19</sup> Lambeth Conference 1998, p 121, s II

*Likewise concerning Provincial and Synodal Assemblies, consideration were easy to be taken; (it would be easy to take consideration); how many and in what places they should be held, and how often they should convene, ought to be referred to the liberty of the general Church and order to be appointed therein.*

Second Book of Discipline, 12:7

### The Panel proposes:

a larger body with the powers and responsibilities that can support and enable local solutions and decision-making through the service and gifting of personnel equipped to deliver; which frees the local church from the imposition and burden of constant administration and routine reporting, to make more time for worship, fellowship and celebration as Christian communities within a recognised geographical boundary.

### 3.2 An Alternative Presbytery Structure

The Panel proposes:

- the formation of **Local Area Groupings** working co-operatively in relationships formed by natural locality, able to work together in tackling the current issues facing each area. These would be groups of mutual support and encouragement for the task of proclaiming the Gospel (Appendix 3);
- a smaller number of larger **Presbyteries** with the strategic responsibilities, staff and financial resources to offer congregations local support and to exercise oversight of them;
- a **Presbytery Assembly** to replace the current meeting of presbytery, which will meet twice a year for worship and inspiration, mutual support and encouragement and to oversee the 'business' of the presbytery. The Presbytery Assembly would remain a court of the Church and would operate as such, as and when appropriate (Appendix 4).
- the formation of a **Presbytery Council** for each presbytery which will have the overall responsibility

to delegate the day-to-day work of the Church to the appropriate committees and to coordinate work of the presbytery between each Presbytery Assembly (Appendices 5 and 6);

### Size

- (a) For Local Area Groupings, a community of around 20 charges per grouping is envisaged, although each presbytery could determine the exact size of such groupings depending on local factors.
- (b) The Presbytery Assembly needs to be a body large enough to maintain a meaningful sub-structure of local area groupings to allocate resources creatively and exercise superintendence functions, yet still small enough to take decisions more locally. It is expected that presbyteries should be around 70-130 charges in size.

Appendix 2 shows a diagrammatical representation of this.

A presbytery, as at present, will be subject to policy as laid down by the General Assembly and will be responsible for ensuring that appropriate national policies and standards are maintained, for example, in Safeguarding or in the provision of resources for maintaining the Gospel imperative to the poor and marginalised.

### 3.3 Devolved Powers

During consultations, the Panel found that many presbyteries were not using the powers already available to them. At best, this sometimes led to delays in decisions being taken or at the other extreme, a stifling of creative decision-making. To address this, the Panel seeks to set out the powers proposed for each Presbytery Assembly in a way which encourages a permission-giving culture in presbyteries.

The Presbytery Assembly will have the authority to:

- **determine and support the mission of the presbytery** – this will involve a review of congregations using the principles set out in Local Church Review and

any other method the presbytery chooses that meets the criteria contained in Local Church Review;<sup>20</sup>

- **approve the Presbytery Plan** – a presbytery will have full responsibility for the development, maintenance and implementation of the Presbytery Plan;
- **approve the presbytery budget** – for the purpose of its plan, a presbytery will be able to use all funds at its disposal, including the ‘Ministries and Mission’ allocation;
- **appoint office bearers;**
- **employ staff** – this power is limited by budgetary constraints.

Such authority will involve responsibility for:

- undertaking the Local Church Reviews for all congregations in the bounds, receiving the reports and acting on them appropriately, undertaking any special visitation of congregations as deemed appropriate;
- determining the boundaries of charges, establishing, relocating and dissolving charges, and planning for the deployment of ministries;
- supervising the property and financial affairs of congregations;
- assessing the amount each charge in the presbytery is required to make towards the presbytery’s total Ministries and Mission contribution;
- determining what in addition each charge should be asked to contribute towards the work of presbytery;
- determining the allocation of such funds as are at its disposal, including the budget released from the central Church, locally raised monies, external funds, and grants;
- seeking external funding;
- preparing and maintaining a costed plan for carrying out the work of the Church in its bounds;
- supervising the records in the presbytery and in its congregations.

### 3.4 Staffing

Each presbytery shall decide its own strategy for mission, its own plan and therefore its own staffing levels.

To enable the smooth running of presbytery, the Panel proposes the following membership and office bearers of the Presbytery Assembly:

1. The **membership** of the Presbytery Assembly shall be the same as the membership of the present Presbytery Court (2000 Act III, Consolidating Act anent Church Courts, as amended).
2. A Presbytery Council **Convener** shall be appointed from the membership of the Presbytery Assembly for a period of four years. He or she will convene the Presbytery Council to ensure the work of presbytery committees is coordinated. He or she will also encourage and support the work of committees and officers.
3. A member of the Presbytery Assembly shall be appointed as **Clerk to the Presbytery Assembly**, responsible for the managing and minuting of the meetings of the Presbytery Assembly and for providing advice as required to the Moderator and to the Presbytery Council Convener to ensure due process of Church law and compliance with civil law.
4. A **Moderator** shall be appointed from its membership on an annual basis to convene the Presbytery Assembly.
5. In direct support of the Presbytery Assembly and Council, a **Presbytery Secretary** shall be appointed as a full-time staff member, responsible for the administration of the presbytery and its committee structures. The post-holder should be competent in administration and financial management, and be able to take responsibility for communications, and the completion of planning and financial requirements.

The Presbytery Assembly may approve the appointment of other specialist staff, full-time, part-time or honorary, to undertake particular roles in/for the presbytery as budget allows.

<sup>20</sup> Panel on Review and Reform report to the 2010 General Assembly, 19/24, Appendix 1

It is envisaged that, over a period of time, ministries support staff currently supporting presbyteries from both the Ministries and Mission and Discipleship Councils out of '121' would be relocated within presbyteries.

### 3.5 Appropriate Budgets

The budget for each presbytery will vary depending on the number of charges in the presbytery but will range from approximately £3,150,000 (70 charges) to £5,850,000 (130 charges). The Ministries Council *20:20 Vision* proposes the allocation of budget in terms of FTE ministries. To enable presbyteries to fulfil the Presbytery Plan and think creatively about ministries, the budget will need to be allocated in terms of £s and not in terms of posts, FTE or otherwise.<sup>21</sup>

### 3.6 The Resources Necessary to Facilitate and Sustain Such Changes

There is a significant overlap between the work on presbytery reform and that of the Ministries Council in presbytery planning for the future, outlined most recently in the Ministries Council's *20:20 Vision* report, adopted by the 2010 General Assembly. Asking presbyteries to plan without an informed understanding of the purpose of presbytery, its functions and how it is to operate, is to put the cart before the horse. The Panel and the Ministries Council, therefore, will work together to facilitate the reform of presbyteries as they plan for their futures.

It is proposed that the Ministries Council takes overall operational responsibility for the practical implementation of the reforms set out in the Panel's report, in conjunction with its own closely-related responsibilities for planning with purpose. The Panel will have a strategic role to monitor and advise on the reforms as implementation proceeds.

As part of its recent review, the Ministries Council identified specific staffing resources to focus on practical implementation of the reforms. The staff time available will be in the form of an oversight role from the Partnership

Development Secretary (Senior Management Team) comprising: 0.4 FTE of one and 0.3 FTE of two other Ministries Support Officers, making a total of 1 FTE Ministries Support Officer. This identified staffing resource will supervise the process of presbytery reform, and will facilitate and encourage presbyteries in their process of transition.

Staff will remain under the management of the Council. The Panel will indicate the priorities in relation to presbytery reform for these staff. The Council's Secretary will be responsible for ensuring that these priorities are met, in line with the policies agreed for the reform of presbyteries and the planning agenda. This collaborative work will also be integrated, where appropriate, with the work of field staff from the Mission and Discipleship Council, as a network of staff resources are deployed to the larger presbyteries.

An Implementation Management Group will be set up to coordinate this, comprising representatives from newly-configured presbyteries, the Ministries and Mission and Discipleship Councils and the Panel. The Panel's role on this group will be to monitor the developments taking place and make recommendations to the Ministries Council as appropriate. The Implementation Management Group will be chaired by a member of the Panel specifically appointed for that purpose.

## 4 A VISION FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH

### 4.1 Local Area Groupings

This is the most exciting part of the alternative structure and where most people will be involved. Local Area Groupings will concentrate on the relational rather than the administrative, with ministers, elders and congregations collaborating to develop and strengthen their capacity to worship, witness, nurture and serve together. People will be able to undertake mission and ministry freed from the general administration of presbytery. This will allow local congregations to create the change they want to see in their own local areas.

<sup>21</sup> Ministries Council report to the 2010 General Assembly, s 1.4.4

These groupings have the potential to be creative, dynamic and mission-focused. They will be relational, providing mutual support for mission and ministry through worship, cooperation, and inspiration. They will have the space and time to discuss issues, identify solutions and decide on courses of action. Individuals and congregations will be able to share fellowship and build mutual trust. They will be able to indicate priorities for their area as well as the resources required to undertake initiatives. This will allow for new local expressions of church, not limited to one congregation acting in isolation, but at a level which is not as large as the Presbytery Assembly.

Local Area Groupings could meet in a more informal way than most current presbyteries do, for example, monthly or bi-monthly worship-based events, fellowship meals/suppers that include seminars, speakers, sharing stories of local practice, such as twinnings and outreach, or supporting agreed projects. They may form ecumenical partnerships since there are likely to be other churches within their own geographical areas willing to participate in the planning of mission and the exercise of ministry.

One advantage of a structure such as the Local Area Groupings is that the relational dimension of these in turn will inform the style of the Presbytery Assembly, encouraging it to be relational through worship, conference-style sessions, discussion groups or other forms of dialogue as appropriate.

## 4.2 The Presbytery Assembly

*As for Elders, there should be some to be censurers of the manners of the people, one or more in every congregation; but not an Assembly of Elders in every particular church, but only in towns and famous places, where resort of men of judgment and ability to that effect may be had, where **the Elders of the particular churches round about may convene together, and have a common Eldership and Assembly-place among them, to treat of all things that concern the congregations of which they have the common oversight.***

Second Book of Discipline, 12:5

The larger grouping of the Presbytery Assembly will have strategic responsibility for the presbytery area and control of its own Presbytery Plan. It will determine priorities in offering congregations the support they require and will be able to direct resources accordingly through the Presbytery Council.

Because there will be fewer of them, Presbytery Assembly meetings can be a different type of meeting to those currently in place. They might meet for a full day, or more; place worship and communion fellowship at the heart of its life, offering leadership in mission, inspiration, celebration and pastoral encouragement to local congregations from an accessible base for each new larger presbytery.

There might be more dialogue than debate, although, on occasions, formal rules of debate are essential for good order in decision-making. Much more time can be given to encouraging others to speak and others to listen.

## 4.3 How Will the Meetings Be Different?

The success of a new Presbytery Assembly will depend not just on how it meets but on its commitment to a new way of working. The focus will shift from managing decline to proactive, future visioning. The primary role

of the Presbytery Assembly will be that of a body which resources local mission initiatives. As such, we might expect to see the following changes:

1. more time spent reflecting on and discerning God's mission for the area;
2. more considered and detailed reports on matters relating to local initiative and resourcing;
3. more considered debate leading to better decision-making;
4. more time spent on any pressing issues that face the presbytery area;
5. less time spent listening to reports on matters that have already been decided or have happened, which can be circulated as written reports rather than delivered as verbal ones at the meeting;
6. less time spent on 'rubber-stamping' matters of routine administration;
7. fewer reports that are simply an exercise in passing on information which does not require any decision to be taken.

#### **4.4 Implications for the Councils of the General Assembly**

As the new Presbytery Assemblies become established and their representation on the councils of the General Assembly comes into effect, there will be a greater two-way direct involvement of presbyteries with councils. Councils will become more closely involved with the work at regional level, enabling them to have a greater insight into how they can support presbyteries. Anticipating this, the Ministries Council has already indicated a willingness to explore the devolution of a number of key areas of work to well resourced and well organised larger presbyteries.

This will mean the deployment of staff on a more regional basis than at present, giving presbyteries more local access to expertise which is currently retained nationally – a training officer or a pastoral support officer could be deployed in a presbytery to encourage and enable good practice, for example. Presbyteries could also agree

to share posts and expertise not currently available but necessary to fulfil the current mission plans of the presbyteries concerned: pastoral advisors, youth workers, ecumenical officers, mission enablers, stewardship officers, for example. In this way, presbyteries would benefit from having trained expertise located in key areas which would allow them to plan coherent strategies and address the specific needs of their presbytery areas.

If such devolution of work took place, the way the Ministries Council operates would change. The eventual impact would be a reduction in the overall administrative staffing budget. Instead of trying to service the country largely from Edinburgh, the Council would retain senior management staff to support regionally-based, ministry resource staff in presbyteries. Those deployed to presbyteries in any particular area of work would act as facilitators, enabling people locally to carry out the work themselves. This will have the effect of delivering a sustainable model that releases the Church from a culture of dependency unwittingly created as we rush to resource things from '121'. It is a model that places responsibility where it belongs: in a well-resourced alternative presbytery structure.

The Special Commission anent Review and Reform stated:

*The Church 'works' where people join together, building relationships with each other and the community to which they belong. It is through these relationships that the Gospel is spread. In each place the church is different. There is no one model that fits all. We rejoice in the diversity within the Church. We celebrate and encourage it. This is achieved best by allowing congregations the space and opportunity to develop their own patterns of ministry, mission, worship and leadership that best suits the people and situations where they are.*<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Special Commission anent Review and Reform report to the 2001 General Assembly, 36/8 ff

#### 4.5 Overall Advantages

In the alternative structure proposed, mission will be placed firmly at the heart of all the Church does. The perception of 'presbytery' would change from being a court or meeting to that of an area which encourages and supports the gifts and skills of all those within it. Through Local Area Groupings, elders, ministers and congregations will undertake mission in the way they choose, free from the burden of administration. Administration will be carried out by those called and equipped for it, in a way that supports the mission of local area groupings. Fewer presbyteries will mean every presbytery can be directly represented on national councils and committees, placing local needs and desires firmly at the centre of national decision-making.

#### 4.6 Working in New Ways and with Trust

The Panel's proposals are intended to create space and opportunity for presbyteries to shape a vision for the Church in their own areas. The Ministries Council's *20:20 Vision* encourages the Church to enable the ministry of the Gospel to be more about the work of the whole people of God through planning for purpose, for variety and sustainability. Taken together, these call for a new way of working that will create a mission-focused church.

This will involve investing trust in people; appointing and affirming them to do the job Christ has called them to do – something that the *CWW* report called for and which is already being developed within presbyteries. We see this in practice in the development of the Vacancy Procedures Act VIII, 2003, affirmed by the Panel in its 2008 General Assembly report. The Act works because the presbytery first sets its planning policy for the deployment of ministries in the Presbytery Plan and then invests its trust in a Vacancy Procedure Committee to execute the plan. The Committee is required to report to the presbytery only those decisions which might be subject to challenge. The Vacancy Procedure Committee acts on behalf of the presbytery to expedite decisions as long as they work within the policy of the Presbytery Plan.

This is the way Presbytery Assemblies meeting only twice a year might work, setting policy and then trusting people to work on behalf of the presbytery while ensuring they are ultimately accountable to the Presbytery Assembly.

### 5 Realising the Vision

If we are to return the Church of Scotland to the original vision of the reformers of a church called by Christ which is "the right way up", how are we to realise that vision?

The Panel is aware that the Church has a way to travel before such a vision can be realised. We have listened to the wide range of opinions about presbytery reform and recognise the unease within and between presbyteries about change on the scale we are suggesting. The Church is in a period of transition as we tackle the issues we face today. Have we become too cautious about introducing new and radical ideas? It is only natural that many of us within the Church have a fear of change and worry about what a new future might look like. The Panel firmly believes that congregations, presbyteries and councils of the Church should travel this journey of reform together.

God invites us to join his mission, not to maintain a religious club. Moving as a church in a new direction with our distinctive ways of doing things is always going to be difficult and challenging – but we cannot stay as we are. We have to sacrifice some of our established ways in order to reestablish a new and vibrant national church in all aspects of its life and worship.

The Panel is not suggesting a top-down pattern of governance that, like past attempts at reform, will fail. Instead, it is inviting presbyteries to work out for themselves the forms, structures and partners that will enable reform to happen. It is encouraging groups of presbyteries to come together to focus on the relational aspect of our calling and to discuss how the proposals for a new presbytery structure might be implemented. To that end, the Panel is suggesting that the General Assembly set up groups of presbyteries to engage in

dialogue and develop the principle of the re-formation of our presbytery structure, as detailed in Appendix 7.

The Church of Scotland will always be *ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda* (a church reformed, always reforming), never static; reflecting the whole witness of the Bible which points to a God who calls his people out and on from where they are, often not knowing where they are to go. The true image of the Church is of a community of the future and not of the past; a church called by Christ – which is “the right way up”.

*In the name of the Panel*

DAVID S CAMERON, *Convener*  
DONALD CAMPBELL, *Vice-convener*

### ADDENDUM

The Rev David Cameron’s final report as Convener of the Panel on Review and Reform is the culmination of seven years’ work serving first as a member of the Panel and then as its Convener. In his five years as Convener, David has demonstrated strong leadership skills and a willingness to listen to all voices across the Church, seeking to inform the Church’s thinking and leading the Panel through a series of consultations and conversations which have culminated in the current proposals for presbytery reform. A strategic thinker, he has been unstinting in his determination to encourage the Church to reform and become more mission-focused. To the work of the Panel, David has brought experience from his previous role in the business world and from a very successful ministry in the Presbytery of Irvine and Kilmarnock. Under his leadership, the Panel has gone from strength to strength in its confidence to encourage the Church towards reform. For all this, those who follow are indebted.

## APPENDIX 1

### KEY FUNCTIONS OF PRESBYTERY

*A presbytery is responsible for all spiritual matters within its bounds, and should be alert to take suitable initiatives for the advancement of Christ’s kingdom even if these are neither prescribed by law nor instructed by the Assembly.<sup>23</sup>*

Key Functions of a presbytery as currently constituted (which for this exercise have been listed by the Department of the General Assembly).

#### *Planning related*

- Approval of the annual update of the Presbytery Plan in terms of Act VII 2003.
- Changes to Presbytery Plan produced by unexpected circumstances.
- Implementation of Presbytery Plan as vacancies arise.
- Vacancy work in terms of Act VIII 2003, by Vacancy Procedure Committee.
- Vacancies issues referred under s 2 of Act VIII 2003.

#### *Ministry related*

- Some elements of supervision of trainee ministers in terms of Act X 2004 (and all equivalent legislation for deacons, auxiliaries, readers).
- Practising Certificates (most at the same time of year, but new applications may arrive at any time, and must be dealt with timeously to enable the applicant’s ministry to continue).
- Ministries flow: ordinations, inductions, demissions, deaths and tributes.
- Admission and re-admission, presbytery element of Act IX 2002.

#### *Supervision related*

- Routine superintendence functions, especially Act II 1984.

<sup>23</sup> Weatherhead, James, *The Constitution and Laws of the Church of Scotland*, p 101 (Board of Practice and Procedure 1997)

- Non-routine superintendence functions, especially Act I 1988 (unsatisfactory state), Act IV 2001 (ministers and public office), Act XV 2002 (illness), Act XIII 2000 (NCD), Act VI 1984 (changed state) – and note that many of these functions require more than one meeting of the presbytery.
- Non-routine disciplinary functions: *eg* Act V 2000 (sacraments), Acts IV and V 2007 (bullying and discrimination), and to a limited extent Act III 2001 (discipline of ministers and others).
- Congregational Constitutions: see Act XIX 1964.

#### *General Assembly related*

- Commissions to the General Assembly (currently requires more than one meeting).
- Consideration of Overtures under the Barrier Act.
- Consideration of other remits addressed to the presbytery by the General Assembly.

#### *Finance related*

- Mission and Renewal contributions (may require more than one meeting).

- Property and finance: supervisory tasks largely delegated, see *eg* Act VII 1995.

#### *Presbytery administration*

- Election of presbytery Moderator, and appointment of committees.
- Commissions by kirk sessions to presbytery (most at the same time of year, but may arrive at any time depending on circumstances, and must be dealt with timeously).
- Appointment of Presbytery Clerk, or any other paid post which is vacant.
- Examination of presbytery records.

#### *Judicial*

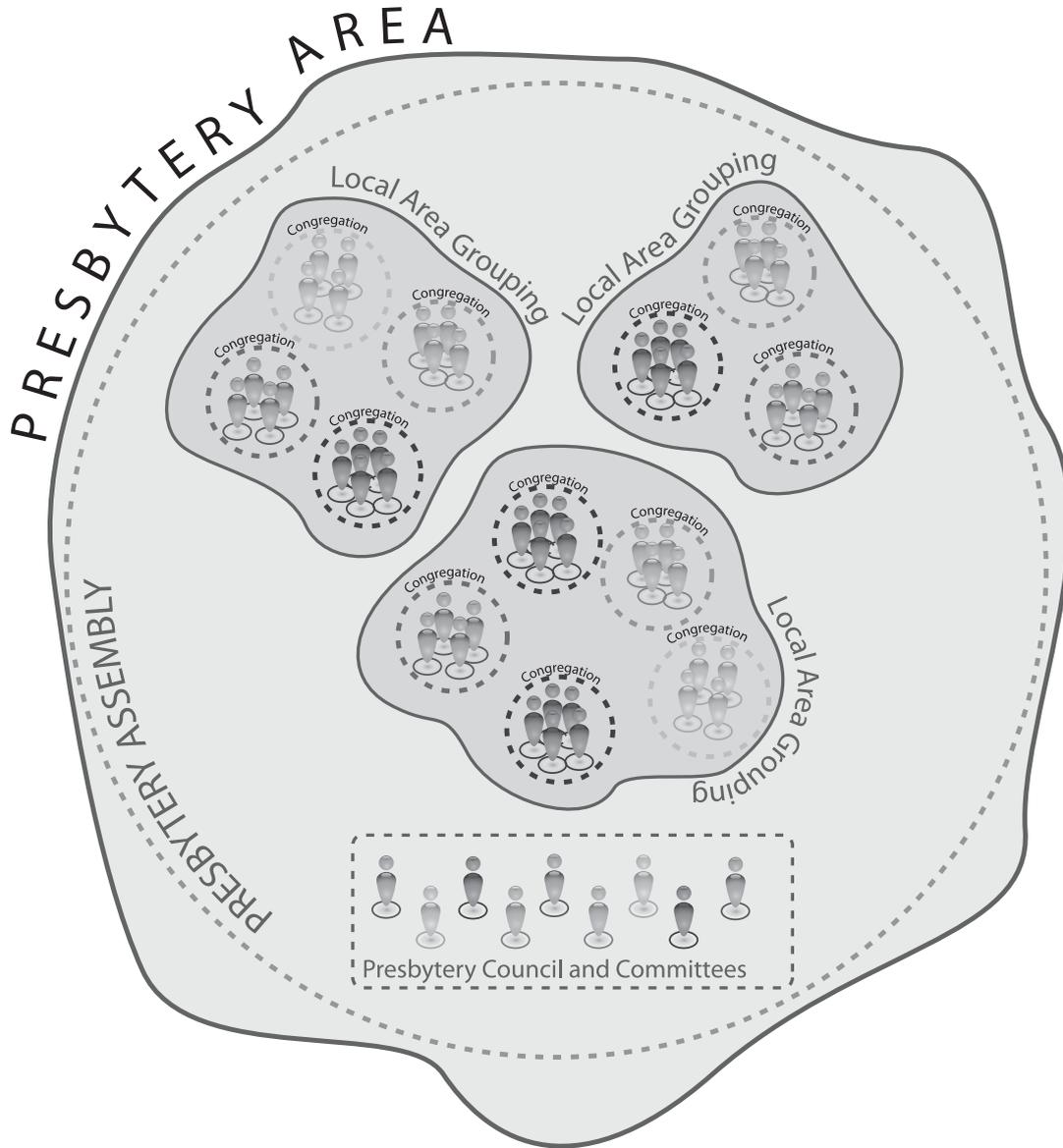
- Judicial tasks: appeals, dissents and complaints, overtures, petitions.
- Miscellaneous tasks relating to the court itself, its relations to other courts, and the ministry, in terms of Acts II and III 2000.

#### *Policy making*

- Pursuing issues of public interest: may sometimes require presbytery action.

APPENDIX 2

DIAGRAMMATICAL REPRESENTATION OF THE NEW PRESBYTERY STRUCTURE



## APPENDIX 3

### GROUPINGS

#### Local Area Groupings

The main work of the presbytery is undertaken in the parish and the presbytery infrastructure is there to support that work. For fellowships to blossom and mission to be carried out, the groups and groupings need to be smaller and more personal.

It is proposed that the Presbytery Assembly will establish groupings of charges and congregations based on geographical lines to allow the presbytery to cater more directly to particular local needs. In some presbyteries, district groupings of charges already exist.

This will allow for new local expressions of church with more intentional collaboration of neighbouring congregations. It will free local congregations to develop, strengthen and encourage a celebratory model through fellowship, cooperation, and inspiration.

It is hoped that that the fellowship of Local Area Grouping of congregations would encourage the new Presbytery Assembly to mirror this in their own gatherings, rather than operating like a smaller version of the present General Assembly.

#### Functional Groups

Although a presbytery's Ministry and Mission Committee (or one similarly named) may have the responsibility to support the mission and ministry work in the presbytery area, the delivery of that ministry will take place outwith the committee meetings. This needs the cooperation of people from a range of congregations or sometimes across the denominations and involving other community bodies. Any initiatives emerging from these groupings have to be supported at committee level and it is from such groups that the cooperative work of presbytery may come.

Specific Groups could be established to deal with

particular issues of concern right across the presbytery, for example, 'parenting skills' or 'supporting the elderly and those with dementia'. These could comprise those with a particular gift or interest in the work of that group as well as members who have an active interest in the work of the Church but who may not be commissioned to Presbytery Assembly. This would encourage members to use their skills not only for their own local congregation but also for wider community benefit. Membership of these groups is not bound by the rules of membership of the presbytery committees. Ecumenical participation could also be encouraged.

## APPENDIX 4

### THE PRESBYTERY ASSEMBLY

#### The Presbytery Assembly

Given the proposed size of a presbytery, a structure is needed that recognises the need for representation of all charges and ministries, and allows opportunities for spiritual renewal and collegiality, and for the efficient conduct of business.

A 'Presbytery' consists of a region (bounds), an Assembly (the meeting), and its members.

The Presbytery Assembly will meet twice a year.

It is proposed that the work of the Presbytery Assembly be carried out by committees having responsibility for functional areas, and by a Presbytery Council responsible for coordinating the work of the committees, for communications (internal and external), for developing the overall strategy, and for a general executive function, all of which would be accountable to the Presbytery Assembly.

It is proposed that the new Presbytery Assemblies would be represented on the councils of the General Assembly. If the number of new presbyteries is small enough, then it is feasible for each of the presbyteries to be represented

on each of the councils, maintaining the current ethos for smaller councils, and thereby establishing a better and closer link between presbyteries and councils. The current absence of any direct representation by the presbyteries on the councils has been raised as a matter of concern in the Panel's discussions with the presbyteries.

## APPENDIX 5

### SUGGESTED POWERS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE PRESBYTERY COUNCIL

#### The Presbytery Council

In the same way as the Council of Assembly fulfils an executive function for the General Assembly setting priorities and co-ordination, so too it is proposed that each Presbytery Assembly shall establish a Presbytery Council to co-ordinate the work of the other committees, provide general direction, and be responsible for the strategic direction of the presbytery.

It is proposed that the Presbytery Council shall be a standing Committee of the Presbytery Assembly to which it shall be directly accountable and to which it shall report. It shall have the following **remit and powers** to:

- (a) bring to the Presbytery Assembly an annual report and recommendations on the mission, ministry, and work of the presbytery, a plan for its implementation and development, within agreed budget;
- (b) monitor, evaluate and coordinate the work of the presbytery committees within the context of the policy determined by the Presbytery Assembly; and to receive reports from, offer guidance and issue instructions to said committees, as required from time to time, on matters of policy, organisation, operation and administration;
- (c) attend to the general interests of the presbytery in areas not covered by the remits of the presbytery committees;

- (d) determine staffing and resourcing requirements for the presbytery and its charges, and to approve the assessed contribution from each charge;
- (e) deal with such issues as are within its jurisdiction and that arise between meetings of the Presbytery Assembly, and to report the same to the next meeting of the Assembly, and to attend to the matters that do not fall within the remit of any presbytery committee;
- (f) ensure effective communications, internal and external, and linking national and local networks;
- (g) make recommendations to the Assembly on structural changes to the presbytery.

Responsibility for ensuring that the presbytery functions in accordance with the principles of good governance shall lie with the Presbytery Council, irrespective of whether or not the presbytery concerned is a charity. Where the presbytery has, or obtains, charitable status, the members of the Presbytery Council shall be the charity trustees.

The **membership** of the Presbytery Council shall be between 10 and 20, shall include the conveners of the primary presbytery committees, shall be appointed on the basis of rules and for periods proposed by the Presbytery Assembly.

## APPENDIX 6

### SUGGESTED COMMITTEES OF THE PRESBYTERY ASSEMBLY

It is suggested that the work of the Presbytery Council might be distributed amongst three main committees, each with the power to appoint sub-committees and groups as appropriate.

#### Mission and Ministry

This is the main work of the presbytery and will cover:

- (a) pastoral care for all ministries;

- (b) support for all ministries of the Church through mentoring, training, and the establishment of a mutually supporting fellowship;
- (c) support for the mission in parishes, in local groupings, and across the presbytery region;
- (d) support for Christian education;
- (e) support for the work of the Church nationally and internationally, and in the local expression of that responsibility;
- (f) support and provision of training on spiritual and practical issues needed in the presbytery, *eg*, leadership and discipleship: this may justify the setting up of a special task group.

Mission is at the centre of the work of presbytery, so this Committee has the overview and provides the administrative background and resources, but the actual work is likely to be carried out in the Local Area Groupings.

### **Finance and Planning**

This is an area that requires expertise, and which will draw on the work of the other committees.

It will include:

- (a) developing the Presbytery Plan, with annual updates to take account of the social and spiritual needs of the region, the resources available, the capacity and plans of the congregations as determined from the Local Church Review process or alternative means, and where already established, the review process of the National Sponsoring Body for Local Ecumenical Partnerships.
- (b) deploying ministries and determining parish boundaries;
- (c) determining how the presbytery's required contribution to the Ministries and Mission fund should be shared amongst the charges and other ministries in the presbytery;
- (d) determining what each charge should additionally be asked to contribute to the work of the presbytery;
- (e) determining the allocation of such funds as are at its

- disposal;
- (f) stewardship;
- (g) seeking external funds;
- (h) property, maintenance, care, and supervision;
- (i) making proposals for the purchase and disposal of buildings.

### **Oversight**

This area will cover the presbytery's responsibility for the oversight of the work of the congregations in its bounds:

- a) the process of Local Church Review and training of participants, conduct of visits and follow-up;
- b) general oversight of the conduct and health of congregations and charges, taking action, discreet, informal, or formal as necessary;
- c) issues of discipline, complaint, or conflict concerning a minister or office bearer which, as soon as this becomes formal, should be handled by the Department of the General Assembly and an appeals mechanism.

## **APPENDIX 7**

### **PRESBYTERY DIALOGUE GROUPS**

Each dialogue group will select members of existing presbyteries to enter into collaborative discussion:

- to set up a process that has the capacity to work through and implement the alternative presbytery structure;
- to create the Presbytery Council and agree its membership and committee structure and work towards the creation of the Presbytery Assembly;
- to agree the number of charges within the alternative presbytery bounds and determine local area groupings;
- to develop the Presbytery Plan for the new larger presbytery area;
- to determine the mission agenda for the new presbytery area;
- to agree with the Implementation Management Group resources to manage the transition from the current structure to the new.

<b>1</b>	Abernethy Caithness Inverness Lewis Ross Sutherland Uist
<b>2</b>	Aberdeen Buchan Gordon Kincardine and Deeside Moray Orkney Shetland
<b>3</b>	Angus Dundee Dunkeld and Meigle Perth St Andrews
<b>4</b>	Dundee Dunfermline Kirkcaldy Perth St Andrews Stirling
<b>5</b>	Annandale and Eskdale Duns Jedburgh Lanark Lothian Melrose and Peebles

<b>6</b>	Falkirk Glasgow Lanark Stirling West Lothian
<b>7</b>	Edinburgh Lothian West Lothian
<b>8</b>	Glasgow Hamilton Lanark
<b>9</b>	Dumbarton Glasgow Greenock and Paisley Hamilton
<b>10</b>	Ardrossan Ayr Glasgow Greenock and Paisley Irvine and Kilmarnock

<b>11</b>	Annandale and Eskdale Ayr Dumfries and Kirkcudbright Irvine and Kilmarnock Wigtown and Stranraer
<b>12</b>	Argyll Lochaber Lochcarron – Skye Uist
<b>13</b>	England Europe Jerusalem

**CURRENT PRESBYTERY BOUNDARIES**



The Church of Scotland  
Panel on Review and Reform



## APPENDIX 8

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**1. Why do we need to change at all? Things are fine as they are in our presbytery.**

The Church as a whole needs to develop its focus on mission if we are to move from a mindset of managing decline to growth. There is a huge diversity in the size of presbyteries and little doubt that many are finding the basic tasks of administration difficult. We need to reorganise so that presbyteries become places where mission is enabled and supported.

**2. The Panel hasn't listened to us at all – just come up with its own agenda. It seems to be imposing a model upon the Church. Why is this?**

No, we are not imposing a model – in fact, quite the opposite. The Panel has had wide-ranging consultations with congregations, presbyteries, and the councils and departments of the General Assembly which have challenged our own thinking about a workable structure. The proposed template has evolved from these consultations and provides one model for how reform of presbyteries could be achieved.

**3. How many presbyteries will there be in this new structure?**

At this stage, we have no preconceptions about how many presbyteries there will be. We would want to come to an agreed optimum number after detailed discussion between groups of presbyteries, which would take into consideration a combination of factors such as:

- socio-demographic and geographic factors of conjoining presbyteries;
- grouping congregations with similar needs;
- other existing regional areas such as that of local authority boundaries or working with other denominations.

**4. How many charges/congregations will there be in a presbytery?**

This will probably vary from presbytery to presbytery but the Panel is suggesting between 70 and 130 charges in each presbytery. This provides for a workable budget to be allocated and larger pool of people that presbyteries can draw from. We anticipate that for the most part, congregations will belong to the presbytery within which the former presbytery was; however we can also envisage a situation where some congregations at presbytery 'borders' will feel a closer affinity with another presbytery.

**5. 130 charges is far too large a grouping. It would mean that presbytery meetings could be made up of 300 people or more. How can people possibly be expected to travel the large distances necessary for such a meeting?**

The meeting should first and foremost be centred around worship and fellowship. Matters of business will be entrusted to the Presbytery Council as appropriate who will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the presbytery. It will be up to the presbytery to determine the pattern and structure of meetings and the appropriate logistics.

**6. What you are suggesting will involve much larger presbyteries geographically. Is it realistic to expect to be able to operate over such large distances?**

Presbyteries do not need to meet monthly. It is suggested that the Presbytery Assembly meets only twice a year. Better use of IT facilities such as Skype, email, and mobile/conference communication will mean less need to travel for committee meetings which in turn will reduce expense incurred through travel. Committees can take responsibility for decision making without the need for 'rubber-stamping' at presbytery within the checks and balances that good governance will provide within presbytery policy.

**7. This model wouldn't work here.**

The Panel's remit from the 2008 General Assembly is to provide an alternative presbytery structure. You are being

given the opportunity to develop the principles and to provide constructive suggestions of what **would** make it work within your area.

**8. We don't have the resource/time/talents/money to take on any devolved functions. We do enough already. How do you expect the proposed structure to free people up through the mechanism of devolved authority when there will not be any more resources in terms of people to undertake the work?**

Reorganising presbyteries in the way that is suggested will create fewer presbyteries with larger pools of gifted people in each presbytery to draw upon (ministers, elders and others). You may want to discuss and suggest creative ways to overcome the problems you feel devolution poses. There may be examples in other areas which could be applied in your own situation or things you currently do which could be done differently or even given up altogether.

**9. Surely we are simply adding another tier of Church government that we could well do without? Sounds to me like too many committees and groupings are being created, so that what we could have is an explosion of administrative responsibilities**

**and not the more streamlined structure you seem to be suggesting.**

No, the Presbytery Assembly is **the** tier of Church government in the alternative structure; there is no other tier being added. Of course, it will have a committee structure to oversee the day-to day work of presbytery but there is no other tier of government. The levels of Church governance will be General Assembly, Presbytery Assembly and Kirk Session. This will not lead to **more** administration but **more effective** administration as key people are allowed to get on with routine matters enabling others to concentrate on the work of mission.

**10. You talk about accountability, but is there not a danger that the Presbytery Council will assume the real power under the new structure and will make the key decisions, which will then simply be rubber-stamped at the Presbytery Assembly?**

Yes there is always a danger of power being concentrated in the hands of the few. The key to ensuring this does not happen is trust. Trust is essential alongside compliance with standing orders of presbytery to ensure this does not happen. Presbyteries will be responsible for ensuring that the checks and balances demonstrate the trust and accountability that should exist right across the Church.