Commissioners did not need to read the Blue Book to discover that there is a shortage of Parish Ministers in the Church at the moment. Members of the Registration of Ministries Committee come from a variety of Presbyteries and have also experienced this reality at first hand. We are quite clear. We want as many ministers as possible to be able to apply for vacant charges. Our role is to assist those who have been serving God in other spheres and now wish to explore the possibility of serving as Parish Ministers.

Commissioners are also aware that one of the most damaging and destructive things in our church is when an incoming minister does not mesh well with their congregation or congregations. While there are many reasons that this can happen, one is about preparedness. Like you, when a minister is inducted, the Registration of Ministries Committee wants there to be a good transition. As you do, we want that process to go well so it is good for the minister, good for the congregation, good for the parish and good for the Presbytery.

The General Assembly has given us a particular role to play when a Church of Scotland Minister, who has not been serving in a parish, wishes to take up that role.

When we receive an application from such a minister, our assessment falls under three broad headings: knowledge, skills and culture. That is

- First, are there any gaps in knowledge, which need to be addressed so the applicant can be effective and feel confident as they move into Parish Ministry? For example, is their safeguarding training up to date?
- Second, does the applicant have the skills which are needed so that they can carry out the tasks which lie ahead for them? For example, have they conducted funerals in the last three years?
- Third, how familiar is the applicant with the culture of parish life in the Church of Scotland in 2018? For example, understanding some of the ways in which congregations engage with the wider community and how that has changed in recent years.

Following our assessment we identify the quickest and simplest way for an applicant to address any gaps that are identified. Our experience to date is that, in most cases, this can be done on the job, which means there is no reason to delay giving category ‘O’.

Finally, I want to say that this was new legislation which required the creation of a new process. The last year has been a learning process for the committee. Those who have been through the application process have helped develop and refine it and we are grateful to them for helping us do this. That process is ongoing and so we continue to welcome feedback from any who have used it.

Moderator, I present the report and move the deliverance.