

## FAITH ACTION PROGRAMME LEADERSHIP TEAM MAY 2026

### Proposed Deliverance

#### The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.

#### Faith Action Programme Leadership Team

2. Note the progress of plans for a Resource Church in the Presbytery of Glasgow and commend continued support for developing such plans (*Section 1*).
3. Instruct the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team to develop the Good News Collective, a suite of resources and opportunities to strengthen confidence in the good news of the Gospel for our lives, communities, church and world (*Section 1.9*).
4. Thank David Stewart for his service as Yearbook Editor, wishing him well on his retirement from the role, and appoint Rev Angus Mathieson as the new Yearbook Editor (*Section 1.10*).

#### Mission Support Programme Group

5. Reaffirm the Church's commitment to maintaining a worshipping, pastoral and missional presence in Scotland's poorest and most marginalised communities, recognising this as a Gospel imperative and integral to the Church's calling (*Section 3*).
6. Note the publication of updated Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data, together with the availability of new census data, and, recognising the importance of ensuring that the Priority Areas list continues to be informed by the most accurate and current statistics, instruct the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team:
  - i. to report to the General Assembly of 2027 with a proposed methodology for redrawing the Priority Areas list, focusing on levels of population deprivation and the balance of Priority Area designation across the life and work of the whole Church:
  - ii. to report to the General Assembly of 2028 on the implications of the agreed methodology and bring a new Priority Areas list, which will then continue to be reviewed on a seven-year review cycle; and
  - iii. throughout the scoping, review, and reporting phases, to ensure that comparative analysis between Priority Areas and the wider Church is undertaken and informs each stage of the work, and to include such analysis within the Reports brought to the General Assembly (*Section 3.1.1*).
7. Instruct the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team, working with the Theological Forum, to establish a Task Group to explore liturgical renewal and develop new liturgical resources for the Church and to report back to a future General Assembly (*Section 12*).

#### Public Life & Social Justice Programme Group

8. Urge those involved in public life in Scotland to uphold the values of integrity, compassion, justice and wisdom in their discourse and decisions, and encourage the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team in its work around promoting a positive vision for Christian responsibility in an age of political extremes (*Section 14*.)
9. Affirm that people have the right to seek sanctuary from danger and persecution and commit to continued advocacy with and for refugees; for an asylum system that is fair, humane, and respectful of human dignity; and for policies and practices that support integration from day one of arrival (*Section 15.2*).
10. Urge congregations to be places of welcome, accompaniment, and practical support for refugees, and to play an active role in facilitating community cohesion by bringing people together, challenging fear and hostility, and nurturing relationships of mutual respect and belonging within our communities (*Section 15.3*).
11. Urge the UK Government to restrict gambling advertisements (*Section 18*).

#### People & Training Programme Group

12. Pass the Selection and Training for National Ministry of Word and Sacrament Act, as set out in Appendix I, following the principles agreed by the General Assembly of 2025, which will be applicable to Candidates entering training from 1st September 2027 (*Section 26 and Appendix I*)
13. Following the instruction of the General Assembly of 2024 to bring a recommendation to the General Assembly of the Lead Academic Partner to provide the delivery of a new 3-year BD degree and 2-year Diploma for national ministry of Word and Sacrament and Diaconate candidates, approve the recommendation of the Selection Panel that Trinity College, University of Glasgow, be the Lead Academic Partner (*Section 28.7.6*).
14. Approve the outline of the contents of the Minute of Agreement between the Church of Scotland and the University of Glasgow, and of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Church of Scotland and Trinity College, to enable the delivery of a new 3-year BD degree and 2-year Diploma for national ministry of Word and Sacrament and Diaconate candidates (*Section 30.2.5, Section 30.2.6*).
15. Note that Candidates presently in training will continue in their current training pathway, as designated at the beginning of their training (*Section 30.9.12 and Appendix I, Section 26*).

16. Instruct the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team to bring a revised Deacons Act (Act VIII 2010) to the General Assembly of 2027 which includes designated training at Trinity College, University of Glasgow, as the Lead Academic Partner (*Section 26.1.2*).
17. Note the lifting of the pause on recruitment to the Diaconate and instruct the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team to consider new ways to deploy those called to Ministry of Word and Service (*Section 26.1.2*).
18. Instruct the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team through the People & Training Programme Group to undertake a full review of the apprenticeship pilot scheme, bringing both the learnings and recommendations to the General Assembly of 2027 (*Section 33.7.1*).
19. Approve the appointment of Mrs Alison Fenton as the Senior Director of the National Assessment Team (*Section 37.1*).

### **Presbytery and Partnership Support Programme Group**

20. Give thanks for the Christian witness of The National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL), and The Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) in serving the needs of those affected by war and violence and urge the whole Church to stand in solidarity to alleviate human suffering and strengthen hope for a more stable and dignified future for humanity (*Section 40*).
21. Instruct the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team, working with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group, the Legal Questions Committee and Presbytery Clerks, to undertake further work on the process undertaken by Nominating Committees of vacant charges, with a particular focus on training, guidance, and review, including:
  - i. how applications and supporting materials are assessed and compared;
  - ii. how Interim Moderators and Presbytery Advisory Panels are equipped to assist Nominating Committees;
  - iii. how information is gathered, recorded, and weighed during interviews and decision-making;
  - iv. how feedback is offered to applicants in ways that are appropriate, meaningful, and professional;
  - v. how awareness of unexamined assumptions of bias can be strengthened;
  - vi. how theological reflection on call, discernment, and congregational formation can better inform practice, and
  - vii. which stages of the process may benefit from further clarification or review; and instruct the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team to bring a further Report to a future General Assembly (*Section 42*).
22. Pass the Capability Procedure for Parish Ministers Act, as set out in Appendix IV (*Section 43 and Appendix IV*).
23. Pass the Ill Health and Income Protection Act as set out in Appendix V (*Section 44 and Appendix V*).
24. Instruct the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team to reflect on and review the roles of ministry which might be required within the Church going forward, giving consideration to flexible and emerging forms of ministry, and to bring an interim report to the General Assembly of 2027, including identifying where consultation with other standing committees might be required (*Section 45*).
25. Pass an Act amending Act XI 2025, on the Call, Election, and Appointment of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, as set out in Appendix VII (*Section 46 and Appendix VII*).
26. Repeal Regulation VI 2008, on Pulpit Supply.
27. Urge Presbyteries, from 1 June 2026, to implement a Sabbatical scheme as outlined in Appendix VIII (*Section 47, Appendix VIII*).
28. Appoint Elizabeth Fox, Elder, as a Trustee of the Church of Scotland Housing and Loan Fund (*Section 48*).
29. Pass Regulations amending the Regulations for Remuneration and Reimbursement of Parish Ministers (Regulations I 2015), as amended, as set out in Appendix IX (*Section 49 and Appendix IX*).

## **Points for Information**

### **Public Life & Social Justice Programme Group**

1. We encourage reflection and thinking about 'Scotland's Four Words of Hope' - the values of **Integrity, Compassion, Justice and Wisdom** – especially during this 2026 election year and in a context of global uncertainty.
2. We reiterate our commitment to the scriptural call to welcome the stranger and love our neighbour, through the encouragement of practical projects on the ground to support integration of refugees and asylum seekers, as well as speaking out nationally to urge our political leaders to prioritise and uphold human rights and dignity.
3. We are committed to reviewing and updating the Church of Scotland's interfaith relations strategy.
4. We congratulate the UK Government for its decision to scrap the two-child benefit cap, and the Scottish Government for its commitment to the Scottish Child Payment; we continue to urge all levels of Government and all political parties to make the eradication of child poverty a key priority.

- 5. We ask the General Assembly and the whole Church to support the Campaign to End Gambling Ads, which urges the UK Government to impose restrictions where the evidence has shown the most harm caused by gambling.
- 6. We remind the wider Church of the commitment to care for creation, both through local efforts around education, advocacy and prayer, as well as in reducing carbon footprints and promoting biodiversity. We hope to build on last year’s deliverance on the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty by continuing to speak out against new oil and gas licensing in the North Sea.
- 7. The work of Integrity, the Church of Scotland’s task group on gender-based violence, has a new strategy with a particular focus on creating a safe space for women, girls and children through training and support. This group plans future work around the issue of misogyny.
- 8. In response to a report commissioned by the Scottish Government on policies developed and implemented in the 20th Century on Scotland’s Gypsy/Traveller communities, we issued a statement in the summer of 2025 which acknowledges the role that the Church had to play. Our statement is reproduced in this Report, and we encourage church members, elders and ministers to reflect on it.
- 9. We report on the decisions taken to end the Society, Religion and Technology Project, and to cease the Church of Scotland’s membership of Eurodiaconia.

**People & Training Programme Group**

- 10. Thank both the Working Group and the Selection Panel for their dedication and commitment to continued development work within IME (*Section 28.6.4*).
- 11. Acknowledge the work undertaken to initiate the apprenticeship pilot scheme and thank the Hub leaders, mentors and People & Training team for their commitment to this new area of work (*Section 33.3*).

**Presbytery and Partnership Support Programme Group**

- 12. Give thanks for the work of Christian Aid; welcome the appointment of Thabo Makgoba, Archbishop of Cape Town, as the new Chair of Christian Aid; and encourage congregations to continue to support the work of Christian Aid (*Section 38.1*).
- 13. Remember the Church’s commitment to the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, to support the right of the people of Taiwan to self-determination, and to embody a mission that accompanies suffering communities with courage, faith, and hope; and commit to walk alongside the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, alongside the work of the Ecumenical Forum on Taiwan, advocating for peace grounded in justice (*Section 39.1*).
- 14. Encourage the Church to continue to pray for the Church and people of South Sudan (*Section 38.2*).
- 15. Give thanks for the ongoing work of the Middle East Council of Churches in bringing together Orthodox, Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant churches across the Middle East in support of the scattered Christian communities; and for their ongoing work with Palestinian refugees through the Department for Services to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR) (*Section 40.1*).
- 16. Give thanks for the witness of the Synod of the Nile, The Coptic Evangelical Organisation for Social Services (CEOSS), and St Andrew’s Church Refugee Service (StARS) and encourage members to learn more of their work and witness and congregations to consider a twinning (*Section 40.2*).

**Executive Summary**

The Great Commandment calls us to a dual love: for God and for our neighbour. In our shared life within the Church of Scotland, this truth reminds us that we are profoundly interdependent, both upon God and one another.

Whether you serve as an elder or deacon; a reader or minister of Word and Sacrament; a pioneer minister, chaplain, or mission officer; a children’s and family worker, or a dedicated member of the congregation—each of you is essential to the fabric of this Church.

Our mission is only made possible through your faithfulness and commitment. We offer our deepest gratitude for your service and pray God’s continued blessing upon you.

**Faith Action Programme Leadership Team Report**

**1. RESOURCE CHURCH**

**1.1 Vision and Rationale**

**1.1.1** We believe the Church of Scotland is called to meet a growing spiritual curiosity among young people, recognising that this is a significant weakness for our denomination. Because we have lost many churches in areas where students live, we plan to invest in “Resource Churches”—vibrant city-centre hubs that provide a welcoming space for young adults to explore or return to their faith. Instead of just focusing on one local neighbourhood, these hubs will act as launchpads: they will gather people for worship and community, train them to follow Jesus in their daily lives, and then send them back out to serve and support the wider city.

**1.2 Definition**

**1.2.1** A Resource Church is strategically developed to be a hub for mission, planting new churches, revitalising existing ones, and developing leaders, intentionally sharing its people and skills to expand the church’s reach across a city or region, rather than just growing itself.

## Key Characteristics:

- Partnership between national, presbytery and local: Developed as part of a national church-planting strategy; because of the level of strategic development and investment required, Resource Churches are built on collaboration between national, Presbytery and local.
- Mission-Focused: Aimed at evangelism, seeing lives and communities transformed, not just internal growth.
- Leadership-development Hub: Develops leaders and teams to start new congregations or revitalise others.
- Resource Provider: Shares trained people, proven programmes (like youth work) and develops its funding to enable growth.
- Strategic Growth: Works within a Presbytery Mission Plan to reach a whole area, impacting diverse communities. It begins with a plan for engaging with students and young adults but immediately looks to become intergenerational.

### **1.3 Strategic Location**

**1.3.1** Location is critical. Experienced planters confirm that early success often depends on being positioned near universities to reach students and young adults, and more financially stable neighbourhoods to provide a base of long-term support. We propose a location close to university areas and well-connected communities. This allows for strategic access to students, families, and spiritually curious individuals.

### **1.4 Planting**

**1.4.1** Church planting is already happening in the Church of Scotland, driven by people sensing God's call. However, growth is limited as people are unsure about legislation, lack of resources, and assumptions that new churches aren't needed.

**1.4.2** We affirm three key levels of planting identified in our church planting strategy:

- Locally initiated efforts (grassroots)
- Presbytery-led mission initiatives
- National coordination for support, coherence and shared learning

**1.4.3** Priority in church-planting must be given to enabling local efforts while ensuring accountability, sustainability, and inclusivity across different contexts (urban, rural, suburban, student). Resource church will not be our default way of church-planting; rather they will be our strategic approach in some university cities and towns.

The Presbytery Mission Initiatives Act (2015) guides and enables us in all methods of planting. Each new plant should have a sending church with whom a clear covenant is agreed. Other supporting churches may be involved with finances, people, buildings and any other areas of support.

### **1.5 Structure and Flexibility**

**1.5.1** The Resource Church must be:

- Flexible and adaptable to context
- Purposeful, with clear focus on students and young adults
- Structured around mission, worship, training, and sharing
- Led by diverse teams, including ordained and non-ordained leaders

**1.5.2** We must explore new ministry models: Bi-vocational, pioneering, youth ministry, team ministry.

### **1.6 Training and Team Development**

**1.6.1** This is not about replicating models—but developing people. We will want to identify APEST roles (Ephesians 4:11-13): Apostolic, Prophetic, Evangelistic, Shepherding, Teaching, within team leadership, to equip the whole church. Training must prepare teams for flexibility, resilience, and missional engagement.

### **1.7 The Role of Presbytery**

**1.7.1** Presbyteries are vital in providing:

- Oversight and support (e.g., through Presbytery Mission Initiative Covenants)
- Clear agreements with sending churches
- Support in governance, encouragement, and accountability
- Flexibility with property and structures

**1.7.2** Presbytery support must be relational and strategic, not just procedural.

### **1.8 Cultural Change and Next Steps**

**1.8.1** This journey will involve risk, learning, and flexibility. The Church of Scotland must begin asking its members: "Is God calling you to plant a church?"

**1.8.2** All Presbyteries with significant university cities or towns were invited to journey with this work over the summer of 2025. Glasgow Presbytery indicated they were keen to begin exploring possibilities in their context. At time of writing, one congregation is preparing to become a sending church.

**1.8.3** Throughout the spring of 2026, work is proposed in the following ways:

- The existing congregation becomes a Resource Church, stretching into new geographical areas and ministries, especially into the east side of Glasgow city centre.

- A rhythm of mission, discipleship, community and worship will be established in 2026, focused on the east side of the city centre, with a new member of staff employed to lead this.
- A programme of Leadership Development will be developed which resources the existing church congregation, the city centre ministry and other Glasgow Church of Scotland congregations.
- A local leadership team will be established for the city centre ministry, which sits under the oversight of the existing Kirk Session.
- Funding will be made available for up to two days to release the minister to bring leadership for this new development.
- Venues will be explored as possible venues for monthly worship nights.
- A budget will be prepared.
- Conversations will begin with other specific Glasgow city-centre / student congregations and a PMI covenant will be drawn up.
- People will be invited to pray and discern how God is leading.
- The Revitalise Trust will be asked how they might support, especially with training and team development.

## 1.9 The Good News Collective

**1.9.1** In recent years, our Church has faced a convergence of significant challenges all of which can easily be framed as a narrative of decline. In the face of such adversity, it is understandable that many have felt a sense of despondency; yet the continued presence and commitment of this community serve as a powerful testament to our resilience. Despite these struggles, we must remain steadfast in our identity as a people of the Gospel, refocusing our collective witness on the “Good News” that remains at the heart of our mission. Our mission statement-

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

**1.9.2** The essence of the Gospel lies in the transformative power of Christ’s love. As we receive this grace, we are called to embody that “Good News” for the sake of others. This theological conviction underpins the potential for the Good News Collective, a new initiative to be developed by the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team (FAPLT) to inspire and equip presbyteries, congregations, and individuals.

**1.9.3** Tasked by the General Assembly with shaping the future focus of ministry and mission, FAPLT envisions this collective as a diverse “menu” of resources designed to foster spiritual renewal. By engaging with these tools, the Church is encouraged to rediscover its core identity: that the Good News we have received is, by its very nature, meant to be shared.

**1.9.4** We’re living in a day where there are green shoots of something new and fresh appearing. There is evidence of greater bible engagement; a revived interest in spiritual things; growing church attendance; growing number of youth and young adults coming to faith and being unashamed of it. This is good news that should inspire us to rediscover the Good News we have to share.

**1.9.5** This is the heart behind The Good News Collective. Helping us as a church rediscover our confidence in the gospel, and as we share The Good News and see what God does in us and through us, we share these good news stories to encourage and inspire others.

**1.9.6** Work will begin this summer to bring this initiative to the church in 2027.

## 1.10 Yearbook editor

**1.10.1** David Stewart has brought to the role of Yearbook Editor an encyclopaedic knowledge of the Church, its ministers, its buildings, and its congregations; a perspective arising out of years of commitment and service as an elder and organist. Appointed in February 2018, his quiet attention to detail and understanding of the Church have been hallmarks of his editorship, and he leaves a substantial legacy which is hard to follow. For this, and for his many gifts, the Church is truly grateful and offers its thanks to him. Angus Mathieson will be a suitable and able successor to this role, and we express our thanks to him for continuing to provide this important service.

## 1.11 Vivid Vision

**1.11.1** A set of materials has been developed to support congregations in developing vision and articulating purpose for the next few years, especially with regard to mission. The Vivid Vision materials have been used by Kirk Sessions and church members to explore possibilities and develop plans for the future. A number have used the materials in the development of Action Plans. Ongoing, hopeful conversations are happening as a result. All materials continue to be available [here https://ascend.churchofscotland.org.uk/a-vivid-vision-for-the-church/](https://ascend.churchofscotland.org.uk/a-vivid-vision-for-the-church/), and we commend them to your congregation’s use.

## 1.12 Remit

**1.12.1** FAPLT was established at the General Assembly in May 2023. Initial remits for FAPLT and its Programme Groups were approved, with the understanding that revisions would be brought back to a future Assembly as the Team developed.

**1.12.2** Since then, FAPLT and its Programme Groups have moved beyond the initial implementation phase and established a regular working rhythm. To support their ongoing work, updated remits are now presented within the Assembly Trustees’ report.

A review of FAPLT is scheduled for 2026.

### 1.13 Departing staff

**1.13.1** The Faith Action department has reduced significantly in size over the past year following a period of voluntary and compulsory redundancies, resulting in the departure of 17 staff members. We express our enormous appreciation for their dedicated service and extend our best wishes as they move forward. Their contributions have created lasting platforms on which the Church will continue to build.

In June 2026, Angus Mathieson will retire from his role as Presbytery Partnership Support Programme Manager. Angus has served in the Church Offices for over twenty-eight years, working in a variety of departments, and with different boards, councils and committees. His attention to detail, knowledge of the church and concern for people will be sorely missed.

## Mission Support Programme Group Report

### 2. INTRODUCTION

**2.1** The Mission Support Programme Group exists to help our local churches thrive in the mission of God. At a time when interest in Jesus and His Church is growing among a new generation, we aim to support and amplify the work of congregations as they make the love and good news of Jesus known in their communities.

**2.2** Our staff and committee members focus on fresh expressions of church, renewal and growth of existing congregations, priority area parishes, digital ministry, young people and young adults, and worship renewal. We are also developing a church planting work stream for the coming years, working alongside Presbytery Mission Officers, Mission Committees, and congregations seeking growth.

We want to be alongside presbyteries and local congregations and ask:

‘How can we help you make Jesus known in your communities?’

‘How can we help you make disciples of Jesus?’

‘What is God leading you to at this time, and how can we help you step into it?’

**2.3** We oversee the work of the Education and Schools Group, Scottish Workplace Chaplaincy, and the Gaelic Committee, each delivering innovative and practical missional offerings. Presbyteries and congregations interested in these areas are encouraged to contact us.

**2.4** An updated remit can be found in the Assembly Trustees’ report. This reflects both the change in staffing and priorities which the national can bring to the local.

**2.5** After years of challenge and pruning, we believe the Church, seeking God’s help and depending on the Spirit, can enter a new season of mission. This report sets out how we have been supporting that work and what lies ahead.

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### 3. PRIORITY AREAS

#### 3.1 Background

**3.1.1** Over many years, the Gospel imperative to give priority to the poorest and most marginalised has shaped the Church of Scotland’s commitment to sustaining a focused presence of prayer, people, and resources within communities experiencing the highest levels of social and economic deprivation. Central to this commitment is the credibility, transparency, and robustness of the methodology used to identify, support, and review the Priority Areas list.

**3.1.2** The publication of updated Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data, along with new census data and changes arising from the Presbytery Mission Planning process, provides a significant and timely opportunity to ensure that the Priority Areas list continues to reflect accurately the realities of poverty and inequality in contemporary Scotland.

#### 3.2 Context, Rationale and Transition

**3.2.1** Previous reviews of the Priority Areas list have demonstrated the importance of adopting a measured, consultative, and pastorally sensitive approach, recognising that any change in designation carries missional, financial, and organisational implications for congregations, presbyteries, and wider communities. The continuation of the established seven-year review cycle is proposed as an appropriate and proportionate rhythm for this work. It offers sufficient stability to support long-term mission and development, while enabling periodic reflection, learning, and renewal.

**3.2.2** This review will also take full account of progress arising from Presbytery Mission Planning. Where there has been a reduction in the overall number of congregations, the Priority Areas list should reflect this reduction proportionately, maintaining Priority Areas at broadly five per cent of total congregations and ensuring that they are not disproportionately affected by structural changes.

**3.2.3** Where an updated Priority Areas list emerging by 2028 results in a change of designation for any congregation, transitional arrangements will apply. Transitional support of up to two years will be provided, in line with arrangements offered following the 2021 Priority Areas list. During this two-year transitional period, the existing Priority Area designation will remain in place, and the Priority Areas team will work with the congregation and Presbytery to ensure that appropriate mechanisms of support are maintained throughout the transition.

### 3.3 Proposed Process and Timescale

**3.3.1** It is proposed that 2026 be designated as a scoping and preparatory year. During this period, FAPLT will review the current methodology for identifying Priority Areas, assess the impact and outcomes of the existing process, and explore how updated datasets may be integrated within a refreshed framework.

**3.3.2** This phase will include consultation with relevant Councils, Committees, and partners, and will draw upon learning from research, evaluation, and lived experience within Priority Area communities.

In 2027, a proposed methodology for redrawing the Priority Areas list will then be brought to the General Assembly. This anticipated methodology would seek to highlight threats and opportunities, while considering the balance, distribution, and impact of Priority Area designation across the life and work of the whole Church. The methodology would also aim to identify hidden poverty.

**3.3.3** The outcomes of this work, together with recommendations for implementation, will be reported to the General Assembly in 2028, resulting in a renewed Priority Areas list that continues the seven-year review cycle, and provides proportionate transitional support where designation changes for congregations either transitioning on or off the Priority Areas list.

**3.3.4** This approach reflects the whole Church's continued commitment to the Gospel imperative through evidence-based mission, accountable stewardship, and faithful accompaniment of communities experiencing the greatest social and economic deprivation and thus ensuring priority for the poorest and most marginalised remains at the heart of our mission.

## 4. NEW WORSHIPPING COMMUNITIES

**4.1** A new worshipping community is a distinct gathering of people who meet regularly for Christian worship, formed with the intention of reaching new people rather than serving an existing congregation. It has its own developing identity, leadership, and pattern of meeting, is missional in origin, and is intended to grow into a sustainable Christian community. It is more than a course, event, or additional service, and is not simply an extension of another church but a community that could continue in its own right.

**4.2** The development of New Worshipping Communities (NWCs) remains a significant strand of the Church's mission, seeking to create expressions of church life that engage those who do not currently connect with traditional congregational worship.

Baseline research in 2021, drawn from the Congregational Returns and subsequent verification, identified 78 congregations with one or more NWCs.

**4.3** Tracking these original, verified congregations over subsequent years now offers a clearer picture of sustainability. In 2022, 79% of these congregations still reported having an NWC. This fell to 47% in 2023 and stands at 46% in the 2024 Statistical Returns. In effect, just under half of the original verified initiatives are still being reported three years on. It should be noted, however, that there has been considerable non-response to this question in the returns, meaning the true figure may be higher than recorded.

**4.4** Looking more widely across the Church, the 2024 Statistical Returns show that 204 congregations - approximately 30% of all congregations - reported having a New Worshipping Community. While these figures are not yet verified, they demonstrate that engagement with the concept of NWCs continues across the Church.

**4.5** Taken together, these figures present both encouragement and challenge. While some early initiatives have paused or ceased, a substantial number continue.

**4.6** In the coming year, follow-up work will be undertaken to verify current reports, to understand the local context more fully, and to enable the wider Church to learn from what is emerging, what is enduring, and where additional encouragement and support may be needed.

## 5. GA 25 DELIVERANCE FAP23

Instruct FAPLT to engage in a process of listening and learning by engaging with congregations across the Church of Scotland where growth in numbers or spiritual vitality is evident, in order to identify effective practices and share them with congregations facing decline or difficulty, so that existing congregations are supported in renewal alongside Church planting.

### 5.1 Comment

**5.1.1** Members of Mission Support and People & Training have undertaken extensive listening and engagement across the Church of Scotland. While the sharing of stories of growth and vitality is valuable, experience and feedback suggest that stories alone rarely lead to sustained developmental action. For learning to be effective, such stories must be carefully framed, with effective practices clearly identified and accompanied by practical, accessible steps that can be applied across a range of contexts.

**5.1.2** Learning from pioneering practice indicates that lasting church communities grow out of their own unique context and cautions against the direct replication of another congregation's pathway. Nevertheless, there remains value in sharing stories, if they are presented in ways which: identify effective practice; offer tools for contextual reflection and analysis; reflect a broad range of contexts, traditions and stages; allow for elastic definitions of spiritual vitality; and avoid the introduction of further programmes or initiatives.

**5.1.3** We plan to deliver a suite of in-depth, conversational; multimedia learning resources which allow for exploration of context and journey, identify effective practice, and demonstrate approaches to contextualisation. These conversations would be honest and reflective, including learning from failure as well as success. Brief accompanying written material would support each resource, ensuring that learning is framed in ways that are accessible and actionable. This work would require close integration with the Communications Department and the Digital Advisor.

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## **6. GWA**

**6.1** The rollout of the *God Welcomes All* hymnary supplement continues through a range of launch and training events across presbyteries, national gatherings, and online platforms, following the initial launch at GA24. In partnership with People & Training and with presbyteries, training is being delivered in music and liturgy, drawing extensively on *God Welcomes All* and focusing on its effective use in local contexts.

**6.2** The Full Music Edition of *God Welcomes All* is now in its second imprint. It is anticipated that the CH4 website will reach one million streams by GA26. The recently introduced indexes and search functions will be enhanced further by digital resources becoming available as this work progresses throughout 2026.

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## **7. LOCAL WORSHIP LEADERS/READERS**

**7.1** Following the loss of several staff members from this multi-lead project, due to the ongoing staffing restructure, alternative approaches to delivery have been implemented. A presbytery-level consultation has taken place, with further engagement planned involving groups of Local Worship Leaders and Readers. This work will be undertaken, in collaboration with relevant presbytery staff, to ensure sufficient narrative is gathered on training and deployment, and on the challenges and opportunities inherent in these roles.

Alongside the ongoing development of networks for practitioner support and shared learning, Mission Support staff, working in collaboration with key stakeholders, will analyse the data gathered and develop recommendations regarding the appropriate level of national support.

**7.2.** These recommendations will be reported to the General Assembly 2027 (GA27).

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## **8. CHURCH PLANTING**

### **8.1 The General Assembly of 2025 passed a deliverance to:**

*'Instruct FAPLT, in collaboration with Seeds for Growth and the Assembly Trustees, to develop church planting strategy and structures and report to the General Assembly of 2026.'*

**8.2** We are not ready to bring strategy and structures to this General Assembly. The reduction in central support staffing across the Church, including in Mission Support and in Seeds for Growth, has made it impossible to commit the necessary staff resource within the timescale.

**8.3** Work to determine how this will be taken forward, however, is ongoing. In March 2026, a team of representatives from the Church of Scotland participated in the Scottish Church Planting Network Conference, contributing to a developing strategic understanding of how the Church of Scotland might be better equipped to plant and sustain new churches, alongside its ongoing commitment to the renewal of existing congregations. To progress this work, one member of MSPG will dedicate a month, May 2026, to responding to this deliverance, including assessment of the implications for staff resourcing and the scope for further strategic exploration.

**8.4** We are supporting church plants that are already emerging, seeking to learn from these pioneering initiatives and to identify how best to support them through monitoring and evaluation processes that can inform approaches shaped to serve the whole. Following the completion of the focus group work on Resource Churches (reported elsewhere), we have taken on responsibility for enabling, learning from, and supporting this work. (Section 1.1)

**8.5** We believe in the work that the General Assembly has asked us to undertake in relation to church planting, and we look forward to bringing proposals on church planting strategy and structures to a future General Assembly.

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## **9. YOUNG PEOPLE AND YOUNG ADULTS**

**9.1** We continued to prioritise Magnitude within our young people and young adult programme because it offers a strategically significant space for nurturing belonging, discipleship, and emerging leadership at a national level, enabled through strong partnership with presbyteries and local congregations.

**9.2** The Church of Scotland Village at Magnitude provides more than practical support; it creates a shared home where young people - particularly from smaller, rural, and Priority Area congregations - can experience identity, connection, and accompaniment within the wider life of the Church. Participation has grown markedly in recent years, from 23 young people in 2023, to 70 in 2024, and 110 campers in 2025, drawn from 10 congregations with a further four attending as day visitors, providing evidence of both increasing demand and the effectiveness of this partnership approach. The Church of Scotland represented 15% of all young delegates, including other larger groups who camped independently.

**9.3** Presbytery representatives play a critical role in this work, acting as key connectors who support, encourage, and enable congregations to participate in ways appropriate to their context and capacity. The national role is therefore intentionally facilitative, coordinating infrastructure, safeguarding, and shared learning so that presbyteries and congregations are empowered to lead locally. Looking ahead, our focus is on strengthening this collaborative model

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through distributed leadership and clearer structures, ensuring the Village remains sustainable, relationally rich, and well placed to walk alongside young people as they grow in faith, confidence, and vocation within the Church of Scotland.

## 10. DIGITAL MINISTRY

**10.1** Reflecting the Church’s commitment to shaping mission for the future, the Church of Scotland’s digital ministry continues to develop and mature, building on significant progress made over the past year.

**10.2** Launched in April 2025, Instamission is an ongoing digital outreach initiative which supports the Church’s wider missional strategy by engaging audiences beyond traditional church settings, particularly younger people. The project produces short-form digital content intended to prompt reflection on Christian faith in contemporary contexts and is supported by a volunteer team drawn from across the Church, the majority of whom are under 40.

**10.3** Alongside Instamission, the Digital Ministries team will continue to develop themed video series that support mission, testimony, and engagement with contemporary social issues. Previous work, including content produced around Pentecost and the Week of Action to End Violence Against Women and Girls, demonstrates the contribution of digital ministry to the Church’s commitments in mission, discipleship, and justice.

**10.4** In response to the 2025 Digital Ministry Strategic Aim to equip the whole Church for digital ministry, a suite of practical resources has been developed and is now available to support ongoing training and capacity-building. These resources provide theological grounding, set out core principles for effective digital engagement, and offer practical guidance to enable congregations, ministers, and members to participate confidently in digital ministry.

## 11. SCOTTISH WORKPLACE CHAPLAINCY

**11.1** In line with the Church’s commitment to live out the Five Marks of Mission, Scottish Workplace Chaplaincy, an agency within the Church of Scotland, is responsible for overseeing and developing chaplaincy services, through which Scottish Christian churches collaborate in engaging with working life. These services provide pastoral care and spiritual support throughout Scotland, to people of all faiths and none, across a wide range of workplaces, including Royal Mail, Fire and Rescue Services, local councils, and commercial settings.

**11.2** The network currently comprises around 40 chaplains from diverse denominational backgrounds, serving urban, rural, and island communities. Initiatives such as the CrossReach pilot, which places chaplains in its services, demonstrate ongoing innovation and the potential to extend the Church’s presence and pastoral care within Scottish workplaces.

## 12. LITURGICAL RENEWAL

### 12.1 Theological Basis of Liturgical Renewal

**12.1.1** Worship is crucial to the healthy life of the church. Indeed, Article Declaratory IV declares that Christ has given the church the right to adjudicate finally in matters of doctrine, worship, government and discipline. Worship is therefore one of the key areas of its life to which the church must attend according to its own constitution. The Church of Scotland is also described as a ‘national Church’ in Article Declaratory III, with a ‘distinctive call and duty to bring the ordinances of religion to the people.’ This means that the church has a responsibility to be courageous in its liturgical leadership, shaping our worship to be culturally relevant, dynamic and essential to life in contemporary Scotland, while remaining faithful to its Reformed heritage.

**12.1.2** Worship in the Church of Scotland is understood fundamentally as a response to the sovereign grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ and is rooted in the conviction of the Westminster Shorter Catechism that the chief end of human beings is ‘to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever’ (WSC 1). Worship is on this view not a human invention but a divine summons; it is the act of ‘spiritual worship’ in which believers offer their lives as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). As the Westminster Confession states simply: ‘Religious worship is to be given to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost’ (WCF XXI.2). So it is that in the gathering of the covenant people of God, the Word is proclaimed and the sacraments are administered, with the promise and in the prayerful hope that Christ will be present in the power of the Spirit among the people gathered in his name (Matthew 18:20). Such gathering in worship of the covenant people serves to transform the minds of those gathered in accordance with the pattern of God’s new world, as they gratefully acknowledge that everything they are and have as the body of Christ has been received from God the Creator and Redeemer.

**12.1.3** The church is, however, a living body, and its faith a living faith. Its worship is part of its living history, in which the church is always on the move. Hence, obedience to the divine summons to worship always occurs in a specific place and at a specific time and in a specific context. Correspondingly, worship can only inspire and empower the ‘priesthood of all believers’ as it speaks meaningfully to them of God and allows them to speak meaningfully of God before the world. It is for this reason that liturgical renewal is desirable for any church that is an *ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda* (a church reformed, always in need of being reformed). Such renewal affords the church the opportunity to ensure that its worship continues to be worthy of God in the present – by being intelligible to everyone (1 Corinthians 14:9), and by doing justice to the challenges facing the people of God and their experience of Christian life today. Liturgical renewal thus ensures that the tradition and witness of the church remain a living tradition and witness, ready to be taken up by the Spirit in such a way that ‘God’s deeds of power’ are heard ‘in our own languages’ (Acts 2:11).

## **12.2 The Case for Liturgical Renewal in Today's Context**

**12.2.1** In the current context of church decline, some may ask whether worship is a priority at this time. It has been questioned whether the Church should be looking inwards and reforming its own internal practices and structures, when an outward focus upon mission is so clearly a priority.

**12.2.2** Empowering worshippers amid the dynamic and shifting landscape of contemporary Scotland to gather – to seek God and to know God, to discern where the Spirit is leading, and to understand the truth of Christ's claims in a post truth world – is even more crucial within this context. Proactive liturgical experimentation, purposefully reflecting the breadth and depth of belief within the Church of Scotland, will take us to the intersection of faith and public square. Being united in worship as the body of Christ makes the church a visible and corporeal reality, present in society and drawing others towards God. Just as God has initiated worship and invites us into divine presence, we discern the Spirit's lead and our further invitation into the *Missio Dei*.

**12.2.3** While a key driver in renewal can be a sense of urgency around church decline, there is also a desire for a more authentic or experiential form of Christianity. Structural and institutional renewal has seen significant investment throughout the past few years. Missional and cultural renewal will not happen effectively without liturgical renewal at its foundation. The renewing and refreshing of our worship practice and liturgy is a vital stage in the deepening of faith and the opening of pathways to spiritual experimentation that enables shifts in the relationship of faith and society.

**12.2.4** Liturgy – spoken litany, sacramental practice and sung worship – is a primary source of theology and it gives us language and practice that is foundational to faith formation and discipleship. The principle of the Latin maxim *Lex orandi, lex credenda* – which translates to “the law of prayer is the law of belief” – essentially means that our worship, and particularly our liturgy, play a fundamental and formational role in shaping and reflecting not only our theology and doctrine, but moreover – our belief, which in turn shapes life (*Lex orandi, lex credenda, lex vivendi*).

**12.2.5** Renewal of liturgy therefore profoundly impacts the discipleship cultures within the church. As with our public worship, language and practice that situates us in the place of hope and within the deep places of our common life is vital. It is here that we need to be both courageous and disruptive. While the church continues to stand at the forefront of communities grappling with the complexities of our time and understanding the evolving mission that we are part of, our discernment and prophetic expression is made possible in our liturgical response. The renewal of our liturgical life together makes us ready for the journey outward into our missional calling as the church, with ‘the work of the people’ uniting us in our common endeavour.

## **12.3 The Task Ahead**

**12.3.1** In recent times, worship renewal within the Church of Scotland has been given a significant step forward with the launch of *God Welcomes All* – the supplement to Church Hymnary Fourth Edition. This book reflects the complexity of our local and global communities and society, and the shared experience of singing our faith as we seek God and the establishing of God's Kingdom in this time and place. We are reminded in the introduction to *God Welcomes All*:

*Songs also have power when sung collectively and congregational singing has been at the heart of worship renewal throughout the history of the Church. Therefore, at a time when there is so much change in both the Church and in wider society, it is important that we seek out new songs that can provide a musical and liturgical language to accompany us through the tensions and complexities of our time.*

**12.3.2** The Book of Common Order has historically served as both a theological anchor and a liturgical resource for the Church of Scotland, shaping the language of prayer, public worship, and connecting us to the sacred in the important moments of our lives. The introduction to the 1994 Book of Common Order begins:

*At a time of ceaseless change in the way churches understand and participate in worship, to publish a book of Common Order may seem a courageous act. Liturgical and gender language, the understanding of worship leadership, the theology of preaching and of the sacraments – all are in flux, a restlessness which may be a sign more of the Spirit's indwelling than absence.*

*Whatever else God calls us to, we are called to worship, to do so together, and to do so in the promised company of Jesus Christ. It is in worship that our lives are expressed before God and informed and converted by God's Word. It is in worship that through song, prayer, and preaching, our theology is formed, our discipleship encouraged, and our spirits nourished. It is in worship that we reach out to touch the hem of Christ's garment and find that, instead of touching the hem, we are being offered the grace of God by word of mouth and gift of hand.*

*The Church of Scotland, since the Reformation, has provided publications such as this to aid the corporate experience of worship.*

**12.3.3** It is now time for additional liturgical resources to be created for The Book of Common Order. Investing in liturgical renewal is indeed a courageous act, particularly within a rapidly shifting context and in a denomination that has experienced profound change and reform. In the 30 plus years since the 1994 edition of the Book of Common Order (and in the decade since any revision), there have been vast movements not only in language, but also in understandings of identity, gender and sexuality, in issues of migration, racial justice, poverty, and in increasingly individualistic and consumer cultures. How we connect, how we worship and how we understand ourselves as communities of faith has additionally been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, technological change and political and cultural shifts.

**12.3.4** The societal changes described above are not peripheral but are central to how we share the gospel. The language of worship and prayer must embody justice and compassion – not as add-ons, but as intrinsic to the nature of God's Kingdom and how we embody this as a church. Inclusive language need not be seen as a dilution of theological depth, but rather as a recovery of the fullness of expression of God's self-revelation, beyond the limitations of gendered or cultural assumptions. Any shared liturgy would need to both reflect our rooted Reformed heritage and the lived realities of contemporary Scotland within a rapidly changing social, political, and cultural landscape.

## 12.4 Approach

**12.4.1** The approach would be based on the assumption that what is required is first and foremost 'liturgical renewal' within the Church of Scotland, more than – in a rigid sense – a 'Book' of Common Order. Rather, some kind of holistic liturgical support would be envisaged, something that may take the form of a 'collection' that is open-ended and dynamic – a sort of compendium or anthology of liturgy that is accessible through a variety of different mediums and digital platforms, and that speaks both to the church and to those outside of our current influence.

**12.4.2** Developing such a resource for the Book of Common Order is not merely a technical exercise in revision—it is an act of theological discernment, communal listening, and imaginative creativity. It is a process that will hold the space for intentional Spirit led revitalisation of the Christian community, while deepening our worshipping life and discipleship. Exploration, discernment and narrative gathering will be essential as we seek to understand more fully the liturgical landscape within our denomination. This approach enables the process of renewal to become more intentional – while acting as a method of gaining insight and narrative data around experiences of liturgical formation, the use of liturgy within the worshipping life of communities, the noted omissions of particular types of liturgical expression, and possibilities for liturgical development. Rather than merely surveying the use of specific liturgical material and in particular past editions of Common Order and Ordinals, the approach described above is integral to the ethos of the process. Through deep listening and by weaving together narratives of our common and diverse experiences of God in worship, this methodology will allow us to recognise and retain the necessary breadth and depth of theology and expression within the living worship of our tradition.

**12.4.3** The next step would then be to gather the required groups to discern what the process of writing, collating and using emerging liturgy might look like. This would also allow us to hear from a diverse group of practitioners, which would be more reflective of the emerging landscape of the Church of Scotland, and also of the demographics that we would engage with as we continue our missional purpose in contemporary Scotland. This would reflect the Acts 2:11 principle of worship and the narrative of God being expressed and understood in language and medium that connect to each of our lived realities.

**12.4.4** Exploring how liturgy might be developed, experiment and piloted would also be a factor – refreshed and new liturgical elements could be launched, tested and embedded into the active worshipping life of the church in dynamic and responsive ways. This would have bearing on the shape and delivery of resourcing, training and empowering liturgy within our denomination, whilst also gaining more cognisance of development within liturgy that moves to a space of cultural connection. This would recognise with integrity our liturgical responsibility and shared identity in public worship as a national Church, with the weight of heritage and tradition pointing to an important influence and obligation for us to keep theologically coherent liturgical practice alive, all the while balancing it with local adaptability and contextual creativity already flourishing in local congregations.

**12.4.5** Producing a static 'product', would invite a sense of obsolescence and limit longevity, but as we are reminded in the introduction to Common Order 1994:

*The Church of Scotland, since the Reformation, has provided publications such as this to aid the corporate experience of worship.*

*These books have never been prescriptive, making 'this and this only' mandatory on ministers and congregations. Rather, in a tradition which reveres both freedom to worship and freedom in worship, three things are offered:*

*Firstly, orders of service, which may be followed verbatim.*

*Secondly, patterns of prayer and devotion, which can be used as models to be emulated or starting points for development.*

*Thirdly, a wealth of resources, which can be mined and re-mined for many years to come.*

**12.4.6** As well as dynamic and emerging resources that reflect the diverse means by which people avail themselves of worship and liturgical content, a holistic strategy is required; one that incorporates any liturgical development into the training of our people and into use at General Assemblies and other courts of the church on a regular basis, ensuring that any development is rooted in current and emerging practice.

## 12.5 Conclusion

**12.5.1** The process of liturgical renewal must embody the very values it seeks to promote: fulness of God, openness, attentiveness to justice and faithfulness. It must emerge not from assumption but from encounter—between Scripture and culture, between heritage and hope, between the local experience and the national Church. In doing so, the Church of Scotland can offer a liturgical resource that does more than sustain worship: it can help shape a renewed liturgical theological imagination for the next generation of faith in Scotland.

## 13. CHURCH OF SCOTLAND GAELIC COMMITTEE

### 13.1 Draft Five Year Gaelic Development Plan 2026-2031

**13.1.1** This draft is presented to the 2026 General Assembly in obedience to Deliverance 29 of the 2025 General Assembly:

*"Thank the Gaelic Committee for their work stemming from the Gaelic Development Plan 2022-2025 and affirm the continued shaping of a follow-on five-year plan to be brought to the General Assembly 2026, complete with a review of work undertaken in the year 2025-2026."*

**13.1.2** Regarding the state of Gaelic, the dichotomy identified in the Church of Scotland Gaelic Language Plan has grown more stark. While 2022 Census data confirms continued growth in speakers and Gaelic-medium education, the language's decline within the Church has accelerated toward an existential threat.<sup>1</sup> As similar trends affect other denominations, including the Free Church of Scotland, an ecumenical response is essential. The objectives in this draft plan prioritise such collaboration, offering hope for a resurgence of Gaelic worship both within and beyond the Church of Scotland.

**13.1.3** Our current plan was produced in obedience to a deliverance of the 2021 General Assembly:

*"Instruct the Forum<sup>2</sup> to explore the possibilities of developing a 3-year Gaelic Language Plan [2022-2025] that includes a particular emphasis on Gaelic Ministry and Mission to children and young people and to bring a report to the General Assembly of 2022."*

**13.1.4** As that deliverance required, the present plan focuses very much on children and young people under the following four headings:

1. Encourage Children & Young People who are already involved in the life of church communities (resources to encourage them in their involvement and discipleship)
2. Resource those working with children and young people in church communities, both paid workers and volunteers, to effectively nurture the faith and ongoing discipleship of children and young people.
3. Equip chaplains and other congregational members to minister/engage with children and young people in school.
4. Developing faith in the home (resources for use in nurturing a life of faith in the home and beyond).

**13.1.5** An account of the work done in 2025-2026 can be found in 13.2 below. It would be fair to say that, while significant progress has been made, the need for additional resources will be ongoing in a world where the nature of materials suitable for use with children and young people is constantly, and ever more quickly, changing. That has informed this aspect of the draft plan we now present for the next five years.

**13.1.6** However, the Committee is strongly of the view that the focus for the next five years needs to be widened to include the needs of Gaelic speakers and would-be Gaelic speakers more widely. We therefore envisage a twin-track approach combining the continued needs of families, children, and young people and those of adults who may wish to worship in more contemporary ways. That is the approach followed in our draft plan.

**13.1.7** One of the reasons for the continued decline in Gaelic services referred to above is that fewer ministers and other worship leaders are willing and able to lead worship and preach in Gaelic. Some see no value in it. In taking that approach, they are totally out of step with how Gaelic is now perceived in Scotland. Others would like to be able to do it but lack confidence and training. It is therefore an important innovation of our draft plan that the training of worship leaders, both ordained and non-ordained, is emphasised.

**13.1.8** The other area of innovation has to do with the production of worship materials which combine (a) the continued use of Gaelic psalmody and "putting out the line", which is enjoying at least a mini-revival of interest (particularly in the unlikely setting of the Scottish Borders), (b) the rich archive of Gaelic hymnary which exists but is not now easily accessible and (c) the best of modern praise items and arrangements, such as feature in BBC Alba's *Alleluia* programmes.

**13.1.9** At the risk of stating the obvious, in pursuing our aims, we see ourselves principally as facilitators. We will not ourselves produce the materials which are needed for rejuvenated Gaelic worship, in church or home. Instead, we will work with others. To be sure, we will pursue our own initiatives from time to time, but much of what we want to achieve can only be achieved by working with others, helping them to realise their own aspirations where those align with ours. So, partnership, such as has already been established with a wide range of entities,<sup>3</sup> is key, and we look forward to working with those and other partners in the future.

**13.1.10** Whilst we will continue to facilitate the work of others, we also need to acknowledge those who facilitate our work, notably the trustees of the Alexander J MacLeod Fund, who fund us to a maximum of £20,000 *per annum* at the moment and *Bòrd na Gàidhlig*, who support us in relation to projects which align with their own strategic plan. Without their support and that of others, what has been achieved to date would not have been possible and the plan which we now present would be purely aspirational.

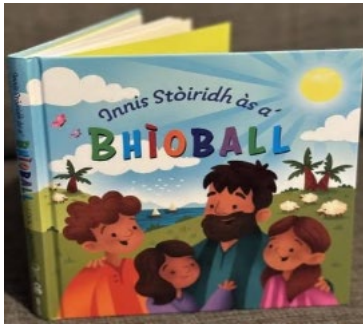
## **13.2 Gaelic Committee Report on Work Done in 2025-2026**

1 It should be acknowledged that, although Gaelic in-church services are now fewer and further between than they used to be, Gaelic services are still transmitted weekly on BBC Radio nan Gaidheal, which also broadcasts a Gaelic "Thought for the Day" (*Smuain na Maidne*) as part of its morning news programme from Monday to Friday, whilst, on television, BBC Alba broadcasts successive series of (mainly) praise programmes called *Alleluia*. Accordingly, the Gaelic broadcast media still carry Gaelic worship into people's homes weekly/daily. Arguably, they take their responsibilities in that area more seriously than the churches do.

2 A reference to the Faith Nurture Forum, which existed at that time.

3 Such as *Bòrd na Gàidhlig*, *Comhairle nan Eilean Siar* (the Western Isles local authority, including *Sgoil Nis* (Ness Gaelic Medium School), *Comhairle nan Leabhraichean* (Gaelic Books Council), Dyslexia Scotland, Education Scotland, individual members of the Free Church of Scotland, Go Chatter Studios, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland (HMIE), Highland Council including *Sgoil Inbhir Pheofharain* (Dingwall Gaelic Medium School), the presbyteries of Glasgow, Lewis and Iona, Scottish Bible Society, Scottish Roman Catholic Education Service, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, *Stòrlann* (National Gaelic Resource Centre), United Free Church of Scotland.

**13.2.1** The work saw the continuation of ‘**Proiseact Pentecostes**’, a multi-pronged, exciting, innovative, missional project that aims to bring the message of God’s love to the children and young people of Scotland through the medium of Gaelic. What follows gives examples of this ongoing work and has been compiled by Rev Hugh Stewart, Vice-Convener of our Committee, who leads this work.



**13.2.2** In collaboration with Lion Publishers and the Scottish Bible Society, 1500 copies of ‘Innis Stoiridh as a Bhioball [‘Tell a Story] Bible Story Books were translated, updated, published and distributed, FREE of charge, to children across Scotland, for use at home, in schools and churches.

‘Proiseact Pentecostes ’ also created a Gaelic audiobook of the ‘Innis Stoiridh as a Bhioball’ which is accessible via a QR code found within the newly published book. This allows children and Gaelic Learners to hear the text audibly whilst reading it visually. This is particularly helpful for Gaelic learners and children with reading challenges.

**A’ Ceangal le Breigichean [Tying with Bricks]**



**13.2.3** A new series of videos for children and young Scots that explores biblical stories using LEGO® bricks.

**13.2.4** With support from Bòrd na Gàidhlig, the London Gaelic Services Committee (via the A J MacLeod Bequest), and the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) – publisher of the first Gaelic Bible – these videos are available free of charge to schools, churches, and parents as a gift to Scottish children.

**13.2.5** Featuring well-known Bible stories in a fun and accessible way, the series includes stories such as David and Goliath, Jonah, and the resurrection of Lazarus, continuing from previous releases on Christmas and Easter.

**13.2.6** Each video includes teaching notes that align with the Curriculum for Excellence, together with a schema enabling children and young people to create their own sets of the video using LEGO® bricks.



**Sar Clasaichean a' Ceangal le Breigichean [Tying with Bricks Masterclass]**

**13.2.7** Masterclasses have been held in Dingwall (Rosshire), Ness (Isle of Lewis) and Stornoway (Isle of Lewis), with others planned for Glasgow and other centres going forward.

**13.2.8** These sessions involve the use of Clasaichean a' Ceangal le Breigichean animation videos to learn about the Bible stories portrayed, create sets using LEGO® and produce short animation videos, all in line with the Curriculum for Excellence.

**Ag Aithris / Ag Innse**

**13.2.9** Work has begun on the production of new Bible-based, innovative, missional resources, developed in conjunction with other parties.

**13.2.10** The Gaelic Committee wishes to record its thanks to all those who have been involved in 'Proiseact Pentecostes': Storlann; Comunn na Leabhraichean Ghaidhlig; the Society for the Proclamation of Christian Knowledge; Bord na Gaidhlig; Education Authorities; Education Scotland; HMle Scotland; Scottish Bible Society; the Education and Schools Group of the CofS; other churches, including the United Free Church and the Roman Catholic Church of Scotland; and the many individuals who have given freely their time and expertise to the project.

**DRAFT PLAN**

<b>1. Continued involvement in meeting the needs of families, children and young people for Gaelic faith materials for use in home, church and school</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
Continue to add to the resources available to families, children and young people for use in home, school and church, working in partnership to develop contemporary materials in attractive and engaging multimedia formats.	Equipping future generations of parents, teachers and church leaders with the contemporary resources they need to keep pace with rapidly evolving changes in how young people engage with the faith.	The rejuvenation of the use of Gaelic in homes, schools and churches, where it was once so significant.	Ongoing
Complete the work already begun under <i>Project Pentecostes</i> including the production of further Lego videos, the completion of <i>Sgeulachdan a' Bhiobaill</i> (Stories of the Bible), <i>Ag Aithris</i> (recording of stories for use with both primary and secondary students) and <i>Molaidh Sinn E</i> (We will praise Him – an innovative, inter-school online project with international potential within the Gaelic diaspora giving school pupils the opportunity to create their own worship materials).	These projects will be completed or as is appropriate, continued during the lifetime of this plan with the result that by the end of Year 5 hundreds of children and young people will have encountered the Gospel in Gaelic.	Bringing, or helping to bring, children and young people to faith so that the next generation contains a cohort of Gaelic-speaking believers able and willing to hand down the faith through the medium of Gaelic.	Ongoing. It is anticipated that the individual projects mentioned will be replaced by others, equally innovative, when completed
Develop a specific initiative aimed at early teenagers (12-15 years of age), to take the form of holiday camps using tried and tested venues like Nethy Bridge where those attending can engage in the usual activities offered at such camps but engage with the faith interactively, through the medium of Gaelic.	Get early teens engaged with the Gospel in a fun environment in which they can get to know each other and learn more about the faith free of any demands or challenges.	Create friendships rooted in faith and in a shared commitment to Gaelic and get youngsters thinking about faith matters at a crucial stage of their development, bridging the gap between childhood and adult faith.	The first camps to take place in Year 2 and annually thereafter.
Work closely with Gaelic-medium educators in order to help meet their needs for suitable faith and Religious and Moral Education materials and activities in Gaelic.	Close alignment between the needs of Gaelic-medium educators and the church(es) in the creation of resources needed specifically in the field of education.	Schools and teachers will be equipped to deliver RME as effectively in Gaelic as is presently possible in English	Ongoing

<p>With particular reference to the use of Gaelic in church, invite other denominations, including the Free Church of Scotland, The Free Church Continuing, the Roman Catholic Church and the Episcopal Church to pool resources and personnel capable of producing materials and activities suitable for use in Sunday Schools, Messy Church, Youth Groups and whatever forms these may take in years to come and to devise training for those leading such groups.</p>	<p>A talent pool will be created ecumenically to produce faith materials suitable for use across Scotland's Christian community.</p>	<p>Equipping Scotland's churches with all they need for worship and the nurturing of faith through Gaelic in tomorrow's world.</p>	<p>This pool will be created in Year 1 and will pursue its mission throughout Years 2-5.</p>
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<b>2. Devising and delivering training in the leading of Gaelic worship</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
<p>Create an online training course for people, including, but not restricted to, ministers, who are interested in leading worship and preaching in Gaelic.</p>	<p>The creation of a re-usable training vehicle/platform for those interested in preaching in Gaelic.</p>	<p>To begin supplying interested congregations with trained worship leaders and preachers.</p>	<p>First course to be created by end of Year 1</p>
<p>Deliver such a course, complemented by in-person gatherings of participants, so that they can get to know and support each other in their ongoing ministry, with a view to creating a pool of such people capable of leading worship and preaching anywhere in Scotland.</p>	<p>Produce, say, 15 people so trained by the end of Year 1 and a similar number in year 3.</p>	<p>The creation of a mutually supportive community of Gaelic preachers, capable, where possible, of flexible deployment across Scotland.</p>	<p>First course to be delivered by end of Year 2 and repeated, with appropriate modifications, in Year 4.</p>
<p>Make such courses available ecumenically to participants and contributors interested in reviving Gaelic worship in their own denominations.</p>	<p>Ecumenical participation in preparing and delivering such courses and in benefiting from them, with the possibility of Gaelic preachers working inter-denominationally.</p>	<p>The creation of a pool of trained people prepared to work inter-denominationally.</p>	<p>Make available as each course is released</p>
<p>Monitor the need/possibilities for repeating such a course at intervals over the period of this plan.</p>	<p>Thoroughly assess the outcome of each course and make appropriate adjustments for the next one.</p>	<p>The creation of a training programme capable of meeting demand and adjusting to developments in the way worship should be delivered.</p>	<p>Subject to demand – first repeat to be delivered in Year 3</p>

<b>3. Creating new, and improving access to existing, Gaelic praise materials</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
Foster the present resurgence of interest in Gaelic psalm-singing by arranging <i>Scoiltean Ciùil</i> (Precenting Schools).	In the First Year of the plan, the provision of support to the <i>Scoil Chiùil</i> which is already underway at Greyfriars Kirk, Edinburgh, as a result of an awakening of interest centred on a group based in Carlops.	Create an opportunity for the widespread revival of traditional Gaelic psalmody in Scotland's presbyterian churches.	Work to begin in Year 1 and develop organically subsequently.
Support a nascent project originated by a leading Gaelic singer and musician for the creation of a new Gaelic hymnary, combining old favourites now seldom heard, such as the hymns of <i>Pàdruig Grànnd</i> (Patrick Grant, a 19 <sup>th</sup> century Gaelic poet and hymn writer), and new material and new arrangements of traditional material, by assisting in the identification, collection and collations of suitable material.	By the end of Year 1 the Committee will have identified material which already exists and is thought suitable for inclusion in the new hymnary and shared that information with those whose project this is.	Ultimately, the production of a comprehensive Gaelic hymnary suitable for use in the modern world.	End of Year 3? (Note: this is not our project, so timing is not within our control.)
Support the production of new music for use in Gaelic worship by bringing together musicians and songwriters already working in this area, as well as newcomers, with a view to making their work more widely known and available.	By the end of Year 1 such a group will have been pulled together and a roadmap agreed for the further development of the work in subsequent years of the plan.	The creation for a suite of contemporary Gaelic music for use across Scotland's Christian churches.	End of Year 1 and ongoing from then.

**Public Life & Social Justice Programme Group Report**

**14. Christian RESPONSIBILITY in an age of political extremes**

**14.1** 2026 is an election year in Scotland, and as a Programme Group and Leadership Team we are mindful of the usual tussle for attention and voters’ support as we head for May 7th. We have noticed that there are some elements of our public life which we find worrying, and that statements and policies which would have caused outrage or widespread condemnation a few years ago are now perceived as being mainstream or worthy of consideration. We note that there has been some attention on the actions and words of extreme right-wing and racist political actors (particularly those who use the language, values or symbols of Christianity to promote their ideology). However, there is also a problem from some who are involved in hard-left wing movements. In both areas of extremism where violence, or the threat of violence, personal attack and othering, as well as an undermining of the institutions of democracy are being used for political ends, the Church can and must speak out to say that this is not the way our society, our body politic or our relations with one another should proceed. The duty to pray, preach, teach and share a better way rests on each one of us who seek to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

**14.2** Since September 2025, we have been working on a joint elections project with the Scottish Episcopal Church. This has included creating practical toolkits for congregations to organise election hustings (promoting the idea that in-person events can be a better way to share ideas and truth in an age of digital misinformation and social media algorithms, which drive what people see online), as well as developing a shared conversation from our two denominations about what Christian responsibility (our ability to respond to the world around us in a way which follows scripture, Christ’s example and the teachings of the church) looks like in our context.

**14.3** We continue our close partnership with the Joint Public Issues Team (Methodist, Baptist and United Reformed Churches) and have worked and talked with them particularly in relation to issues about extreme right-wing movements and the co-option of Christian values, language and symbols. We have discussed what is our God-centred response to the raising of flags on town centre lampposts, or the gathering in large numbers of protesters on the streets or outside asylum hotels who call for a crusade or a return to Britain/Scotland’s traditional Christian values? And do we recognise and acknowledge that a century ago, our General Assembly and its Committees promoted positions and values against Irish Catholic immigration (which we now repudiate) that were racist, nationalistic, and which fuelled sectarianism, the consequences of which we still live with to this day. In the words of Micah 6:8 – what does the LORD require of you, but to seek justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God?

**14.4** One final election year initiative we have connected with is a project promoting ‘Scotland’s 4 Words of Hope’. On the ceremonial mace in the Scottish Parliament are inscribed the words Integrity, Wisdom, Compassion, and Justice. This project seeks to promote serious consideration by everyone involved in Scotland’s public life to reflect on what they mean, and how our discourse and decisions could be improved if we strived to better adhere to them. They might also be used after the election, to hold our politicians, our journalists, our business leaders and our churches to account so that we can hold together with these values a love for all our neighbours – those living in Scotland, and around the world, and for the generations still to come.

**14.5** A summary of activity as a result of the Deliverance of the 2025 General Assembly in relation to the Report of the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team – Public Life and Social Justice Programme Group is at Appendix X.

**15. REFUGEE SUPPORT**

**15.1** The past year has seen the concerning rise in protests outside asylum accommodation and growing hostility towards people seeking refuge. Such responses cause real harm to vulnerable individuals and stand in stark contrast to the values of compassion, hospitality, and justice that underpin the life and witness of the Church. In the years to come, our congregations will continue to have a key role to play in fostering community cohesion, building understanding between people, and promoting welcome and solidarity at a local level.

**15.2** We are concerned about government policies that exacerbate these challenges, most concerningly the pause on family reunification, which prolongs the separation of loved ones and undermines the protection and security to which refugees are entitled. Public policy must respect human dignity, uphold justice, and ensure that families and communities are not further harmed. We call on the General Assembly to reiterate its position that people have the right to seek sanctuary from danger and persecution, and to commit to continued advocacy with and for refugees; for an asylum system that is fair, humane, and respectful of human dignity; and for policies and practices that support integration from day one of arrival.

**15.3** The Church of Scotland remains committed to the values embedded in the New Scots Integration Strategy approach, supporting the integration of refugees and people seeking asylum from the point of arrival and enabling people to participate fully in Scottish society. That integration is a two-way process that needs to involve and include receiving communities. We continue to call for a fair and humane asylum system, including practical measures such as free bus travel for people seeking asylum, and pledge to continue our advocacy to ensure that Scotland remains a place of refuge, welcome, and sanctuary.

**16. INTERFAITH RELATIONS**

**16.1** Interfaith relations continue to be put under significant pressure in Scotland, the UK and the wider world. The international context is one where respect for freedom of religion and belief is under growing pressure, and actions and decisions of national leaders in some countries are contributing to a rise in religious hatred.

**16.2** It has been several years since the Church of Scotland’s interfaith relations strategy was last reviewed and considering the changing global context and the recent prioritisation work led by the Assembly Trustees, an update to this strategy is, at the time of writing, underway.

**16.3** In our own context, the work of supporting ministry and mission remains paramount. What it means to be a good neighbour is especially relevant, particularly with the responsibility that the National Church bears to regularly convene or lead conversations around faith and belief engagement.

**16.4** We know the benefit of maintaining good relations with other faith and belief groups, particularly when a united stand can be taken on social issues or government policy proposals. There is a benefit too in offering our solidarity and friendship, particularly in the aftermath of religious hate incidents.

**16.5** Once the updated interfaith strategy has been agreed upon within Faith Action, we will endeavour to share and make this known via the website and the General Assembly.

**17. CHILD POVERTY**

**17.1** The General Assembly of 2025 enthusiastically gave its support to the ‘Scotland Demands Better’ movement, which was an advocacy call for more to be done to tackle poverty. The major event was a march and rally in Edinburgh on 25 October, where the Moderator and other Church leaders took part, along with dozens of other organisations, including charities, trade unions and anti-poverty groups.

**17.2** It was with great joy that the news was received from the autumn UK budget that the Two Child Benefit Cap will be abolished, which experts believe will be a major contribution to the reduction in child poverty. We note that the Scottish Government had said that they would already do what they could to mitigate the cap in Scotland, and we can now celebrate that it will be ended across the whole of the UK.

**17.3** We continue to support the expansion of the Scottish Child Payment and believe that this has helped to make a real difference to families across Scotland who struggle against poverty. The ‘End Child Poverty Scotland’ coalition has highlighted that the 2017 Child Poverty (Scotland) Act set a legally binding target to ensure that fewer than 10% of children are living in poverty by 2030. In May 2026, we will elect our Parliament, which will have to oversee the completion of this target. We continue to offer our solidarity to the work of the ‘End Child Poverty Scotland’ coalition, and to join them in urging politicians and Scottish and Local Government to make this issue a core priority.

**18. GAMBLING ADVERTISEMENTS**

**18.1** The General Assembly in 2014 called for a ban on Gambling advertisements in sport. In the years since, there has been a proliferation of gambling adverts, particularly through online platforms such as websites and social media. The Campaign to End Gambling Advertising argues that the gambling industry has created a business model based on addiction and harm. Excluding the National Lottery, 86% of online betting profits come from just 5% of customers. Over half the income of betting shops now comes from highly addictive gaming machines. The Gambling Commission suggests that 1.3 million people in the UK could have a gambling problem. The gambling industry spends £1.5 billion per year on advertising, leading to consumers being inundated with gambling ads, and contributing to the normalisation of gambling in society as a whole.

**18.2** Sports sponsorship and advertising during sports events are banned in Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands, and in Germany it is prohibited to advertise gambling online, on tv and radio, or with public posters.

**18.3** The Gambling Act 2005 provides the UK Government with the power to restrict gambling ads as necessary; the Campaign to End Gambling Advertising advocates that the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport should use the powers available to them to help reduce gambling harm.

**18.4** We invite the General Assembly to confirm its opposition to gambling advertising and to share our support for the Campaign to End Gambling Advertising.

**19. CARE FOR CREATION**

**19.1** The UN COP30 summit held in Brazil in November produced limited progress; leaders from the three most polluting countries (USA, China and India) did not attend, and for the first time in the history of COPs, the US Government did not send a delegation. There was a lack of progress on fossil fuel phase-out, and the final negotiated text has been described by environmental groups as weak. There were, however, some advances in relation to climate adaptation, the inclusion of indigenous voices, commitments on energy systems, and some academic comment that the COP process is still the best mechanism the peoples of the world have to limit global temperature rise. In the current geopolitical climate, the continued commitment of so many nations to meet and cooperate is worth cherishing.

**19.2** We continue to work with Christian Aid Scotland, Eco Congregations Scotland, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and the World Council of Churches to highlight the opportunities for learning, prayer and advocacy during Creation Time (1 September – 4 October every year), and around the time of the COP summit meeting. We continue to be a member of the Stop Climate Chaos Scotland coalition.

**19.3** Last year’s General Assembly endorsed the idea of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative, and we have looked for opportunities to express our concerns in Scottish and UK public policy. This included adding our voice to other campaigners in an open letter against the development of the Rosebank oil and gas field, to the west of Shetland.

**19.4** In 2025, we worked with Operation Noah, a UK Christian environmental charity, as part of their campaign to encourage churches and denominations to consider how their land might be better used to reduce carbon emissions and promote biodiversity. We held a webinar with Operation Noah in the autumn on this topic. We will continue to explore with them how the use of land owned, managed or controlled by the Church of Scotland can best be done with a concern for caring for creation as an important consideration.

## **20. INTEGRITY TASK GROUP**

**20.1** The Church of Scotland's Task Group on Gender-Based Violence, known as Integrity, is working to deliver a new 18-month strategy (January 2026 - August 2027), which will see the group maintain its current focus on creating a safe space for women, girls and children in the church through training and support. In the last year, Integrity has continued our partnership with 'Restored', a Christian domestic abuse charity. They have completed an in-depth training series on domestic abuse awareness and response, which includes the specific ways disclosures of domestic abuse can be shaped by our Church environments. The training was extended to some staff members of Faith Action. We have licenced an introductory domestic abuse awareness training course from Restored and are working closely with Church of Scotland Learning to make this more widely available to ministers and office holders.

**20.2** The updated strategy also sets Integrity on a new course to more deeply examine the ever-present problem of misogyny and the more overt ways this is now being expressed in public discourse, to which our churches are sadly not immune. We aim to bring an updated report to a future General Assembly on the issue.

### **21. Historic Policies affecting Scottish Travellers**

**21.1** At the end of June, the Scottish Government published an independent report it had commissioned into archival research on how policies impact on the lives of Travellers in the 20th Century.

**21.2** Following consultation with the Communication Department, Law Department and CrossReach, a public statement was made by Tommy MacNeil and Mike Cantlay, as Conveners of the committees which are the successor bodies to those Church boards which were highlighted in the report: the Board of Home Mission and the Board of Social Responsibility: -

*The publication of this report on archival research exploring policies affecting Gypsy/Traveller communities in the 20th Century is an important contribution to our understanding of the history of Scotland and the experiences of people from these communities.*

*We appreciate the concern of the Scottish Government in commissioning it and the efforts of those who have been involved in preparing it.*

*We make this statement as the Conveners of the committees of the Church of Scotland that are the successors to the agencies and boards of the Church which were involved in work with Gypsy/Traveller communities in the 20th Century.*

*On behalf of the Church of Scotland, we offer a heartfelt and genuine apology for these historic wrongs highlighted in the report and carried out in the name of the Church.*

*Today, we wish to say we stand in solidarity with those who suffered and deeply regret the harm that came to them as a result of actions by the Church in the past.*

*We affirm the dignity of the people that our forebears wrote off.*

*In particular, we regret and are very sorry for the trauma that was inflicted on Gypsy/Traveller communities, families and individuals by our Church.*

*We acknowledge that the Church of Scotland tolerated discrimination and the use of derogatory language by its employees and members.*

*The Church fostered an atmosphere of moral judgement which condemned as shameful any way of life that deviated from a particular view of what was "normal". It disregarded the culture, values and respect for Gypsy/Travellers.*

*In the context of the Report, we see how the actions and attitude of the Church of Scotland up to the 1970s contributed to the perpetuation of discriminatory and prejudicial views against Gypsy/Travellers across many parts of the settled community.*

*Where this led to family separation, we are especially sorry, as we fully recognise the grief, trauma and disruption this causes can have long-lasting, even life-long, impact.*

*It is important that we acknowledge that there was a time when the Church of Scotland promoted discriminatory and prejudicial attitudes and actions towards Gypsy/Traveller communities in Scotland.*

*The historic treatment of Gypsy/Travellers by government, wider society and Churches has been intentionally and unintentionally discriminatory.*

*There will have been those in the Church who held prejudicial views and acted in a way which did not respect the cultural identities of the Gypsy/Traveller communities.*

*This is a matter of deep sadness and regret for the Church of Scotland.*

*The report presents challenging reading.*

*We recognise that the lasting impact of the Church and other organisations has contributed to continued prejudice and discrimination against Scotland's Gypsy/Traveller communities to this day.*

*The Church of Scotland has a long tradition of involvement in social and community work, and we know that many Church*

members and ministers in the 19th and 20th Century were motivated from a position of wanting to relieve poverty and, as they saw it, help to improve the lives of others.

Interventions which sought to house or settle Gypsy/Traveller communities can be seen as an intentional attempt to destroy a culture and a way of life.

The report draws the conclusion that this was a deliberate attempt by the Church to forcibly assimilate Gypsy/Travellers.

As Christians, we follow as Jesus asks us to love our neighbours as ourselves.

Where we have fallen short, we humbly seek forgiveness and God's guidance as we walk in the way of repentance, to turn our lives around, and to follow Him.

In the Church of Scotland, we have sought to bring an open and fair mind to understanding this research and recommendations, and we seek to do so with humility and kindness.

**21.3** A separate report on this subject was published by the Scottish Human Rights Commission in January 2026 <https://www.scottishhumanrights.com/media/3271/pdf-mainreport-spotlights-culturalrecognition-2026.pdf>. The actions of Church of Scotland office holders and committees were highlighted in this report too.

**21.4** The Public Life and Social Justice Programme Group continues to seek constructive engagement and input to Scottish Government, statutory bodies and civil society consideration of the impact of policies affecting Gypsy/Traveller communities in Scotland in the 20th Century. In so doing, we continue to be guided by the principles that were commended by the 2011 General Assembly when it received a substantive report: -<sup>4</sup>

*Churches in Scotland should:*

1. *Support the Scottish Government in recognising Travellers as a distinct ethnic group.*
2. *Note that past treatment of the Travelling Community by Government, wider society and the Churches has intentionally and unintentionally been discriminatory.*
3. *Encourage the Scottish Government and local authorities to afford to Travellers protection against discrimination.*
4. *Encourage the Scottish Government, in conjunction with local authorities, to take steps to improve the provision of services to Travellers, recognising the distinct culture and lifestyle of the Travelling Community.*
5. *Encourage the Scottish Government to take steps to ensure that members of the Travelling Community are enabled to vote.*
6. *Explore opportunities to celebrate with the Travelling Community the richness of its culture.*
7. *Seek ways ecumenically through which the spiritual needs of the Travelling Community can be met.*
8. *Explore the theology of welcome and hospitality as it relates to the relationship between the Travelling Community and those outwith the Travelling Community.*
9. *Enter into dialogue with representatives of broadcasters and of the print media about promoting more positive images of the Travelling Community.*
10. *Encourage Church bodies and individual church members to speak out against instances of the negative and abusive portrayal of the Travelling Community in the media.*

## **22. RELIGION AND TECHNOLOGY PROJECT**

**22.1** In 2025, the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team made the decision to close the Church of Scotland's Society, Religion and Technology Project.

**22.2** In 1970, the Church of Scotland embarked on a new project to look at Society, Religion and Technology, and at the time, it was doing something unique. It was at the cutting edge of how Church and public life could intersect. It transformed the way of thinking for the Church of Scotland, which has had a lasting impact, particularly since SRT merged with Church and Nation and the Education Committee to form the Church and Society Council in 2005, and more recently, Faith Impact Forum and FAPTL/Public Life and Social Justice.

**22.3** We acknowledge the important work that has been done in the name of the Church of Scotland's SRT Project, and celebrate its role in equipping the Church to respond to and confront with confidence and faith some of the great scientific and technological developments of our time, including: -

- oil and gas discovery in the North Sea
- understanding of climate science and global heating
- originating the eco congregation movement in Scotland
- genetic modification, including the cloning of Dolly the sheep and in synthetic biology
- the rise of digital information, the internet and artificial intelligence
- the purposes of economic activity in response to the 2008 financial crash

4 [https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/5892/ga11\\_churchsociety\\_travellers.pdf](https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0006/5892/ga11_churchsociety_travellers.pdf)

- farming, food production and consumption
- the ethics of defence
- medical ethics, including assisted dying

**22.4** It is with sadness that, due to the staffing changes in the national office in 2025, it was decided that the SRT project needed to come to an end. The decision to make the post of Policy Officer redundant had the impact of leaving the SRT with no staff support.

**22.5** Following careful and heartfelt discussions, it was concluded that the time for laying down this strand of work had come. We noted that this decision came at a time when other long-standing pieces of work were also ending, including the closure of the HIV Programme and of Life and Work.

**22.6** The Faith Action Programme Leadership Team offers its thanks to the present and past members of the SRT committee, and staff members connected with the project, for their service, dedication, commitment and contributions.

**22.7** We acknowledge and celebrate that in 2026 there are numerous church and faith based organisations who are now engaged in this space: Theos Think Tank (established in 2006), the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion (2006), Equipping Christian Leadership in an Age of Science / Scientists in Congregations (2013), Grasping the Nettle (2015), Christians in Science, the Faith Experiment, Believing Science, Society of Ordained Scientists.

**22.8** A final comment on this decision is that the role and remit of the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team, and of the Public Life and Social Justice Programme Group, continue to look at the big questions about the Christian faith and public issues, including science and technology. The Programme Group has been tasked to consider how the Church of Scotland can continue to respond to future opportunities in relation to issues of science, technology, medicine and the environment, within the present context of staffing capacity and budget reality. We will also continue to work with the Communications Department to ensure that past SRT papers, resources and reports continue to be available to the wider Church.

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## **23. EURODIACONIA**

**23.1** The Church of Scotland has been a member of Eurodiaconia for many years. Eurodiaconia is a European network of Churches and Christian organisations which provide social and healthcare services and advocate for social justice. The membership link with Eurodiaconia was retained with the Public Life and Social Justice Programme, as it had previously sat with the Faith Impact Forum and, before 2020, the Church and Society Council.

**23.2** Following consultation internally, particularly with the Ecumenical Relations Committee and with CrossReach, and after dialogue with the General Secretary of Eurodiaconia, we have taken the decision to relinquish our membership at the end of 2026.

**23.3** The reasons behind this include the consequences of Brexit, and the weakening of the relevance of European-wide approaches to social care policy and practice to the work of the Church of Scotland. Membership also comes at a cost, both in terms of money through the payment of an annual fee, but also through staff time in relation to engagement (reading reports, participating in events and attending the in-person AGM held in a different European city each spring).

**23.4** While we regret that circumstances have led us to this point, we recognise the importance of focusing our efforts where they will have the greatest impact. The decision reflects a realistic and faithful assessment of how best to use our limited resources to support the mission and ministry of the Church of Scotland.

**23.5** As we prepare to conclude our formal membership, we express our deep appreciation for the work of Eurodiaconia, its staff, and its member organisations. We remain grateful for the relationships formed and for the shared commitment to compassion, justice, and care for vulnerable communities. We offer our prayerful support for Eurodiaconia's continued flourishing in the years ahead.

## **People & Training Programme Group Report**

### **24. Initial Ministerial Education (IME) and LEAD ACADEMIC PARTNER**

#### **24.1 Introduction**

*'A more integrated, mission-focused approach to the formation of ministers — one that is apostolic in nature, rooted in Christ, and capable of shaping leaders who can serve faithfully and imaginatively in today's rapidly changing contexts.'*  
*Report of the Selection Panel for Lead Academic Partner, 2026*

**24.1.1** This report, in sections 24 to 32, proposes a generational shift in the training and formation of national ministers of word and sacrament in the Church of Scotland, with consequent reforms to follow for the diaconate. It urges the Church to grasp now a unique opportunity to produce new, bold, dynamic and innovative forms of education and training for ministry, always focussed on enhancing and resourcing the calling and vocation of our candidates. It does so by inviting the Church to embrace a significant renewal and reform of the basis and structure of our ministerial and diaconal training in its purpose and content; and, as part of that re-framing, to affirm the move to a sole Lead Academic Partner for the Church; and to approve the recommendation of a Selection Panel that the Lead Academic Partner of the Church be Trinity College (University of Glasgow).

## 25. NEW IME SCHEME – ‘A GENERATIONAL SHIFT’

### 25.1 A New Vision for the Training and Formation of our Ministers and Deacons

**25.1.1** The traditional academic theological programme for the training of ordained ministry in the Church of Scotland has focused primarily on acquiring and displaying rational knowledge of Scripture and theology, in keeping with the priorities of the broader University context in which candidates for ministry undertake study. This has produced generations of ministers with a high level of academic theological understanding, suited to a restricted ‘preacher/teacher model’ of a minister proclaiming the Word within a flourishing parish system. Whilst a thorough grounding of theological learning and knowledge remains integral to ministry and must not be set aside in any training model, the value of such learning is diminished if it is not closely integrated with the formation of a candidate in the whole of their ministerial vocation or becomes disconnected with the ever-changing realities of ministry, church and society; such that a candidate cannot translate such knowledge into ministry practice.

**25.1.2** The translation of academic knowledge into ministry practice beyond the pulpit is often hindered by a significant “gulf of separation.” While academic discussions of ministry are beneficial, they remain insufficient if they fail to move beyond the classroom. As Robert Banks notes, “action will be devalued as a route to learning so long as it is talked about and not engaged in.”<sup>5</sup> Historically, the Church has viewed church placements as a secondary “add-on” for “working out” theological knowledge. Consequently, connecting academic theology to the realities of parish life often becomes a “journey without maps”—an isolated pursuit dependent largely on individual initiative and supervisor guidance. Whilst the academic input from our present providers is of a high standard, the gulf with ministry practice and the inconsistency in the curriculum between five academic providers has left a proportion of newly ordained ministers feeling that notable sections of their university learning have been irrelevant or absent, while simultaneously feeling unprepared for the practical demands of contemporary ministry.

**25.1.3** Such training methods are no longer “fit for purpose” in a post-Christendom Scotland. We are training ministers for a Church and a world that has been disappearing since the 1960s. There is now an urgent need to integrate theory and practice at the heart of a transformational, missional training model that directs the entire journey of context-based ministerial formation.

**25.1.4** While maintaining academic rigour and retaining the strengths of core teaching in Bible and theology, we must recognise that theological education is a contributor to, rather than the totality of, ministry formation. Training ought to be redirected towards developing a personal and spiritual identity capable of adapting reflectively and resiliently to Church and societal realities. This requires an intentional, “in time” learning model where theory and practice are implemented simultaneously. In the words of Banks, “the one-way relationship between theory and practice, according to which the former precedes the latter, must give way to a more complex relationship between the two.”<sup>6</sup>

**25.1.5** We begin with key foundational principles. It is important to remember why we undertake the training of our ministers of word and sacrament and deacons. The key desire for Initial Ministerial Education (IME), and of every step of the present re-development process, including the selection of a Lead Academic Partner (LAP), is to nurture and enable candidates for national ministry of word and sacrament, and word and service (the diaconate), to fulfil their calling from God and their apostolic, missional and pastoral vocation in ministry; all to the glory of God, and for the expression in word and deed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The training of ministers must also be to enable the whole people of God to exercise God’s mission in the world.

**25.1.6** Therefore, ministry training must be focussed heavily on the personal, spiritual and ministerial formation of candidates so that they attain ‘attributes’ for ministry and are ready for ordination and the challenges ahead; with the acquisition of educational qualifications, as well as skills and competencies to perform the role, as important secondary considerations. Rather than just ‘what we learn’ and ‘what we can do’, both ‘how we learn’ and ‘who we become’ need an equal status. This has been a key focus of the IME re-development work over the past decades, and of the present selection process for LAP.

**25.1.7** The Church of Scotland has, for many years, been moving on such a trajectory, and this report must be seen as a continuation of all of that work. Following a comprehensive review of IME initiated by the General Assembly in 1993 which resulted in the Report of the Education for the Ministry Review Group to GA 1997, the ‘Ministers of the Gospel Report’ to the General Assembly of 2000 set out a vision for ministers in the 21st Century to be ‘reflective practitioners, collaborative leaders and formative learners’, who ‘integrate who they are as persons in Christ with the particular functions they fulfil in the service of Jesus Christ.’ In so doing, as the 2000 report sets out, there are ‘qualities’ that ought to be evident in ministers, such as ‘maturity of faith’, ‘lives lived in communion with God’ and ‘lives marked by the Fruit of the Spirit.’

**25.1.8** These words have not aged in the past quarter-century. The dynamic re-shaping of ministry training set out in the pages to follow seeks to enable that vision to fully take shape at last.

**25.1.9** The trajectory developed further through aspects of the Church Without Walls report of 2001; from an instruction of GA 2008 to review ministry training, leading to the Enabling Ministries Report of 2011; the Rethinking Initial Training Report of 2017; and the Blake Stevenson Report of 2018; culminating in the Ministries Council Report to GA 2019 which introduced the Formation Framework and led to Assembly approval to initiate a final stage of re-framing IME, including the reduction of academic partners to ‘one or two’. Likewise in relation to the diaconate, the Deacons of the Gospel Report 2001 set out the distinctive nature of diaconal ministry, and the Ministers of Word and Service Report of 2019 further developed this into five images of diaconal service.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 61.

<sup>6</sup> Banks (1999), 59.

In the more recent past, this has gained further momentum with the implementation of the Formation Framework, which now forms the basis of candidate development and appraisal, and a Curriculum for Ministry also produced in the same year; and then the present process initiated by GA 2019 to reach a recommendation of a Lead Academic Partner. This final stage began in 2024 and has been reported upon for the General Assembly in subsequent years. This has been supplemented by the appointment of a Director of Studies for ministry by the Church in September 2025, namely Rev Dr Sandy Forsyth, whose role is to shape and oversee the implementation of the new IME scheme with its formational focus.

**25.1.10** The Church intends to bring all of this work to a culmination by introducing the new scheme for the core phase of training for national ministers of word and sacrament and deacons from the candidate intake beginning in September 2027.

**25.1.11** In that light, the key desired features of the new IME scheme are as follows:

- That all aspects of training have as their aim the enhancement and development of the personal, spiritual and ministerial formation of a candidate shaped by the Church’s Formation Framework, to enhance and fulfil their apostolic, pastoral and missional vocation; such that by the end of the core phase of training they might exhibit ‘attributes’ that indicate readiness for ordination, as well as achieving key skills and competencies in ministry.
- That theological education must remain a key aspect of such formation, but in the context that it is thoroughly integrated with assessed ministry placements that have reflective practice at their core – all academic courses must help students to ask the ‘so what?’ question for ministry and mission; and in the placement setting the candidate and supervisor should implement theological reflection/reflective practice that is linked to such learning, as well as addressing the core skills and competencies of ministry.
- That the Church enters into a new partnership with a Lead Academic Partner which will allow the close, mutual development of such a scheme, enabled through the work of the Director of Studies in the Church, and a Formation Panel, under the governance of FAPLT, which will oversee the formational development of each candidate.
- A key direction is one of the integration of academic provision: between courses within an academic scheme of study itself; with other modes of delivery of formation beyond the academy, in particular by the Church; with intended vocational outcomes; and with the practice of ministry. All of this should entail a reduction in the time from the beginning of training to ordination as a national minister of word and sacrament, from a standard period of 4.25 years to 3 years, or 2 years under certain exceptions.
- Degree-level academic training will be further set in context as one part of a lifelong process, albeit during a ‘core phase’, which must also take account of the prior personal, spiritual, social and intellectual formation of the individual, such as through prior life skills or career, the discernment process or the apprenticeship route, and also a key element of ‘continuing ministerial development’ (‘CMD’) post-ordination i.e. this being a lifelong process of formation, not everything will, or should, be covered or achieved at the ‘core stage’ within the academy. There are, therefore, central roles also for the Church at national and local level in enabling formation, and for personal, spiritual exploration.
- As well as integration, it should also be noted overall that another key for future development will be the presence of flexibility and adaptability in delivery by the Lead Academic Partner and the Church. The curriculum requires flexibility and adaptability to account for future developments in Church and society. In addition, despite the restricted length of degree in the standard route (to a maximum of three years), some flexibility will need to be incorporated into the academic curriculum whilst training for ministry to also allow for the particular training needs of each individual; and the potential for ‘streaming’ towards certain directions of ministry, such as pioneering, academia, youth ministry, chaplaincy etc.

**25.1.12** In the present re-development of ministry training towards a context-based formational and missional focus, the Church is aligning itself with many sister denominations who have followed a similar pathway, such as the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Church of England, the Methodist Church in Britain and Ireland, the Uniting Church in Australia and the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, from whom valuable lessons can be learned.

**25.1.13** The curriculum for ministry and programme of candidate formation detailed in Sections 30 to 31, and the recommendation for a Lead Academic Partner in Section 27 to 29 represent an integral, generational shift in training. Before evaluating the Selection Panel’s recommendation of Trinity College, University of Glasgow, it is important for the Assembly to view that recommendation as a cornerstone of this broader overhaul, which seeks to redirect theological education within the context of overall ministerial formation.

## 26. THE NEW TRAINING ACT & THE FORMATION PANEL

### 26.1 The New Training Act

**26.1.1** To implement the new methodology for the training and formation of our ministers, a new structure in Church law is required, which sets out its key features. The appointment of a Lead Academic Partner is an imperative, without which the scheme is inoperable, hence the separate deliverance with a recommendation of a LAP to the Assembly. We present for approval, therefore, a new Training Act, being the Selection and Training for National Ministry of Word and Sacrament Act, replacing Act X 2004. The new Act can be read in full in Appendix I to this report.

**26.1.2** Discussions continue with the Diaconate Council to finalise the terms of the new Deacons' Act, replacing Act VIII 2010, which will set out IME for deacons. The new Deacons' Act will incorporate significant sections of the Training Act and include designated training with the Lead Academic Partner and will be brought before the General Assembly of 2027. In the meantime, the pause on recruitment to the Diaconate is lifted, and diaconal candidates may begin training from September 2027. FAPLT will consider, along with the Diaconate Council, new ways to deploy those called to diaconal ministry of word and service.

### 26.2 Purpose of the Act

**26.2.1** The Act defines and regulates the Church of Scotland's process for selecting, forming, training and assessing candidates for national ministry of Word and Sacrament. The central purpose is to ensure that candidates undergo personal, spiritual and ministerial formation shaped by the Church's Formation Framework, with theological education being carried out in partnership with the Lead Academic Partner (LAP).

### 26.3 Four Phases of Training

**26.3.1** Training for ministry is now structured into four distinct phases:

1. Initial Phase – discernment, initial screening, local review, and national Assessment Conference.
2. Core Phase (IME) – degree-level study with the LAP plus integrated, accredited placements.
3. First Five Years Phase – compulsory additional training post ordination.
4. Continuing Ministerial Development Phase – lifelong learning.

The new Act governs phases 1 and 2.

### 26.4 Governance: Formation Panel & Partnership Model

**26.4.1** The training system will be delivered through a partnership between FAPLT, represented by the Director of Studies and People & Training, and the Lead Academic Partner, with intended contributions also from our other academic providers and external training bodies and individuals.

**26.4.2** Beyond educational provision, 'formation' occurs through many avenues, not only in the exercise of ministry on practical placement, but also in personal and spiritual growth. Skills and competencies, formation and 'attributes' of ministry are inextricably linked, yet the sources of development in each are diverse. Each contributor towards the candidate's learning and formation should have a voice that feeds into the overall picture i.e. we must avoid any continuation of a segmented or 'siloed' approach to the provision of ministry training in a split between what is seen to be theoretical and practical; or between the central church, local and regional church, and academic partner. We must instead embrace a fuller collaboration, knowing that all sources contribute to candidate learning and formational growth.

**26.4.3** All of this will require strong communication, collective responsibility and common goals in a partnership between the Director of Studies, People & Training and the LAP, as well as with Presbyteries, placement supervisors and candidates. Beyond regular, informal contact, the Formation Panel is the main vehicle for such collaboration to fulfil the formational goals.

### 26.5 The Formation Panel

**26.5.1** The presence of a Formation Panel fits well within the collaborative re-framing of training and formation, and also with the affirmation of a 'College' identity for ministry training within the LAP. Indeed, the Panel might be seen as the essential 'glue' to hold together the stakeholders for a common purpose, acting to increase those bonds and ensure that all partners in the process of formational training are working towards those ends, in the best interests of the candidate's development.

**26.5.2** Meeting three times a year, the Formation Panel will oversee all aspects of a candidate's formation, including:

- Allocating routes of training
- Approving placements and overseeing academic provision
- Evaluating progress following annual appraisal, and recommending any additional training avenues
- Initiating the 'streaming' of training in a particular direction, if appropriate.
- Assessing readiness for ordination, and issuing exit certificates

**26.5.3** The Formation Panel will have six core members; being the Director of Studies who will chair the Panel; a member of People & Training; the Principal, or a council member, of the College associated with the Lead Academic Partner; a representative on behalf of the Presbyteries of the Church; and an elder or member of a Church of Scotland congregation with appropriate experience in academia or in vocational training; supplemented when appropriate by the candidate, their Formation Partner, and/or their placement supervisor.

**26.5.4** In their decisions year on year, they will work alongside the candidate to enable their formation and development. The work of the Formation Panel is also strongly linked to other aspects of training and assessment:

- It must enhance and not supplant the existing inputs of People & Training and the many positive avenues that have been developed within the Team to assess candidate formation and to assign placements.
- The work of the Panel in the 'core phase' of IME must account for three other phases in the life-long learning of a candidate; to recognise formation, gifts and skills from past life experience, prior work and the discernment/apprenticeship periods, and also future formation in the first five years after ordination, and then for the remainder of ministerial life.
- The Panel will need to work with further frameworks that consider whether a candidate has reached a certain stage of formation by (a) more closely aligning the Formation Framework goals with each training year; (b) aligning the attaining of skills and competencies with each training year; and (c) at the end of the 'core phase', aligning both of those with the attainment by a candidate of 'attributes' for ministry, as well as skills and competencies, to a sufficient level to allow ordination.

## **26.6 Routes of Training**

**26.6.1** The Act sets out the following routes that a candidate may take:

- The primary route for the Core Phase will be to undertake a three-year undergraduate Bachelor of Divinity degree or equivalent with the Lead Academic Partner, integrated with three accredited ministry placements, each of one-year duration and running from September to August. For suitable candidates, the continuation for a further year to complete a BD (Honours) degree, and potentially beyond to postgraduate study, will be encouraged.
- As a first exception and at the discretion of the Formation Panel, the candidate may instead undertake a two-year Diploma degree with the Lead Academic Partner (to run concurrently with the BD programme), integrated with two accredited ministry placements each of one-year duration and running from September to August. This exception may apply if the candidate fulfils at least three of the following four criteria, being:
  - (a) aged over 50 years;
  - (b) previous theological study;
  - (c) significant prior experience as an employee or volunteer in the Church of Scotland or another Reformed Christian denomination; and
  - (d) one other relevant and significant circumstance in prior life, work, academic study or calling, taken into account at the Formation Panel's discretion.
- As a second exception and at the discretion of the Formation Panel, if the candidate has a prior theology degree, or a period of prior training for ministry in the Church of Scotland or another Reformed Christian denomination, they may be directed towards a 'bespoke route' which would be better suited to their formational goals towards attaining the 'attributes' for ministry at ordination. The 'bespoke route' would potentially involve postgraduate study, a research project and/or tailored placements, with a flexible duration.

**26.6.2** As for the content of training, candidates must complete:

- Degree level study in the following subject areas:
  - (i) Critical academic reflection on the Life of Faith and Discipleship;
  - (ii) Christian Scriptures, History and Thought;
  - (iii) Practice of Ministry; and
  - (iv) Mission.
- Integrated contextual placements focused on:
  - (a) The calling and vocation of ministry, and its varied forms including team ministry;
  - (b) Personal development, devotion and faith, prayer, study, resilience and self-care;
  - (c) Identity as a minister in the Church of Scotland in the light of its history and present formation, and its social context;
  - (d) Preaching and the leading of worship in different contexts, and the conduct of the sacraments, funerals and weddings;
  - (e) The knowledge, interpretation, understanding and application to everyday life of Scripture, key beliefs and doctrines of Christian faith in the Reformed tradition, and in applying Christian ethics and theology to major issues in our country and world;
  - (f) The nurturing of Christian faith in the congregation and community, and the provision of Christian education;
  - (g) Mission and discipleship, including the enabling of church members in mission and the training and support of volunteers;
  - (h) Theology and practice of pastoral care;
  - (i) Pioneer ministry and fresh expressions of church;
  - (j) Church communication, education and mission via digital platforms;
  - (k) Adaptive leadership through challenge and change, church management, relationship building and governance in the local context, and within the broader Presbyterian polity; and

- (l) Knowledge and application of Church law including Church governance and courts; and relevant civil law, including safeguarding law and practice and charity law.
- Mandatory seminars, intensives, gatherings and worship as required by FAPLT and the LAP.

In relation to the management and assessment of integrated placements, the Church anticipates it will take the lead role in the following, subject to further development in the future in working with the LAP:

- Placements will be allocated by People & Training using supervisors trained and assessed by them;
- Their location will be a decision for People & Training, acting on the advice of the Formation Panel;
- Each placement will continue to be governed by a Learning Covenant. All placements bar one must be in Scotland.
- People & Training will liaise with the supervisor, candidate and Presbytery in relation to the ongoing progress of the placement; and any issues of unsatisfactory progress or conflict that arise; as well as considering any questions of a placement being changed;
- Recognising the roles of the LAP and the Presbytery in also doing so, the Church will provide pastoral support to the candidate in relation to issues that might arise during the placement; and
- At the end of the placement, People & Training will collate the reports of the candidate and the supervisor and hold the appraisal meeting in relation to the progress of the candidate, reporting to the Formation Panel thereafter.

**26.6.3** In relation to the management and assessment of integrated placements, the LAP will take the lead role in the following aspects:

- Develop the placement course from the University perspective that will lead to accreditation; including proposed course expectations and outcomes for the candidate;
- Provide all teaching, and academic materials required by the candidate in order to undertake the course and the placement;
- Provide appropriate materials to the Supervisor to ensure that they are aware of the tasks set by the LAP for the candidate in their placement and can work with the candidate accordingly, and supervisor training in conjunction with the Church;
- Liaise with the candidate and, if necessary, the supervisor, during the placement to ensure that there is understanding of the goals, and development towards the proposed outcomes;
- Undergo a thorough basis of academic assessment at the end of the placement that is related to theological reflection/reflective practice and the formational goals; and
- Liaise with People & Training and the Formation Committee about the outcome for the candidate in the course and placement, following assessment.

## **27. A LEAD ACADEMIC PARTNER**

**27.1** Over the past four decades, the number of national ministry of word and sacrament and diaconate candidates has declined from 215 in 1985-6 to 35 in the 2025/26 session, with a particular fall in the 1990s. At present there are 5 candidates at Christ's College, Aberdeen (all distance-learning, including 2 deacons), 10 candidates at New College, Edinburgh (all in-person); 9 candidates at Trinity College, Glasgow (all in-person); 11 candidates at Highland Theological College, University of Highlands and Islands (all distance-learning, including 1 deacon); and 0 candidates at St Mary's College, University of St Andrews.

**27.2** For most of our academic providers, this makes our candidates a small cohort within a much larger student body. Being so thinly spread between institutions they have restricted opportunities to learn and grow together as a unified group. The scope to provide foundational courses at each institution for ministerial training for small numbers of students is limited. As a result, the provision of ministry and mission-related courses is patchy and inconsistent between the five providers, with no common curriculum. This means that the Church has created a 'bolt-on' provision of learning and formation through conferences, MTN networks and other events - leading for some candidates to an inevitable duplication of what they have already learned, and for others a revelation of entirely new material.

**27.3** The core advantages of re-shaping education for ministry with one Lead Academic Partner are therefore:

- One centre, with a unified student cohort of much larger numbers, to be a stronger learning and support community that has ability to:
- Initiate a strong 'College' ministry training identity
- Set a core curriculum for ministry
- Complement and be integrated with the training and formation in practice on church placement
- Allow the Church to provide additional courses and directions of formation that more fully complement and do not duplicate
- Bring about a new relationship between church and academy in a close working partnership, with the LAP liaising strongly with the Director of Studies and Formation Panel
- Provide a clear, well-defined and inspirational training route for ministry, that may build recruitment numbers
- Build in 'streaming' for candidates in their training and formation to make it 'person-centred' and not 'one size fits all', towards such as pioneering, chaplaincy, academia etc
- Within a realistic acceptance that the Church cannot afford to fund such development in more than one institution.

**27.4** It is in this light, and from previous General Assembly deliverances which have approved this direction (in 2019 and 2024), that one provider has been sought, to implement one (rather than two or more) structure which can deliver an agreed core curriculum which all candidates will take, with enough students to justify ministry-related subjects; and to place theological reflection/reflective practice at its core through integrated assessed placements. There would be one partnership to nurture with the Church, the Director of Studies and the Formation Panel. Doubling the number of providers (or retaining the status quo) would make such a structure much harder to create in duplicate and also stretch People & Training resources in oversight and appraisal, as well as making the work of the Formation Panel far more complex.

**27.5** Since the General Assembly has agreed to and is expecting a recommendation of one Lead Academic Provider, that is the task that a Selection Panel was invited to undertake from the beginning; and that is the recommendation brought before the Assembly.

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## **28. THE SELECTION PROCESS FROM SEPTEMBER 2024 TO PRESENT**

### **28.1 What Was the Church Looking for in a Lead Academic Partner?**

The following factors are important:

- A passion and desire to train ministers, seeing that as core to the whole identity of their divinity school and their teaching lives
- Servants and close partners of the church
- 'Buy in' to the ministerial and missional vocational focus of all teaching and subject areas, and willing to re-orientate existing courses in that direction, as well as developing courses in new subject areas
- Willingness to radically re-assess the curriculum
- Not simply a very good version of what we have already with the same focus and output, but a bold and new approach.
- A strong track record in practical theology, church connection, publication and advocacy about the Church, faith nurture of candidates, innovative action and online provision for the Church of Scotland, with ministers involved in teaching who are also active as ministers
- Desire to re-affirm their 'College' identity as focussed on ministry training
- Skill in theological reflection and a clear vision and desire for integrated, assessed placements
- Ability to deliver a 'hybrid' national provision with both in-person and online elements

**28.1.1** As for what a Lead Academic Partner might provide, Perry Shaw in *Transforming Theological Education* set out that the questions 'What?' and 'How?' are 'not in fact the beginning but the end of curriculum planning.' Instead, the overriding factor should be one of purpose for theological education, driven by the questions 'why exactly do we exist and what are we trying to accomplish anyway?'<sup>7</sup>

**28.1.2** In entering a selection process, the Church was looking less to find out how well the four providers had done in recent years, or for them to tell us about how good they were. It is undoubted that all our providers have great strengths and have trained ministers well in different ways, with equal amounts of positive and negative feedback from candidates about their education at each institution. This is much more about their passion and desire to provide vocational education for training ministers and deacons, and to enter a new partnership with the Church to do so, with a resurgence of the 'College' identity to train ministers within the broader University. It is about the questions 'why exactly do we exist and what are we trying to accomplish anyway?' We wanted to work alongside an institution that sees itself as a servant of the Church and collaborator with it, who will be wholly committed to a new partnership working with the Director of Studies, People & Training and the Formation Panel. We wanted to work with an institution that will engage enthusiastically and dynamically with the Formation Framework and the Vivid Vision.

**28.1.3** With that direction of travel, over the past eighteen months there has been a lengthy and rigorous process to bring a recommendation of a Lead Academic Partner to the General Assembly of 2026. A Selection Panel was appointed by the Church, ultimately consisting of two theological academics working in England but with a depth of experience of the Scottish training institutions, along with two parish ministers of long standing with roles in key bodies of the Church.

**28.1.4** Submissions to become LAP were made to the Selection Panel by Christ's College, University of Aberdeen; New College, University of Edinburgh; Trinity College, University of Glasgow; and Highland Theological College, University of Highlands and Islands. St Mary's College, University of St Andrews decided not to make submissions.

**28.1.5** For the reasons set out by them in their report within Section 5, the Selection Panel found that Trinity College, University of Glasgow met all of the aspirational goals above more strongly than any other academic provider, as well as scoring highest under graded criteria. The process and outcome are considered in more depth in what is to follow, and in the Selection Panel's Report in Appendix II.

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<sup>7</sup> Perry Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education; A Practical Handbook for Integrative Learning*, (Carlisle: Langham Provisership, 2014). 19.

## 28.2 The process of selecting one Lead Academic Partner

**28.2.1 Stage 1** - in late 2024, People & Training sought to identify which of the Church's existing academic providers (AP) were best placed to act as Lead Academic Partner and to evaluate their strategic alignment, capacity, and credibility. A compelling vision for IME was outlined. APs were invited to offer their own creativity to the submission, and to offer a model that need not align with what was presently being undertaken.

**28.2.2** APs were invited to submit an initial proposal outlining how they would:

- Deliver a revised three-year BD/MDiv degree with an optional two-year diploma route
- Align the curriculum with the Formation Framework, integrating academic study, placements, and reflective practice
- Provide integrated, assessed placements across Scotland, including rural, urban, and diverse contexts
- Support missional theology, worship, preaching, pastoral care, and leadership development
- Sustain national accessibility through a mix of in person, blended, and online provision
- Demonstrate academic rigour, institutional stability, inclusivity, and pastoral support for candidates
- Ensure eligibility for SAAS student funding

**28.2.3** Submissions were also asked to address:

- The shape of the academic and calendar year
- Peer learning and formation
- The anticipated partnership with People & Training and other academic providers

**28.2.4** Rather than selecting a LAP at this point, the outcome of Stage 1 was to:

- Identify areas requiring clarification, expansion, or greater detail
- Invite providers to proceed to Stage 2 with targeted guidance and questions

**28.2.5 Stage 2** in early 2025 - was designed to enable a deeper, comparative evaluation of each provider's proposed IME model and partnership approach, allowing the Church to test deliverability, financial sustainability, depth of integration between theory, practice and formation; and quality of partnership working with the Church. Each provider received:

- Their Stage 1 submission with Church comments and questions
- A common set of Stage 2 guidance notes, plus provider specific questions

**28.2.6 Stage 2** submissions were required to expand upon:

- Detailed course content for core BD/MDiv modules
- Structure and assessment of accredited placements
- Models of reflective practice linking learning and ministry
- How responsibility would be shared between the LAP and the Church
- Costings, within the indicated Church budget
- Arrangements for 'hybrid', national delivery including in person elements and online learning, peer formation, and supervision, which mean that no candidate will be required to re-locate from their present home

**28.2.7** To strengthen assurance and accountability, Stage 2 submissions also included:

- Candidate testimonials (from recent BD/MDiv graduates)
- A letter of institutional authorisation and support from the provider's governing body
- An outline budget covering programme development, delivery, and accreditation

## 28.3 How was the selection made of the LAP?

**28.3.1** Following consultations after GA2024, we sought feedback from the APs regarding the selection process. We heard that they would appreciate an independent process with people who understood both academic and theological education and the present context of the Church of Scotland. Recommendations of suitable personnel were received from some of our APs, and a panel of four people were approached to form a Selection Panel:

Dr Heather Major (Research Fellow in New Places for New People, Evangelism & Growth, Cliff College, Derbyshire)

Rev Professor Paul Middleton (Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity in Theology and Religious Studies, University of Chester).

Mr Geoff Miller (Assembly Trustees)

Rev David Rankin (Parish Minister, Perth and a Presbytery-appointed member of FAPLT)

## 28.4 Moving towards a decision

**28.4.1** It had been originally anticipated that the Selection Panel would make a recommendation that, if approved by the People & Training Programme Group and FAPLT, would be taken to GA2025. In the event this did not happen, and the Selection Panel asked that FAPLT provide them with clearer criteria to enable them to undertake a comparative exercise between the four submissions and thus make a recommendation.

Following GA2025, a Working Group was appointed by FAPLT to agree these criteria, whose members were:

Rev Dr David Clarkson (Convenor of P&T Programme Group)

Rev Julia Pizzuto-Pomaco (FAPLT member)

Rev Mike Goss (recently retired FAPLT member, former member of Ministries Council and Faith Nurture)

Mrs Lorraine Fraser (elder and FAPLT member)

**28.4.2** Their task was to answer the question, “What is the Church looking for?” in a Lead Academic Partner, and to offer clarity to the Church’s expectations regarding the LAP’s role in delivering the core phase of IME, including a revised BD/MDiv and Diploma pathway integrated with accredited placements, reflective practice and formation for ministry. The purpose of their work was then affirmed by FAPLT.

### **28.5 Overview of the Criteria**

**28.5.1** The newly appointed Director of Studies drafted 22 criteria in September 2025 of what the Church was looking for in an LAP, to enable the Panel to make comparative assessments between the submissions of the four providers. The criteria were considered, commented upon, amended and finalised through interaction with the Working Group, FAPLT, a student from each of the four providers (confidentially), the Selection Panel and the providers themselves. The People & Training Programme Group approved the criteria.

**28.5.2** The Panel was later provided by the Director of Studies with a marking system addressing each criterion. The full Criteria and Marking papers utilised by the Panel can be accessed at this link [Resources - Ascend](#).

**28.5.3** Together, the criteria articulate the Church’s aspirations for a collaborative, mission focused partnership capable of shaping the future of ministerial formation. In brief, the criteria were:

#### **Highest Priority Criteria (Rank 1 – Core Requirements)**

The Church placed strongest emphasis on:

- **Motivation and Vision**  
A clear articulation of why a provider wished to act as LAP, alongside a compelling vision for ministry training within the Reformed tradition and the Church of Scotland.
- **Formation and Outcomes**  
A coherent understanding of formation, aligned with the Formation Framework, and a clear articulation of the attributes expected of candidates at ordination.
- **Theological Reflection and Reflective Practice**  
A robust and integrated model of reflective practice that underpins both academic learning and ministerial formation.
- **Academic Standing and Capacity**  
Strong institutional and staff credibility, including teaching capability, research profile, and capacity to deliver the programme at scale.
- **Curriculum Quality and Deliverability**  
A broad, well-structured proposed curriculum capable of being delivered sustainably and in time for implementation.
- **Partnership with the Church**  
A clear shift from being one provider among many to working as the Church’s Lead Academic Partner, including close collaboration with the Director of Studies, Formation Panel and People & Training.
- **Hybrid Delivery Model**  
Effective integration of in person and online learning to support national accessibility.
- **Community of Learning**  
Intentional development of peer support, shared worship and community formation within a national cohort.
- **Integrated Placements**  
Clear proposals for the implementation and assessment of accredited placements, with appropriate shared responsibility between the provider, Church and Presbyteries.
- **Diversity and Inclusion**  
Demonstrated ability to engage positively and respectfully with candidates of diverse personal identities and theological outlooks.
- **Interview**  
Strength of the provider at interview in their presentation and their answers in discussion
- **Professionalism**  
Professionalism and reliability demonstrated by the Provider at interview; and degree of confidence from the interview that a partnership of the Church with that Provider will deliver the curriculum well for candidates towards the formational goals

#### **Medium Priority Criteria (Rank 2 – Important Enablers)**

- Reasonable demands on Church resources, but with advice that there may be flexibility in budget.
- Understanding IME within the wider context of lifelong formation
- Adaptive flexibility in response to change
- Scope for specialist ministry streams
- Ecumenical and interfaith engagement
- Strong pastoral and academic support systems for candidates

### **Lower Priority Criteria (Rank 3 – Added Value)**

While desirable, these were not decisive:

- Contribution to broader training for the Church
- Additional benefits or opportunities available to candidates e.g. grants, field trips
- Implications for SAAS funding

### **28.6 Change to the Selection Panel membership**

**28.6.1** Unfortunately, two members of the Selection Panel had to step down because of other commitments, and so in September 2025 Rev Dr Paul Middleton and Mr Geoff Miller were replaced by Rev Keith Blackwood (Parish Minister, Aberdeen and Assembly Trustee) and Dr Cathy Ross (renowned missional theologian, lecturer and former leader of Church Mission Society Pioneer Mission Training, Oxford, lecturer in mission at Regent’s Park College, Oxford).

**28.6.2** Both Keith and Cathy took time and care to catch-up on the process and provide valuable contributions, and all the panel members gave very generously of their time and skills to consider fully the four submissions.

**28.6.3** Short biographies of the four members of the Selection Panel, and their connections to the four academic providers whose submissions they were considering, are to follow:

*Rev Keith Blackwood*

Minister Mannofield Church, Aberdeen: 2007 to Present

Studied Divinity at Glasgow University: 1988-1991 and 1993-1995

As part of the Presbytery of Aberdeen (now Presbytery of NENI) loose connection with some staff at Aberdeen University over last 18 years.

In addition, spouse completed the OLM Training Modules through Aberdeen University 2021-2024

Vice Convener of the CofS Assembly Trustees

*Dr Heather J Major*

Cliff College

Lecturer in Practical Theology & Mission

Research Fellow in New Places for New People, Evangelism and Growth

PhD - Trinity College, University of Glasgow (graduated 2022)

MTh - New College, University of Edinburgh (graduated 2016)

BA (Hons) - Highland Theological College, University of the Highlands and Islands (graduated 2015, Tutor in Hebrew and Old Testament from 2019-2023)

*Rev David Rankin*

Minister Perth Riverside Church

MA – Aberdeen University

BD - Edinburgh University

Pg Dip – Aberdeen University

Member of CofS FAPLT

*Dr Cathy Ross* – is a lay canon

Pioneer Mission Training Lead at Church Mission Society, Oxford 2019-2026, (continuing as a tutor)

Adjunct Lecturer at Regent’s Park College, University of Oxford

BD from Melbourne College of Divinity (1998), PhD from University of Auckland (2004)

External examiner for University of Glasgow Theology courses.

Contributor to the pioneer course at New College, Edinburgh

**28.6.4** The Director of Studies and People & Training would like to thank all Panel Members for the depth of their commitment to this process, and for the dedication and wisdom they displayed throughout. The Church has been greatly blessed by their contributions and could not have wished for a better balance of knowledge and skills to reach this recommendation.

### **28.7 Coming to a decision**

**28.7.1** While the Selection Panel had a quantity of papers from each submitting academic provider, they also opted to interview each one, which took place in November and December 2025. Each academic provider was invited to make a presentation based on their passion and desire to train ministers and deacons, their vision for ministry and their commitment to formation and reflective practice, and the proposals that they had for ministerial training.

**28.7.2** Following those meetings, the Selection Panel requested that People & Training might provide a summary of the key aspects from the agreed criteria from the Church’s perspective for the Selection Panel to bear in mind in their deliberations, which were as follows:

- “that you are confident that the LAP has a strong motivation and desire, as part of its identity, to enter into a partnership with the Church rather than as a contractual relationship, to develop and implement new forms of education and training that aspire towards formational and vocation goals for ministers
- that their educational training envisaged, if delivered, gives the best chance amongst the providers of training ministers well for the present and future context and challenges
- that their curriculum, as presently set out and subject to development, will be broad and deep enough to meet those goals
- that the modes of delivery, being hybrid in whatever form, will be implemented as described by the LAP, and will work well not only in teaching but in forming a candidate community for spiritual and social formation and growth
- that the LAP can teach all candidates equally from all genders, social and theological backgrounds from across all of Scotland
- that there is openness to creativity, flexibility and adaptation now and in the future
- that the institution and its staff display a high degree of professionalism, ability and standing, with a solid structure for the longer term and support at higher levels, and therefore that there can be confidence in future partnership and delivery”

**28.7.3** Each member of the panel then scored each AP according to the criteria and the marking grid, individually and without consultation.

**28.7.4** The panel then came together to discuss in depth each submission, sharing their scoring under the 22 criteria. Whilst the scoring system allowed the Panel to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each of the submissions, we understand that it was just as important to them to ensure that the recommendation resulted from a discernment process before God. Therefore, while the criteria and scoring were an essential element of the process, they did not dictate the outcome and recommendation by themselves.

**28.7.5** In our view, all of this has resulted in a fair, rigorous, transparent and spiritually guided process by which the recommendation for LAP has been made, ensuring that the process leading to the Selection Panel’s recommendation can be relied upon by the General Assembly and the wider Church.

**28.7.6** In the Selection Panel’s view, Trinity College, University of Glasgow expressed the visional goals with the greatest cogency and resonance; met each one of the factors strongly as set out above and were most closely aligned with the 22 criteria set by the Church. Trinity College, University of Glasgow articulated all of the above at interview and in their submissions, in a manner which was far more prominent and consistent than the other providers; establishing a unique identity amongst the providers as primarily servants of the Church and not of the academy. Their orientation to the service of the Church and ministry training was made clear in their longstanding focus upon Practical Theology which is a strength within their curriculum and degree programmes; and in their online public course provision to the Church; history of publications and Church engagement, and vision for the future. Other providers were more focused on what they provide at present, and some showed a lack of willingness to adapt, to innovate or enter into a new partnership.

**28.7.7** Given that the purpose of the selection process was not primarily to identify ‘who is best right now’, but ‘who is best aligned with the vision for the future’, it is fully understandable that Trinity College received the Panel’s recommendation.

## **28.8 The Church’s Other Academic Partners**

**28.8.1** The Director of Studies and People & Training are very grateful to all four providers for their strong levels of commitment to the selection process, and their desire to be the Lead Academic Partner of the Church. All of our providers are gifted educators and theologians, and their Colleges have all contributed significantly to the formation of Church of Scotland ministers over many decades or centuries, for which the Church should remain very thankful.

**28.8.2** It is undoubtedly a painful process for one Lead Academic Partner to be selected, entailing disappointment and hurt for partners with whom the Church has enjoyed a strong relationship, and on a personal level for individuals with whom there have been strong bonds over the years. We have been struck by, and would wish to put on record our gratitude for, the graciousness, humility and kindness of our friends and colleagues at New College, Christ’s College and Highland Theological College in their responses to the recommendation of the Panel.

**28.8.3** The word ‘Lead’ in the title ‘Lead Academic Partner’ is consciously chosen. Looking to the future, the Church hopes very much to continue a fruitful relationship with our colleagues in all of those institutions. Candidates currently studying in Edinburgh, Aberdeen and HTC will remain there to the conclusion of their course. Training for OLM and Readership will remain with Aberdeen and HTC, where the current group of apprentices will continue to be taught. We hope that the valuable contribution of New College to ministry training will continue through their public access courses, the annual Lectionary seminar and the DMin programme with Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

**28.8.4** In addition, we hope to partner with all of our providers in the course and module creation for candidates beyond the core curriculum, and in the suite of resources to be developed for those in the first five years of ministry after ordination.

## 29. THE SELECTION PANEL'S RECOMMENDATION AND REPORT

**29.1** In January 2026, the Panel made the recommendation that Trinity College, University of Glasgow be the Lead Academic Partner, subject to the approval of the General Assembly. The Panel judged Trinity College, University of Glasgow ('Trinity College') to score highest on the marking of the twenty-two criteria set by the Church, and as importantly, discerned that Glasgow offered the boldest, most innovative and most compelling vision to deliver the educational input to the new training scheme.

**29.2** The Panel focussed especially on the degree of passion of each provider to train ministers and deacons and their larger vision to make training dynamic and transformative, as well as the integration with practice and innovation that they envisaged at the heart of their proposed new scheme for training and curriculum content.

**29.3** With those considerations, the Selection Panel were unanimous in recommending Trinity College, to be the Lead Academic Partner, both as the highest-scoring provider according to the criteria, averaged between the four members of the Panel; and as the provider who offered the vision which most closely connected with what the Church was seeking, and might need in the future.

**29.4** In summary, the Panel judged that Trinity College's submissions and interview demonstrated that they were:

- Passionate and dedicated, as their core identity, to train ministers and deacons;
- Firmly aligned to reflective practice, practical theology, hybrid learning, and partnership working with the Church
- Best placed to support candidates and prepare them for ministry in today's changing contexts.

Their proposals for the future of ministry training were seen to be:

- Bold and innovative,
- Well aligned with the Church's training needs,
- Strong in vision, imagination, and strategic coherence.

**29.5** The Panel were of the view that Trinity College's submissions and interview were in keeping with a desire to move forward in a new direction, which is in line with the trajectory of IME development over the past decades, the new focus on formation and theological reflection; the new degree structure; the new integration of learning with practice in placements; the new appointment of a Director of Studies; and the new Formation Panel to guide candidate development. This is a 'one shot' opportunity for the Church, and a bolder vision is, in their view, required. This was demonstrated by Trinity College in their expression of a passion to train ministers formationally and vocationally, with the processes of high-quality education to then be considered in that light; rather than having a passion to deliver high-quality education, with the vocational and formational elements to then be considered, which they viewed to be the approach elsewhere.

**29.6** The Selection Panel's full report to the General Assembly is set out in Appendix II, where the Panel expand in detail upon the process, their discernment and their recommendation, as well as undertaking a comparative exercise between the strengths and weaknesses of the submissions and interview of each provider.

**29.7** In their Executive Summary, the Panel also recognised that testing the 'deliverability' of Trinity College, University of Glasgow as LAP now was essential, as was the presentation to the General Assembly of not just a name, but details of a full package of both the intended curriculum and IME programme that the LAP and the Church would deliver, by the full agreement of both. In addition, any new resources sought and their consequent costs would have to be approved beforehand by the Assembly Trustees.

**29.8** The Panel's Report to the General Assembly, therefore, concludes as follows:

'In recommending Trinity College as the preferred Lead Academic Provider, the panel identified several conditions essential for becoming the LAP:

- A fully costed model to be developed jointly by the Director of Studies and Trinity College early in 2026, demonstrating feasibility and sustainability.
- Assurance of long-term viability and capacity.
- A genuinely whole-of-Scotland approach to training.
- Clarity regarding the relationship between Trinity College and the University of Glasgow, including recruitment processes and the Church's voice in staffing decisions.
- Protection of the Church's broad theological spectrum, ensuring that candidates from all traditions are both supported and challenged.
- A commitment to partnership in shaping a curriculum that is mission-focused, contextually aware, and responsive to the diverse callings of candidates.

**29.9** These recommendations form the basis for the collaborative work undertaken between the Church and Trinity College in developing the final training package which is laid out in detail.' Sections 30 and 31 below set out the agreed terms between the Church and Trinity College, Glasgow, that have been concluded from discussions and negotiations in early 2026.

**29.10** Press releases in January 2026 provided the Executive Summary of the Panel’s full report, and the criteria and marking papers. The principle that the recommendation of the Panel that Trinity College (University of Glasgow) be the Lead Academic Partner should be put before the General Assembly was approved at a full FAPLT meeting on 17 January. Budgetary approval of the Assembly Trustees for the additional resources sought was given at their meeting on 5 February. Webinars were held in March and April to set out the proposals and discuss them with all interested people in the Church, with an FAQs video recorded by the Director of Studies, which can also be accessed here - <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/articles/general-assembly-to-consider-proposal-to-select-lead-academic-partner-for-ministry-training>. It is now for the General Assembly to affirm or not the recommendation of the Selection Panel.

## **30. DETAILS OF THE PROPOSED AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND AND TRINITY COLLEGE/ UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW AS THE LEAD ACADEMIC PARTNER**

### **30.1 Introduction**

**30.1.1** Since early January, there have been a series of in-depth discussions between the Director of Studies and People & Training on the one hand, and the academic and support staff representing Trinity College, University of Glasgow on the other. The meetings have focussed, on (a) agreeing the key points of a Minute of Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding and (b) agreeing the whole training package, subject to further development, including the curriculum, ‘hybrid’ delivery nationally, and the nature and expectations of both integrated, assessed placements and the ‘Candidate Year’.

**30.1.2** These meetings have reached agreement on the key issues, such that the present proposals can be placed before the Assembly, to support the recommendation of the Lead Academic Partner.

### **30.2 The Draft Minute of Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding**

**30.2.1** It is important to recognise, and to celebrate, that the Church will be entering into partnership with two bodies located at the University of Glasgow. The first is the University itself for the provision of academic services and structures, including the award of degrees. This will entail a contractual Minute of Agreement between the University of Glasgow and FAPLT to regulate the legal arrangements between the two bodies.

**30.2.2** The second is Trinity College, founded in the mid-19th century as a ministerial training college of the Free Church of Scotland, and associated with the University of Glasgow following the reunion of the Church of Scotland with the United Free Church in 1929. Trinity College remains a separate body from the University of Glasgow, albeit it works in tandem with the University. Trinity College has a separate charity number, is governed by a Principal and Council, and has its own finances and endowments. The Constitution of Trinity College states it to be: ‘a college of the Church of Scotland...which serves the mission of God by preparing God’s people for the work of ministry.’ It is this relationship that the Church seeks to enhance, support and develop. The agreement with Trinity College will entail a Memorandum of Understanding which will focus on ministerial training and formation within this context.

**30.2.3** Since early January 2026, detailed discussions have taken place between Trinity College (who have also been in discussion with the University of Glasgow), the Director of Studies and People & Training. Agreement has been reached on key issues such that, if the General Assembly supports the deliverance relating to the Lead Academic Partner, there will be further discussions so that those two agreements can be concluded and signed.

**30.2.4** In short, agreement has been reached to include the following areas, subject to further discussions and approvals from the higher structures of the University, from Trinity College Council, and from FAPLT. Letters of support and commitment to the partnership with the Church over the period of the agreement will be forthcoming from Trinity College and from all levels of the University of Glasgow.:

#### **30.2.5 University of Glasgow – Minute of Agreement**

- agreement for ten years, with provision for a widespread review after five years and termination clauses
- to provide academic training to standards deemed to be acceptable by the Church
- to provide the academic training nationally in ‘hybrid’ delivery
- to ensure that the provision and delivery of all academic training is in accordance with the University’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies
- to ensure that all academic training is delivered by appropriately qualified and experienced academic staff: specifically, to ensure that at least the current capacity in the teaching of Practical Theology is maintained as part of core staffing, with succession planning in place to the satisfaction of the Church
- to ensure that adequate administrative support is available to service the increased workload resulting from the delivery of the academic training;
- to provide access to appropriate learning resources, including library facilities, online resources, and learning materials
- to conduct assessments and examinations in accordance with its academic regulations
- to provide candidates with appropriate academic support and guidance throughout their studies
- to award appropriate academic credit, certification, and/or qualifications
- to maintain appropriate quality assurance and enhancement procedures, with annual review based on external examination reports and student feedback
- to comply with all funding rules or requirements which may from time to time be issued by relevant awarding bodies

- to provide regular reports to the Church on the progress and performance of candidates
- to agree detailed confidentiality and GDPR provisions, as well as intellectual property

### **30.2.6 Trinity College – Memorandum of Understanding**

- to commit to a partnership with the Church in shaping a curriculum that is mission-focused, contextually aware, and responsive to the diverse callings of candidates
- to commit to the formation of candidates for ministry by the integration of academic learning with assessed Church placements
- in recognition of a national provision, to ensure that the Academic Training includes teaching from across a broad theological spectrum
- to ensure the active collaboration of the College with the Director of Studies and People & Training, and the active participation of the College in the Formation Panel convened by the Church
- to agree the curriculum for those training for ministry in the Church in collaboration with the Director of Studies
- to commit to partnering with the training bodies of other denominations, and external Christian or public organisations for the delivery of academic training
- to agree financial investments and commitments, along with routes of grant funding provision

## **30.3 Formation and Training Routes**

**30.3.1** As in the new Act before the General Assembly previously set out, the potential training routes for a candidate will entail:

- A standard 3-year route of training for word and sacrament ministry consisting of a 3-year BD degree with three one-year integrated and assessed placements. The potential will remain for suitable candidates to continue to complete a 4-year Honours BD degree
- Under certain exceptions, such as age and prior theological study or lengthy church experience, an alternative route of a 2-year Diploma degree, with two integrated and assessed placements prior to ordination
- For those with a prior theology degree, the potential of a 'bespoke route', which could mean postgraduate study, and/or certain 'tailor-made' placements

In our view, the curriculum now envisaged promises the delivery of academic input to ministerial formation which meets the goals above, and which the Church has been seeking for decades

**30.3.2** However, formation entails the integration of academic and practical learning, and so IME is based more broadly on a Formational Year for every candidate, overlaying the University's semesters and integrating:

- revised BD modules,
- assessed reflective practice linked to placements, and
- non-credit confessional/vocational formation delivered jointly by Trinity and the Church (or commissioned)

## **30.4 Curriculum for Ministry**

**30.4.1** The full proposed curriculum for ministry for the 3-year BD programme and the 2-year Diploma programme is set out in Appendix III.

**30.4.2** The curriculum was developed in partnership of Trinity College, the Director of Studies and People & Training, with helpful input from a Focus Group of newly ordained ministers and deacons, and a Working Group of FAPLT consisting of ministers, a deacon and an elder.

**30.4.3** The curriculum is streamlined so that all subjects will bear a direct relationship with ministry and will be integrated into placement practice. Subjects that are irrelevant to ministry will now be omitted from the core curriculum for candidates, and the Director of Studies will work in collaboration with the Lead Academic Partner to maintain the ministry focus. The core weighting on Biblical Studies and Christian Theology remains, but now with a heavy concentration too on the Practice of Ministry and Mission. Short descriptions of each course have been provided to the satisfaction of the Director of Studies and People & Training.

**30.4.4** Important areas of formation that do not find a place within the curriculum are listed at the end of the curriculum document and will be developed by the Church in conjunction with academic providers and suitable course leaders. They delivered either within the core phase of training or in the first five years after ordination in different formats. The intention will be to develop modules in such areas for candidates, which can then be re-modelled for the benefit of the whole Church.

## **30.5 Provision of National 'Hybrid' Training**

**30.5.1** The provision of 'hybrid' training, incorporating both in-person and distanced/online education, is an essential criterion for the Church. No provider currently does so – two are distance-learning only without combined in-person elements, and three are in-person only without significant online presence.

**30.5.2** Trinity College is committed to developing and implementing a model of national teaching delivery that is a 'hybrid' of both in-person and distanced/online education. The anticipated modes of 'hybrid' delivery will meet the transformational learning and formation goals for candidates. The implementation and delivery of the hybrid model that Trinity anticipates is set out coherently and demonstrates a flexible and cohesive whole. Their proposals for hybrid delivery far outstrip any current provision by an academic provider

**30.5.3** All candidates will attend two national 'in-person' intensives per year replacing the current conference programme, plus study trips, allowing the gathering of the cohort for teaching, formation and community.

**30.5.4** Candidates will not need to relocate geographically, unless they wish to do so. The candidate experience will not be significantly diminished by being online rather than in-person for classes. Those within travelling distance of Glasgow will be expected to attend classes for module teaching in-person. Those beyond travelling distance of Glasgow will not be required to do so.

**30.5.5** As well as online access to lectures, seminar groups will be synchronous online with the essential capability for online students to contribute to live discussions in seminars alongside those 'in-person' and so be participative and interactive in real time. Local 'in-person' seminar groups will be considered, depending on the numbers of candidates in close location to each other, that are distant from Glasgow. All candidates will continue to undertake local training placements overseen by their local Presbyteries and People & Training.

**30.5.6** Full details of the technological and pedagogical aspects of the nature of the online delivery by Trinity College, (University of Glasgow, can be accessed here [Resources-Ascend](#)).

### **30.6 Integrated, Assessed Placements**

**30.6.1** The melding of theological learning and reflective practice is strongly focused on accredited placements where the candidate, supervisor, Presbytery, Church and LAP will all have a significant role.

**30.6.2** A placement will be integrated with the courses being taught that year at the Lead Academic Partner, and an overall reflective theme. Assessed placements will involve weekly reflective practice (e.g., journaling, verbatims, critical incident analysis) facilitated by a Pastoral Studies Tutor/Field Education Coordinator and involving small reflection groups, replacing the former MTN model.

**30.6.3** The candidate and supervisor will be provided with materials and training to implement the integrated aspects of the placement. They will be in regular communication with the Pastoral Studies Tutor/Field Education Coordinator in relation to the reflective practice elements of the placement, as well as with the Training Officers of the Church in relation to the progress of the placement overall. Assessment of placements will occur via the Lead Academic Partner for the accredited reflective elements; overall appraisal will continue to be led by People & Training and involve Presbytery assessment.

**30.6.4** Whilst it is recognised that the Church will retain responsibility for assessment that will determine candidate progression, Trinity College has committed themselves to involvement and commitment with integrated placements. The differing assessment inputs of supervisor, Presbytery, Church and LAP have been recognised. Trinity has provided a strong vision for how such placements would work in terms of course delivery and their potential involvement in supervisor training and liaison with the supervisor. Their teaching staff have a global reputation and depth of experience in the teaching of theological reflection and reflective practice, and in models of implementation on placement, from which candidates and the Church will greatly benefit.

### **30.7 The Formational Candidate Year - 'In Person' Intensives**

**30.7.1** To replace the current candidates' gathering structure (with the MTN also replaced by reflective integrated placements), candidates will participate in two 'residentials' in-person:

- A five day 'residential' in early to mid-September at the start of the 'candidate year', in Glasgow. The first two days will be a spiritual retreat together as the training year begins, at a retreat centre (or church). The next three days will be delivery of the intensive course(s) in the curriculum (perhaps two/three different courses depending on candidate years and numbers on the Diploma), plus induction to University of Glasgow for first year candidates.
- Second 'residential' in say early June for four to five days: a reflective 'summer mission' engagement in a different Presbytery every year across the country, linked in with the reflective theme for the current year. Candidates will, for example, engage in churches, parish projects and pioneering/outreach; assist in community audit and understanding context; lead clubs or special events or care home worship; culminating in their leading worship on the Sunday morning in their host church and then departing. Candidates would stay in groups in vacant manses or in ministers/members' homes, within a town or geographical area.

### **30.8 Outline Proposals for Candidate Responsibilities**

- For two or three years as a candidate for ministry, to be paid an increased allowance of £21K per annum.
- Placements yearly from 1 September to 31 August. During term-time September to May, 10 hours per week on placement in the first year, 15 hours per week in the second/third year (with more at Christmas and Easter), plus worship on Sunday. Trinity teaching schedule will leave one clear day for placement work, anticipating at least one evening too.
- Candidate expectations in the core phase will be made clear from the outset, with a consciousness of the risk of over-demand. Close attention will also be paid to integration between university deadlines and parish demands, both in time spent on placement and timings of assessments.
- During summertime after exams, May to end August, a candidate will be full-time on placement (35 hours per week).
- Equivalent of two days off each week – could be Saturday plus two half days elsewhere. If equivalent of two days off not possible in a certain week due to workload on placement, balance can be carried over to supplement other time off.
- Expected minimum of forty Sundays at worship on placement per year, with the remainder as holidays or for other purposes e.g. church intensives, visiting other churches, time off at exams etc.
- As per ministers, six weeks holiday per year with seven Sundays off.

- As per ministry, Holy Week and Easter Sunday, and Advent to Christmas Day, are compulsory, with no holidays permitted.
- No external work commitments will be permitted during the core phase of training
- A commitment to at least five years' service in the Church of Scotland in some form after ordination (parish, chaplaincy, academia, pioneering etc), with pastoral exceptions; failing which there will be 'clawback' provisions for some of the cost of training, such as university fees or a proportion of the cost per candidate of travel and accommodation for intensives (overall cost to the Church of training a candidate currently around £130K).

### **30.9 Important Further Criteria from Selection Process re Delivery of Theological Education and Integrated Placements**

#### **30.9.1 Relationship with the Church, the Formation Committee and the Director of Studies.**

**30.9.1.1** Trinity College have expressed the desire and vision to develop a close partnership as LAP with the Church, and not simply to be a 'sub-contractor' left alone to provide a service. They echo the hope of the Church that this will be a new form of relationship, which will require changes, concessions and innovations in the practice of both the LAP, the central and the local Church. There are strong prospects that this new relationship will be based on a developing trust and mutual understanding, allowing one party to critique the other and for decisions on future direction to be taken collaboratively.

**30.9.1.2** Trinity College have demonstrated an enthusiasm to engage meaningfully as LAP with the Director of Studies and the Formation Panel to design and implement the new IME programme. The whole mood of their proposals and engagement in recent discussion has 'buy in' and does not understand the guiding principles to be the Church's ideas and responsibility alone.

#### **30.9.2 Relationship of IME 'Core Phase' to Lifelong Formation in the 'Prior Phase' and 'Compulsory Additional Training'**

**30.9.2.1** Trinity College have envisaged their involvement in the 'core phase' of formation and training as part of the overall context of lifelong formation and considered their curriculum and submissions accordingly.

**30.9.2.2** They have indicated a willingness and desire to engage in intensives for candidates that are non-credit bearing, and in training offered in the 'first five years' after ordination. They have also considered and commit to exploring further the question of credit for 'apprenticeship route' courses, which would count towards access for admission or course credit within degree courses.

#### **30.9.3 Creating a Community of Learning and Peer Support.**

**30.9.3.1** Trinity College have set out how such a community will be created within their envisaged structure, accounting for this within a national 'hybrid' provision: to encourage peer learning and growth, friendship and pastoral support; and also, to develop the tools to foster, nurture and develop community in ways that will be directly translatable to ministry contexts. This will develop present strengths in doing so; in the relationships of candidates with each other and within the broader student population, and in their spiritual lives through prayer and worship. This will occur through an emphasis on developing the 'College' identity for ministry training that sits within the broader University context; and in sharing worship and fellowship, in retreats and in study trips in the UK or abroad.

#### **30.9.4 Key Issues and Adaptive Flexibility in Training.**

**30.9.4.1** There is a recognition in Trinity College's submission that the nature of ministry has changed significantly in recent decades in response to growing secularisation, the numerical decline of the institutional churches and shifts in the political and sociological demographics of our society and the world; and that the next decade will no doubt bring fresh challenges that are not, as yet, anticipated.

**30.9.4.2** In that light, Trinity recognises that they are contributing to the formation of resilient, adaptive practitioners in ministry, who will be able to respond to an ever-changing church and world.

**30.9.4.3** Therefore, Trinity recognises that they may have to adapt and further develop their curriculum in response to shifting ministerial, ecclesiological, social or political challenges.

#### **30.9.5 Specialist Streams of Ministry.**

**30.9.5.1** The Formation Panel might affirm a strong calling for a candidate in a ministry, say at the start of the second year of the 'core phase', in such as parish renewal, pioneer ministry, youth ministry, chaplaincy, or to progress further in academia with a view to future teaching. It is important to note that training and development in all such areas of ministry are also anticipated beyond the 'core phase'.

**30.9.5.2** Trinity has indicated a potential flexibility in its provision as LAP which might allow the opportunity for a candidate later in the core phase to focus on training in a more intensive manner in such a particular area. As regards academia, there is no barrier for a candidate to progress further academically after three years, in order to continue to an Honours BD and beyond.

### **30.9.6 Ability to Engage with Diverse Candidate Identity and Theological Outlooks.**

**30.9.6.1** If approved as our national LAP, Trinity is aware that that this means they must commit to embracing and including those of diverse personal identities and from the whole spectrum of theological backgrounds. Trinity provides the following statement:

“Trinity College and the University of Glasgow recognise that the role of Lead Academic Provider needs to command the confidence of the whole Church and to respect the breadth of theological opinion within the Church. We are committed formationally to an ethic of hospitality towards a range of theological positions from the more liberal/progressive to the more conservative. We are committed educationally to helping all students to think critically, to reflect honestly on their own stances and to engage thoughtfully and respectfully with others. Trinity College is committed pastorally to supporting the theological, spiritual and personal formation of all candidates in training recognising that this can be a time of significant personal and spiritual challenge. Our aim as a College will be to enable the formation of candidates who can take their ordination vows with confidence and conviction and be well equipped for mission and ministry in the Church.”

### **30.9.7 Ecumenical and Inter-faith Outlook.**

**30.9.7.1** Trinity College is committed to partnering with the training bodies of other denominations, and external Christian or public organisations for the delivery of IME. Candidates training with Trinity will be in contact with those training in other denominations, and with those of other faiths and none. The content of the curriculum will develop knowledge of other branches of the Christian Church and of other global faiths.

### **30.9.8 Pastoral and Learning Support to Candidates.**

**30.9.8.1** Supplementing the provision by the Church, there is strong pastoral support that will be offered to candidates by those leading the IME provision of Trinity College, and via Student Support Services within the broader School, College and University. Likewise, there are strong resources available in support for learning, or coaching, for those with additional educational needs and thus necessary adjustments, or who may need support in developing academic skills.

### **30.9.9 Commitment to Engagement in Broader Training for the Church.**

**30.9.9.1** Trinity is demonstrating a commitment to training beyond academic provision within the University setting, both to candidates for ministry and to the wider church. Trinity has a strong suite of public access courses designed for, or open to, church members and elders. Staff members express faith by undertaking Church roles, leading worship or providing liturgy beyond the academic setting, or give talks to congregations or Presbyteries. They organise or contribute to conferences and seminars for the Church of Scotland or other denominations, designed for candidates, ministers or members of congregations.

### **30.9.10 Additional Activities and Benefits for Candidates.**

**30.9.10.1** Trinity will contribute beyond the teaching curriculum to the life and development of the candidate, such as in bursaries or in offering opportunities to engage in the learning environment throughout the broader University and in social events within their School; and in study trips for candidates that are relevant for learning and ministry formation.

### **30.9.11 SAAS Funding**

**3.9.11.1** Accepting that the provision of SAAS funding for degrees in ministerial training may change in the coming years as a matter of overall principle, Trinity will confirm that the proposed degrees, courses and modes of delivery in their submission will not alter the provision of funding as it presently stands and make any necessary adjustments if that is the case.

### **30.9.12 Implications for Candidates and Supervisors**

- **What does it mean for present candidates?** They will continue studying at their present academic provider until they complete their degree. They will continue with the present placement programme and undertake a probationary period before ordination. The rest of their candidacy will be governed under the old Training Act and not the new Training Act, unless agreed otherwise.
- **What does it mean for candidates from September 2027 onwards – will they have to re-locate?** There will be no need for candidates to re-locate from their present location to Glasgow, unless they wish to do so. ‘Hybrid’ provision will ensure that in-person intensives will be mixed with in-person/online delivery of course material. Placements will be carried out locally, and candidates will remain under the supervision of their Presbytery.
- **What of the lack of a probationary period?** The core three-year period of training will mirror the demands of ministry, increasing in involvement until its conclusion. Full time placement work from May to August each year will compensate for the absence of probation on a ‘time spent’ basis, with around one year of full-time work. The final placement, in particular, will see candidates engage at that stage in many of the practical elements of ministry that presently would be part of their work on probation, such as funerals or church projects. In addition, the new integration of learning and practice will, hopefully, pay dividends in the earlier formation of candidates during the training process.

There will be three important considerations that will be strongly borne in mind as the new IME scheme is implemented:

- (a) That candidates should not be over-burdened and, therefore, a balance needs to be struck between the intensity of experience and time off for health and wellbeing; as well as placement and Church work being carefully planned to recognise University deadlines;
- (b) That the provision of formative learning is not restricted to a core period of two or three years – provision will be made for the ‘first five years’ after ordination and, therefore, the burden within the core phase can be lessened, if needs be; and

(c) We need to avoid a 'cliff edge' on ordination and ensure as much support as possible – not only will that come through the relevant Training Officer within People & Training, if desired and appropriate, provision will also be made for a continuing relationship of a candidate with their Formation Partner for the first few years of their ministry.

- **What implications will integrated, accredited placements over a one-year period have for ministers who are supervisors, and for Presbyteries?** The desire is that ground-level ministry experience will form the heartbeat of training and formation for ministry, integrated with learning in the academic context. If this comes to fruition, it might provide a greatly enhanced placement experience not only for the candidate, but also for the supervisor and congregation. The hope is, therefore, that there will be enriching benefits for supervisors in their interactions with candidates.

Placements which are year-long and full-time in the summer, should allow a candidate to immerse themselves in the life of a church, and contribute more broadly to the work of ministry than at present. It will, however, place an additional time demand upon supervisors, and also require them to engage more directly with theories and outcomes of reflective practice, as well as focus upon the integration of the classwork or reflective theme of the candidate for that year; and to liaise with staff from the Lead Academic Partner. Whilst that might bring more focus to the placement, it will also bring greater responsibility. In that light, People & Training will be concentrating upon the following before implementation in September 2027:

- The development of resources and avenues of training for supervisors that are appropriate for these tasks;
- Discussing the time commitment of supervisors with Presbyteries to see what allowances, incentives and support might be given by Presbyteries to supervisors, considering other duties and responsibilities that a minister might have within the Presbytery structure; and
- Consulting with supervisors in all of the above, to ensure that the right training and support is being given.

## 31. RESOURCING THE PARTNERSHIP AND BUDGET

### 31.1 Introduction

**31.1.1** Budgetary approval was given by the Assembly Trustees for additional resources at their meeting on 5 February. The full papers setting out the additional resources, and the draft budget, can be accessed at the following link [Resources - Ascend](#).

The following is a summary of those resource implications.

### 31.2 Shared Resourcing Principles

**31.2.1** This will be a mixed funding model recognising that undergraduate fee levels in Scotland sit below operating cost, and that a relatively small candidate cohort cannot fund the enhanced IME alone. The model anticipates contributions from Trinity College, the University of Glasgow (UG) and the Church.

### 31.3 Trinity College Contributions

**31.3.1** Trinity College will:

- double the present College Administrator post to 0.6 FTE (c. £40k total cost annually, including £20k increment),
- invest up to £50k in constructing a further hybrid teaching space in Kelvin West Church, also for formational Church use such as in placement contact and worship; and
- pursue endowment growth to £500k by 2036 to sustain day-to-day operations in its LAP role.

### 31.4 University of Glasgow Contributions

**31.4.1** UG will provide undergraduate/postgraduate academic teaching, assessment infrastructure, student support, and maintain at least the present capacity in Practical Theology within the Department of Theology & Religious Studies.

**31.4.2** UG will be invited to restore the historic Chair of Divinity; and to adopt the present post of Lecturer in Pastoral Studies, which is funded by Trinity College, as core staffing of UG.

### 31.5 Church of Scotland Contributions

**31.5.1** In the implementation of the new training scheme, particular resources are sought by Trinity College, University of Glasgow, focussed on a new teaching post of a Pastoral Studies Tutor/Field Education Co-ordinator; travelling expenses for such a postholder; and a 'buy out' for one day per week of the Principal of Trinity College from their work at the University of Glasgow to focus specifically on confessional ministry training and candidate development.

**31.5.2** Therefore, the Church would fund over the ten-year period, with a funding review after five years:

- A new teaching and integrated placement post of Pastoral Studies Tutor/ Field Education Coordinator (Lecturer, Level 7);
- Expenses for that post (placement travel/support); and
- A grant to Trinity College for the Principal function (0.2 FTE buyout or parish cover).

**31.5.3** Initial annual total: £100,000 (indicative: £70k salary; £10k expenses; £20k Principal grant), with review mechanisms for scaling if candidate numbers exceed 40.

**31.5.4** The Church also commits to the travel and accommodation costs of hybrid intensives and national formation events for candidates, and for leaving rare Trinity library holdings on deposit with GUL while UG is the LAP.

### 31.6 Further Church of Scotland Investment

- Candidate training allowance increased to £21K p.a.
- Increased 'conference' costs from intensives
- An additional post in Church of Scotland Learning Module Development, to contribute to the additional online modules that will be developed for the core phase, First Five Years and the broader Church - £60K per annum
- Additional 0.5FTE admin support for the new IME scheme - £17.5K per annum
- Costs of additional course development in commissioning new courses beyond the curriculum, and possible adjunct teaching costs - £30K per annum

### 31.7 Summary

**31.7.1** The budget includes the additional resources sought by Trinity College, and also additional costs within People & Training in the post of an online learning developer; costs of commissioning new courses from outside individuals, academic providers and training bodies; and the increased costs of bringing candidates together for 'intensives' instead of the present candidate conferences as well as formative study trips.

**31.7.2** The existing commitment to the new IME scheme which was communicated to the academic providers last year should also be noted; of an additional budgetary sum of £50,000 per annum for two years in 2027-29, followed by a continuing £25,000 per annum. The additional staffing and expenses support payable to Trinity College, University of Glasgow of £100,000 per annum should be seen in this context.

**31.7.3** Under this present estimate, there is a total additional investment in IME of £207,500 per annum. However, given the re-allocation of prior budget resources due to the shortened timeframe of training, the new IME Scheme will entail a net saving on the training budget of £30,000 per annum; translated to a saving of around £11,000 per candidate over the whole core phase of training (the cost per candidate now being around £120,000).

**31.7.4** It is important to note, however, that the purpose of remodelling the IME programme was not to save money, and further costs will be required to be invested within the development of the ongoing CMD programme for those within their 'first five years' after ordination. Costs for the now compulsory Continuing Ministerial Development in the first five years after ordination are presently unknown, pending upcoming development of that programme which will be implemented from September 2029. An estimate of those costs will follow in the budget for next year.

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## 32. CONCLUSION

**32.1** The new scheme for the formation of ministers and deacons, including the significant re-development of IME, represents an important sea-change for the Church at this vital time in its life. They offer:

- A re-vitalised programme for ministerial training and education: which has the potential to provide the ministers of this generation with the skills and gifts they need for ministry in the present day; and to engage larger numbers in the training process and enhance the Church
- An integrated formation: academic, practical, and reflective learning are aligned to the Formation Framework with assessed placements throughout.
- Consistency and quality: a single national pathway with clear accountability through the Director of Studies and a Formation Panel.
- A new, close partnership: a collaborative future with a Lead Academic Partner, namely Trinity College, University of Glasgow and the Formation Panel, ensuring that the focus on relevant formation for candidates will remain. The constitution of Trinity College states: "Trinity College is a college of the Church of Scotland... which serves the mission of God by preparing God's people for the work of ministry. The College exists to support the work of the Church of Scotland." There is a genuine excitement for the Church to work closely with such a body.
- Access and inclusion: hybrid national delivery; candidates remain in context, supported locally by Presbyteries and nationally by People & Training.
- Sustainability: time to ordination reduced; forward staffing in Practical Theology; CPD linkages into "first five years" foreseen and to be developed.

**32.2** For these reasons and the many others set out above, the new programme of IME is commended to the General Assembly, and the approval of the Assembly is sought for the recommendation by the Selection Panel that Trinity College, University of Glasgow be the Lead Academic Partner of the Church.

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## 33. APPRENTICESHIP ROUTE

### 33.1 Deliverance of GA2025

*Note that an initial pilot scheme of up to 12 Apprentices has been launched and will commence for the session 2025-2027 and instruct FAPLT to bring an interim report on progress to GA 2026 (Section 19.4.1).*

### 33.2 Establishment of the Scheme

**33.2.1** The development of the Apprenticeship Route (AR) must be seen against the context of the new Initial Ministerial Education (IME) programme for Word and Sacrament ministers and deacons who are training full time. It has long been recognised that the Church needs to do more to widen the "on-ramp" to ministerial and diaconal training, ensuring that those who traditionally felt ineligible to train for ministry have a genuine opportunity to do so.

**33.2.2** The Programme Group brought several deliverances to GA2024 aimed at developing the Apprenticeship Route. This two-year foundational programme seeks to provide a broader scope for ministry, ensuring it leads to developing new forms of ministry required by the Presbytery Mission Planning Process, Team Ministry and the changing needs of the Church. Primarily this scheme is for people who are now seeking to explore God’s call within to some form of fulltime service.

**33.2.3** The first adverts were launched on 11th March 2025, seeking to attract applications from those in the 18 – 40 age group, who are making life-defining decisions. There was no initial requirement that they be members of the Church of Scotland. Initial assessments were carried out in June, with an induction week in August and an official start date of 1st September 2025.

**33.2.4** The application process was designed to be simple and accessible, beginning with the collection of basic information followed by exploratory video calls with each applicant. During these initial stages, candidates were provided with all available details regarding the scheme. To ensure consistency and quality, the Directors of the National Assessment Team adapted core elements of the existing assessment framework, delivering them through this innovative and streamlined approach.

**33.2.5** The emphasis throughout the whole application and assessment process was on the 5 Cs: Christian Commitment, Character, Chemistry, Calling and Competence. There was no expectation that potential apprentices would be ‘finished articles’; rather, the assessment process sought sufficient indications of the 5 Cs and, critically, a teachable spirit.

**33.2.6** In September 2025 a pilot phase was launched in which 11 apprentices began their training across three area Hubs in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Tayside.

### **33.3 Development of Presbytery Hubs**

**33.3.1** In this pilot phase, ministers from the Presbyteries of Edinburgh & West Lothian, Glasgow, and Perth lead the hubs. This structure established a strong numerical core of apprentices in each hub and provided access to a diverse range of projects. While each hub was initially intended to host four apprentices, the current allocation consists of five in Tayside (led by Rev Dr Lynn McChlery), four in Glasgow (Rev Alistair Duncan), and two in Edinburgh (Rev Ian MacDonald).

**33.3.2** Each placement maintains a clear missional focus, situating apprentices within congregations showing “signs of life and energy.” By engaging with chaplaincies, community projects, and both urban and rural Priority Areas, apprentices gain a broad insight into the Church’s work while benefiting from the expertise of seasoned hub leaders.

### **33.4 The Apprenticeship Experience**

**33.4.1** The core of the apprentice experience is four-fold:

- i. On-the-job Experience
- ii. Classroom Learning
- iii. Discernment
- iv. Formation

**33.4.2** Time is allocated in 70:20:10 divide, spending 70% of their time on hands-on experience within their placements, 20% (one day a week allocated to study), and 10% of their time for mentoring, peer group contact, conference programmes, etc.

**33.4.3** The timetable was designed to balance study, mentoring and practical experience. The seasonal curriculum is more structured, developed through collaboration between Hub leaders and the Ministries Pathway Manager. The local schedule is more flexible and able to respond to specific events and local and personal needs. Both the leadership team and the apprentices have shown significant adaptability, particularly when faced with key personnel changes in the Tayside Hub; we remain grateful to the apprentices, leaders, and mentors for their resilience as we navigated these transitions.

**33.4.4** Each apprentice follows a unique journey, bringing distinct talents that shape their individual development. This learning is formalised through a Learning Covenant, ensuring that training aligns with their evolving strengths and passions. Central to the programme is reflective practice, overseen by Hub leaders and mentors; apprentices maintain a regular reflective journal to support their growth, complemented by more in-depth termly reflections.

**33.4.5** Each local Hub operates with some national support. The Hub leaders oversee the whole process for each apprentice with each being allocated a mentor. We also have sought to respond to the specific support needs our apprentices require as we progress both their and our learning.

### **33.5 The Classroom Curriculum**

**33.5.1** As mentioned above, we aspire to develop a course of Church Studies and work through to gain SVQ accreditation, but after careful consideration for this pilot scheme, we feel that to offer four modules over the two years, gaining 80 credits, meets our 70:20:10 split better.

**33.5.2** We approached HTC, who are presently one of two providers who train our Readers and OLMs. This allows us to train our apprentices as one cohort. We have therefore chosen four modules, with two modules undertaken in each year of the programme.

- i. Jesus and the Gospels
- ii. The Pentateuch
- iii. The Reformation
- iv. An introduction to Pastoral and Practical Theology

### **33.6 Reflective Practice**

**33.6.1** The mentor meets weekly with the apprentice, with the Rolfe Model informing reflective practice that asks: What happened? So what? What now?

**33.6.2** This is new for some of our apprentices and working to develop insight and depth is a primary aim of this process. This reflective growth is seen as essential to the development of both the pilot and of the apprentices themselves.

### **33.7 Review of the Apprenticeship Route**

**33.7.1** The process of review is critical to this pilot scheme. It is important that the learnings are continually advised and feed into evaluating the investment made by the Church into this programme. It is therefore proposed that a full review of all areas of AR be undertaken and reported to GA 2027.

**33.7.2** Among the questions we seek to ask of ourselves are:

- i. What should be learned from the initial recruitment campaign, and what expectations did it set for both the apprentices and the wider Church?
- ii. What insights can be gained from the first assessment process? Should we adjust our assessment indicators or review the age and experience criteria for prospective apprentices?
- iii. Regarding the nature of hands-on learning: what new skills are being developed, and how are they integrated into congregational life? What opportunities allow apprentices to develop individually while contributing to their congregations? Furthermore, where is the balance between the core skills and theology required for a congregational worker and the preparation needed for the next stage of the journey?
- iv. In terms of the classroom curriculum: have we identified the correct courses? How can Church of Scotland Learning complement this? Additionally, what content is best delivered through the academic core, the Presbytery Hub, the national training team, or local providers?
- v. Where is the balance between mentoring and ongoing assessment? What core skills must apprentices possess by the end of their training?
- vi. What would be required to develop a bespoke SVQ qualification, and is this a desirable goal?
- vii. Is there a specific model of Hub leadership that is preferable?
- viii. What are the advantages and disadvantages of apprentices serving within their "home" congregations?
- ix. What modes of assessment should be developed, how frequently should they be conducted, and who should be responsible for undertaking them?
- x. At what point is it appropriate to link this programme to the formal assessment process for national ministries?

### **33.8 The Outcomes of the Pilot Programme and anticipated next steps**

**33.8.1** There are four broad areas that we feel this programme will support in the future:

- i. It will provide a foundational layer of formation and development for those who wish to pursue a Calling to FTWAS, the Diaconate, OLM and the Readership. During the final months of the Apprentice training, we will be able to tie in their experiences with the discernment and assessment processes of Local Review and National Assessment.
- ii. We will explore further how those trained may be used in pioneering and church planting situations, bringing a resource for the Church of the future.
- iii. It will be established whether it can act as a foundational layer of preparation for MDS workers. This may ensure that those undertaking MDS roles in the future have some theological training, either by entering this route prior to fully activating their MDS role, or by undertaking elements of training alongside apprentices.
- iv. We will encourage any congregations that locally employ staff to benefit from being able to employ those who have previously undertaken apprenticeship training.

**33.8.2** Beyond these specific roles, we must consider not only how we equip individuals for formal church work but also the long-term vision of a programme that invests in the faith and formation of all members. Such an initiative equips people for discipleship, mission, and service, empowering them to act as committed members of the Church in whichever sphere of life God calls them to serve.

## **34. STUDY LEAVE**

**34.1** Study Leave may be claimed by an inducted minister once they have served as such for a full five-year period within the Church of Scotland. An allowance of two weeks is given annually, and this can be accumulated over a maximum of five years. At present, there is an annual allowance of £275, which again is accumulative over a five-year period. In addition, pulpit supply costs are reimbursed to the congregation for any approved period of study leave absence.

**34.2** The purpose of Study Leave is *'to provide inducted ministers with the opportunity for a period of focused study and/or training for the sake of their continuing growth in knowledge/skills for the benefit of ministry and for the greater benefit of the Church'*.

**34.3** This implies that there are two essential criteria that should be fulfilled:

- i. to the benefit of the Minister
- ii. to the wider benefit of the Church

**34.4** The People & Training Programme Group considered carefully last year's deliverance

*'Instruct FAPLT to provide clearer criteria for Study Leave applications within the Scheme details, ensuring that the principle of the Scheme being an opportunity for 'ministerial development as defined by Ministers' is maintained.'* against the criteria.

**34.5** At present, the criteria do not provide a description of what this benefit to either the Minister or the Church might be, except that it is *'a course of study or an activity to provide for the needs and circumstances of the minister concerned, to be approved by the People and Training Study Leave panel'*.

**34.6** An examination was undertaken of the type of applications that had been previously approved. Each application is unique and ranged from the undertaking of short courses offered by the Church colleges, supplementing study time and funding for postgraduate study, a wide variety of conferences that covered liturgy, worship, bereavement care, development of media skills, neurodiversity, mental health, digital ministry together with self-guided study that led to the development of devotional material and story sermons, or a work placement with the local hospital chaplain to build a better understanding of child bereavement.

**34.7** It was noted that it is rare for a Study Leave application to be refused. Often this happened when the advice of the Ascend Project Worker was not sought or was ignored, where the details of the application were extremely limited or vague in their objectives, or did not reference any link to a period of study. In such cases, the Ascend Project Worker will offer support, guidance and encouragement to resubmit an application.

**34.8** Approved applications are subject to specific requirements. For leave over six weeks, the itinerary should include recreation alongside educational goals. If the leave exceeds one month, arrangements for an Interim Moderator and full pastoral/pulpit cover must be agreed. We acknowledge that supporting one minister's leave necessitates additional commitments from their colleagues.

**34.9** It was also noted that the Ascend Project Worker was very responsive to requests for information and support for applications and often went the second mile when applications from ministers had missed stated deadlines.

**34.10** The conditions also highlight that Study Leave is not sabbatical leave, and state, *'and is not to be used as a means of rehabilitating ministers who require time off for other reasons.'* Through Ascend, inducted ministers are entitled to an annual pastoral support grant and a retreat grant. These are not cumulative, and together with the opportunity to undertake a Ministerial Development Conversation on an annual basis, the encouragement to all ministers is to make regular use of these provisions. The Programme Group noted that some Presbyteries were beginning to consider offering longer-serving ministers' sabbatical leave. It is important to keep the Study Leave period distinct in application and purpose.

**34.11** After evaluating the Study Leave scheme, the Programme Group concluded that the two-fold criteria provide sufficient scope for both ministers and the panel. This framework facilitates the functional use of Study Leave for attending key conferences while encouraging the creative exploration of this generous provision.

**34.12** To improve the application process, the Study Leave form is being revised. Rather than requiring a standard declaration of aims and objectives, the new format encourages a reflective approach, allowing ministers to narrate how and why they intend to use the leave. Furthermore, the revision sets clearer expectations for Presbytery consultation, particularly regarding applications for cumulative study periods.

## **35. CHURCH OF SCOTLAND LEARNING**

**35.1** Over the past year, Church of Scotland Learning has continued to expand its library of resources, including the launch of *'The Conversations Series'*. The team has developed close working relationships with Priority Areas, The Guild and Integrity. They have provided support to the IME training process and sustained engagement with Presbyteries through the termly Presbytery Newsletter. All materials are structured to give high support in training, maximising the opportunities for the leaders to share stories, provide accompaniment and support practice.

**35.2** There is a consistent sign-up to the platform, and every encouragement is given to those who have not yet explored the resources to do so, with further consultation work with other areas of the Church under active consideration.

### **36. ASCEND**

**36.1** The platform continues to provide information on support services, grant funding and training courses to those in the national ministries. Following technical challenges and consultation with the national office's IT and Communications teams, we determined that a complete website rebuild was the most prudent course of action. While users may only notice subtle improvements to their experience, the bulk of the work is happening behind the scenes to ensure the site remains secure and flexible for the future.

**36.2** Ascend continues to offer access and information to a variety of support offerings for those in the ministries of the Church, including grants for study leave, pastoral support, retreats and post-graduate study.

**36.3** Several areas are specifically highlighted on the Ascend website, including Ministerial Development Conversations and Pastoral Supervision. Following a recent review of our coaching provision, we are pleased to confirm that this service will continue through the pastoral support grant. We are immensely grateful to the Rev Robin Paisley and Iain Johnstone for their dedicated support throughout this process as long-serving coaches.

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### **37. SENIOR DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL ASSESSMENT**

**37.1** We are pleased to propose Mrs Alison Fenton to be our new Senior Director of the National Assessment process. This team has been led until now by the Rev Donald Campbell who has continued to ensure that the assessment processes for our national ministries meets the changing needs, building a team that reflects the width and depth of our Church at large. We thank Donald for his dedicated and faithful service.

**37.2** Alison Fenton has worked as a freelance HR consultant for over 20 years, specialising in the design and delivery of recruitment, assessment and development centres within the private, public and third sector organisations. Her previous roles include positions in Learning & Development at the University of Glasgow and CrossReach. In addition to her consultancy work Alison is a certified coach and facilitator.

For more than 25 years, Alison has served as an ordained elder. She is the Session Clerk of Giffnock South Parish Church and a trained worship leader within the Presbytery of Glasgow. Currently, she is an Interim Moderator at Glasgow: St Andrew & St Nicholas Church. She has been actively engaged with National Assessment, serving as a Church Assessor since 2016 and advancing to the role of Director in 2021.

**37.3** Alison brings a wealth of professional and church experience to this role, as well as a commitment of faith and service which will ensure that the national assessment provision continues to develop to meet the changing needs of those in the national ministries.

## **Presbytery & Partnership Support Programme Group Report**

### **38. INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS**

#### **38.1 Christian Aid**

**38.1.1** Christian Aid, the relief and development agency of many UK Churches, including the Church of Scotland, accompanies the poorest and most vulnerable in our world, supporting people with the tools they need to lift themselves out of poverty. With the Chair of the Board, Sarah Mullally, appointed as Archbishop of Canterbury, Christian Aid has appointed Thabo Makgoba, Archbishop of Cape Town, as the new Chair.

#### **38.2 South Sudan**

**38.2.1** In February, the Church of Scotland joined the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church to follow up on the February 2023 visit of His Holiness Pope Francis, Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, and Rosie Frew, the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in their historic pilgrimage of peace to South Sudan. The letter, to the Government of National Unity and Opposition Groups in South Sudan, urged them to seek reconciliation for a better future for South Sudan. "Violence can never be the pathway to progress... years of almost constant fighting since South Sudanese independence have proven this so... There must be another path, a path of unity, a path to settle disputes without bloodshed". The letter called on all "South Sudanese, in particular the leaders and elders, to reject the temptations of hatred and revenge, and any other acts that may trigger violence between sisters and brothers. Such attitudes and actions are obstacles to the peace and prosperity that the country greatly needs."

**38.2.2** Within the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan, the two leadership groups have been participating in mediation, and there is a nascent plan to hold a united General Assembly. South Sudan was again hit by floods in late 2025, and some emergency financial support was sent for the work of the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan (PCOSS)'s Presbyterian Relief and Disaster Agency (PRDA).

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### **39. ASIA**

**39.1** In April 2026, the Taiwan Ecumenical Forum for Justice and Peace (TEF) met in Changhua City to address Taiwan's self-determination amidst rising geopolitical tensions. The Church of Scotland, a decade-long partner in the TEF Steering Group, joined global churches to affirm that the right to self-determination is both a fundamental human right and a theological mandate. Emphasising a prophetic witness, the forum called for international solidarity and advocacy to protect Taiwan's democratic values and human dignity. This ongoing partnership with the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) remains a vital expression of Christian discipleship and pursuit of global justice.

**40. MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA**

Two of the Church’s partners in the Middle East, the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL), through its Compassionate Protestant Society, and the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC), have been actively supporting those affected by military attacks by Israel and USA, and the Iranian response. These hostilities have caused severe human consequences for civilians across the region.

In Lebanon, MECC reported that Israeli evacuation orders for Beirut’s southern suburbs and southern Lebanon forced approximately 700,000 people to flee. This mass displacement caused gridlock and a critical shelter shortage, leaving families to sleep in schools, cars, or on roadsides. Joseph Kassab, General Secretary of NESSL, described the sight of displaced families in parks and streets as “heartbreaking,” noting the deep uncertainty facing those from the South, Bekaa, and Beirut.

These actions have resulted in catastrophic human loss, including the parish priest Fr. Pierre al-Rahi, killed by an Israeli tank attack while assisting wounded neighbours. The crisis has devastated essential infrastructure like hospitals and schools, disproportionately impacting children, the elderly, and the sick. Thousands require urgent food, healthcare, and psychological support, as well as the rehabilitation of damaged homes and community facilities.

The MECC issued an urgent humanitarian appeal to partners, highlighting that Middle Eastern churches form a trusted network capable of reaching the most vulnerable groups directly. Reminding the international community that protecting human dignity is a shared ethical responsibility, the Council reaffirmed its commitment to mercy and peace, calling for solidarity to alleviate suffering and restore hope for a stable future. It called on all partners to stand with the people of the Middle East during this critical phase and work together to alleviate humanitarian suffering and strengthen hope for a more stable and dignified future for humanity.

**40.1 LEBANON/SYRIA AND MIDDLE EAST COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (MECC)**

**40.1.1** Building on the 2025 report, Christians in Lebanon and Syria continue to serve as “salt and light,” advocating for peace, religious freedom, and a tolerant civil society. In autumn 2025, the Church of Scotland, alongside the Presbyterian Church USA, reaffirmed this long-standing presence by participating in the Middle East Council of Churches International Partners meeting in Beirut and visiting the National Evangelical Synod and the Near East School of Theology.

**40.1.2** The Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) serves four major church families, working to sustain a Christian presence in the region through ecumenical cooperation and interfaith dialogue with Muslim partners. For international supporters like the Church of Scotland, the MECC provides a vital ecclesiastical perspective on regional crises. Given the significant ongoing needs in Lebanon, international assistance remains essential for rebuilding communities. Additionally, through the Department for Services to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR), the MECC continues to provide critical healthcare, education, and vocational training to displaced Palestinians.

**40.1.3** Under the leadership of Professor Martin Accad, the Near East School of Theology (NEST) is expanding its influence through a new Centre for Public Theology, designed to bring Christian perspectives into the political sphere. Alongside traditional clergy training, NEST is diversifying its curriculum with youth-focused Christian Education and a specialised programme on Christian-Muslim relations rooted in lived experience. These courses already attract international students, offering a unique opportunity for Scottish theologians to engage with Middle Eastern perspectives on interfaith dialogue and public witness.

**40.2 Egypt**

**40.2.1** A recent visit to Egypt enabled the Church of Scotland to reaffirm its partnership with the Synod of the Nile and its Evangelical Theological Faculty. The delegation participated in the triennial meeting of the Coptic Evangelical Organisation for Social Services (CEOSS) and engaged with the vital work of the St Andrew’s Church Refugee Service (StARS), an organisation providing legal, medical, and educational support to displaced people in Cairo. This engagement underscored a commitment to ongoing ecumenical cooperation and humanitarian support within the Egyptian context

**40.2.2** The visit confirmed that the Church of Scotland’s partnership is highly valued by the Synod of the Nile, with significant potential for future congregational Twinning and volunteer placements. The Evangelical Theological Seminary (ETS) in Cairo is well-equipped for international students, and opportunities for faculty sabbaticals in Scotland could further strengthen these ties. Additionally, StARS (St Andrew’s Refugee Services) offers a powerful witness by employing the skills of refugees themselves—including doctors and lawyers—to serve their own community, providing both vital aid and a profound sense of purpose.

**40.2.3** Celebrating 75 years of service, the Coptic Evangelical Organisation for Social Services (CEOSS) has reached 100 million people since its founding by a Presbyterian pastor. Beyond its vast literacy and poverty alleviation work, CEOSS prioritises interfaith bridge-building to maintain positive relations with Muslim communities. A key initiative is the 80/800 programme, which rehabilitates run-down churches while training local leaders in outreach. Supported by Bible study and family training for young clergy, this programme ensures that physical restoration goes hand-in-hand with sustainable spiritual and congregational growth.

### **40.3 The Church of Scotland and HIV**

**40.3.1** While the Church of Scotland HIV and AIDS Project was officially concluded last year, HIV and AIDS remain a need to be addressed with many partners around the world. In Zambia, for example, support for those needing nutritious food when receiving anti-retrovirals remains a need. In the course of this past year, numerous donations have come from various churches still supporting work amongst partners, and one generous legacy of £40,000 was received to support this ongoing need. We will continue to ensure monies given for work in HIV and AIDS goes to partners engaged in this work.

### **40.4 Stamp Project**

**40.4.1** Used stamps have supported the world church for over 50 years. Since 1969, Keith Scott from Wishaw has been recycling used postage stamps from congregations and turning them into money to support a different small project each year. The stamp project has supported partner churches in numerous countries through a variety of projects. As our stamp project draws to a close, thanks are due to Mr Keith Scott and to all the congregations and individuals who have saved their stamps for World Mission in the past 56 years. They have done a huge amount of good amongst partners worldwide, helping many people change their lives. A few charities continue to be able to receive used stamps.

### **40.5 Faithshare & Twinning**

**40.5.1** Rooted in the theology of the incarnation, the Church of Scotland prioritises a “ministry of presence” built on mutual respect and authentic, cross-cultural listening. By moving beyond outdated structures and embracing global networks, the Church revitalises its own faith and discovers new ways to share the gospel. This commitment is practically lived out through the ‘Twinning’ programme and ‘Faithshare’ grants, which foster international exchanges that strengthen the witness of both local congregations and their global partners.

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## **41. EUROPE**

### **41.1 Portugal**

**41.1.1** On 28 January 2026, Storm Kristin caused widespread destruction across Portugal, severely damaging the Cova Gala Social Centre of the Presbyterian Church in Portugal (IEPP). The storm destroyed the office roof and caused significant water infiltration, disrupting essential services at the kindergarten and social hall. Despite these challenges and damaged equipment, staff have implemented temporary repairs to maintain vital community support. The Church of Scotland continues to assist this mission through emergency grants from its Trust Funds.

### **41.2 Czechia**

**41.2.1** As the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren (ECCB) prepares for full financial independence from the state by 2028, it is prioritising the development of dedicated, well-supported ministers to lead its local mission. Recognizing that financial stability is merely a foundation for its true goal of proclaiming Christ, the ECCB is focusing on revitalising congregational growth through active community outreach. Central to this new era is the commitment to sustaining international partnerships, including its long-standing and productive relationship with the Church of Scotland.

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## **42. ANTI-BIAS MEASURES FOR NOMINATING COMMITTEES**

### **42.1 Background**

**42.1.1** The 2025 General Assembly instructed the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team, working with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group, to develop measures aimed at preventing discrimination in the processes undertaken by nominating committees of vacant charges, and to provide appropriate remedies where discrimination is proven to have occurred. The deliverance envisaged that this work might result in mitigations being mandated.

**42.1.2** This report presents the outcome of the first phase of that work. Through consultation with presbytery clerks, interim moderators, presbytery advisory committees, nominating committee members, and ministers, the report writers focused on developing an accurate understanding of how nominations processes operate in practice and where bias—conscious or unconscious—may influence discernment.

Those engaged with this work concluded that, while there is clear evidence of pressure points and inconsistency within current practice, there was insufficient time or evidence at this stage to determine responsibly what mandatory measures would be appropriate. This report therefore represents a learning and scoping phase, intended to inform the careful development of supportive resources in subsequent phases before any recommendation on mandate is brought to the Assembly.

### **42.2 Mandate and Scope**

**42.2.1** The 2025 General Assembly instructed the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team, in collaboration with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group, to develop measures aimed at preventing discrimination in nominating committee processes and to identify appropriate remedies where discrimination is proven to have occurred.

**42.2.2** In beginning this work, it became clear that the diversity of practice across presbyteries and congregations, together with the theological and pastoral weight of the call process, required a phased approach. The report writers therefore focused this initial phase on listening, learning, and identifying recurring patterns, rather than on proposing immediate or mandatory change.

This report should be understood as the completion of Phase 1: Understanding the Current Landscape, and as preparatory work for the development and testing of future resources.

### 42.3 Method

**42.3.1** This phase involved structured conversations with those recently involved in nominations processes, including presbytery clerks, interim moderators, advisory committee members, nominating committee members, and ministers who had recently applied for or been appointed to charges.

**42.3.2** The consultations explored:

- how the process operates in practice.
- where committees experience challenge or uncertainty.
- where bias or exclusion may arise.
- what forms of support would strengthen discernment.

### 42.4 Key Findings

#### Consistency and Support

**42.4.1** Practice varies significantly across presbyteries and congregations. Training and guidance for nominating committees and interim moderators are uneven, often focused on legal process rather than on discernment, culture, or bias awareness. Presbytery advisory committees are widely perceived as under-used and unevenly equipped.

#### Secrecy, Anxiety, and Feedback

**42.4.2** The confidentiality of the process, while pastorally necessary, can limit transparency and learning. Applicants frequently receive little or no feedback, making it difficult to distinguish between decisions based on skills, theology, or communication and those shaped by unexamined preference. High levels of anxiety and fear of making an irreversible mistake contribute to risk-averse decision-making.

#### Points Where Bias May Influence Outcomes

**42.4.3** Through the conversations that led to this report, a number of stages were identified where bias is most likely to affect decisions:

- initial application review where style of information presented in a CV might influence an outcome.
- shortlisting and interviews, especially where subjective language such as “fit” or “strength” is used.
- post-interview discernment and congregational decision-making.

**42.4.4** Accent, perceived and actual cultural difference, assumptions about age, gender, disability, family life, or a congregation’s “readiness” were repeatedly identified as factors that can obscure fair assessment. In many cases a decision will have been reached with no detectable bias present. The lack of feedback, or feedback that was deemed too generic, and a wider pattern of consistent rejection for a candidate may lead them to assume that prejudice was a key factor in the decision to reject their call to a charge rather than something they could do to improve their presentation and written applications.

### 42.5 Theological Reflection: Call, Discernment, and Formation

**42.5.1** The nominations process is rooted in the Church’s understanding of call. Congregations are entrusted with the freedom to discern whom God is calling to minister among them and to shape a vision of the leadership they believe is needed. The handbook for nominating committees offers a useful guide for every stage of the process including the difficulty of navigating interviews, knowing what to look for in answers and generally does an excellent job to ensure a degree of consistency for the process. Similarly advisory committees provided by presbyteries were often reported as hugely helpful when it comes to navigating the legal aspect of the nomination process.

**42.5.2** At the same time, the consultations made clear that discernment does not take place in a neutral space. Fear, familiarity, anxiety about change, and unexamined assumptions can all limit a congregation’s ability to hear what God may be calling them to become, rather than simply affirming what they already expect.

**42.5.3** Faithful discernment therefore involves both freedom and formation: the freedom of a congregation to seek God’s call, and the willingness to be stretched, challenged, and grown through that call. Openness to a minister who is not exactly what was anticipated—culturally, stylistically, or personally—was consistently identified as a mark of healthier processes.

**42.5.4** This theological framing does not undermine congregational autonomy; rather, it invites deeper attentiveness to the factors that can distort discernment and greater humility about the limits of human judgement.

### 42.6 Existing Practical Guidelines

**42.6.1** As part of this phase of work, *Guidelines for Nominating Committees (November 2024)* were reviewed in light of the experiences shared during consultations.

However, when read alongside the accounts shared by ministers and interim moderators, several limitations became apparent. The Guidelines make limited explicit reference to issues of bias, discrimination, or equality beyond general statements of good practice. As a result, they do not consistently equip committees to recognise or challenge problematic assumptions that may arise during shortlisting, interviewing, or discernment. There were also some practical gaps that might improve reflective decision-making in nominating committees. For instance, there is reference to the fact that notes are a permissible aspect of the interview process but no practical advice about how to take notes. In particular, the Guidelines would benefit from clearer guidance on:

- structured approaches to reviewing CVs and written applications.
- taking consistent, appropriate, and professional notes during shortlisting and interviews.
- analysing and weighing evidence gathered through interviews rather than relying on subjective impressions.

- avoiding vague or coded language (such as “fit” or “strength”) that can mask unexamined assumptions or bias; if using this language then preparing committee members to understand and explain what is behind their understanding of ‘fit.’
- offering feedback that is pastorally sensitive, appropriate, and sufficiently specific to be meaningful.
- handling disagreement within a nominating committee in a transparent and accountable way.

**42.6.2** Strengthening the Guidelines in these areas would complement their existing procedural focus, improve consistency and professionalism, and help committees recognise and challenge assumptions that may otherwise go unexamined during the discernment process.

### **42.7 Implications and Next Steps**

**42.7.1** During the consultations undertaken in response to the 2025 deliverance, several ministers and interim moderators shared personal experiences—or accounts they had directly witnessed—relating to applications for vacant charges. Some of these accounts were deeply concerning and, in the judgement of the staff members, represented practice that was unacceptable and incompatible with the Church’s commitments to equity, dignity, and justice.

**42.7.2** It would not be appropriate to rehearse the detail of these experiences within this report. However, it is important to record that the consultations heard accounts of unchallenged racism and sexism, unprofessional conduct within the selection process, and decisions made based on unfounded or inappropriate assumptions. These included, but were not limited to: the withdrawal of interview invitations without explanation; the leaking of background reasoning behind decisions; the asking of questions in interviews that had no bearing on a person’s ability to undertake the duties of a minister; and decisions being unabashedly shaped by assumptions linked to protected characteristics or justified on spurious cultural or pastoral grounds.

**42.7.3** These accounts have materially informed the findings of this phase and the conclusions set out in this report. The staff members recognise that sharing such experiences carries personal and professional risk and therefore wish to place on record their sincere gratitude to those—particularly ministers and interim moderators—who spoke openly and honestly. Their willingness to do so has strengthened the integrity of this work and has underscored the importance of proceeding with care, seriousness, and resolve.

While the 2025 deliverance envisaged the possibility of mandated mitigations, it was judged that it would be premature to recommend such measures based on this phase alone. Nevertheless, the evidence gathered—including the personal accounts referenced above—makes clear that further action is necessary. Subsequent phases of this work will continue to be shaped by what has been heard and will focus on developing practical, theologically grounded resources that support fair discernment, challenge harmful practice, and provide appropriate avenues for remedy.

**42.7.4** Faith Action therefore proposes that subsequent phases focus on:

- developing guidance and tools to support reflective practice.
- strengthening training and confidence for interim moderators and advisory committees.
- normalising feedback and clearer articulation of decision-making.
- inclusion of anti-bias measures and an outline of bias awareness in the nominating committee handbook.

### **42.8 Conclusion**

**42.8.1** This report fulfils the first phase of the General Assembly’s instruction by providing a grounded account of current practice and identifying where bias may interfere with faithful discernment of call.

The Committee commends this report to the General Assembly as a foundation for further work, through which appropriate measures may be developed and evaluated before any decision is taken on wider adoption or mandate.

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## **43. CAPABILITY**

**43.1** The Capability Procedure is one which was requested by the General Assembly of 2013, in response to the Special Commission on Tenure and Leadership in the Local Church. In referencing the Capability Procedure, the Faith Nurture Forum said this in its report to the General Assembly of 2021:

*A capability procedure seeks improvement in what a minister does, and how he or she does it, with a view to being faithful in helping a congregation discern its mission in context and to be faithful in fulfilling that context.*

**43.2** Previous Reports to the General Assembly have referenced this process, and the General Assembly of 2025 agreed the Competence Framework to undergird this process, which can be found in the FAPLT Report to the 2025 General Assembly at this link; <https://bit.ly/4cQu9Ox>. FAPLT now offers a process as outlined in the proposed Act which can be found at Appendix IV.

**43.3** The Framework, and the Act, are designed to integrate with the Professional Code of Conduct, as well as the set of Terms and Responsibilities agreed at the General Assembly of 2024, and the Church’s ordination vows. Both documents are contained in the Ministers’ Handbook, available on the Church’s website. They are of a piece and together offer the vision of what the Church expects of its ministers. They are designed to be applicable to inducted ministers of word and sacrament as office-holders, and it is worth repeating that the Special Commission referenced above was committed to preserving this distinction.

**43.4** The equivalent processes within both the Church of England and the United Reformed Church see a role for appropriate Human Resources involvement in a Capability Procedure. That provision is included, and it is worth noting that the proposed Act has been developed in consultation with the Solicitor to the Church, the Principal Clerk, and the Head of HR.

**43.5** In its report to the General Assembly of 2022, the Faith Nurture Forum shared words from one of the early Church Fathers, St Irenaeus; his words resound down through the centuries, that the glory of God is a human being who is fully alive. Our hope and prayer is that our ministers will be fully alive and exercising their potential in the context where they find themselves.

**44. INCOME PROTECTION AND ILL HEALTH ACT REVIEW**

**44.1** The General Assembly of 2025 instructed FAPLT to bring a revision of the Income Protection and Ill Health Act (Act VI 2019) to the General Assembly of 2026. In the end, a new Act, the Ill Health and Income Protection Act, is being presented for approval and can be found in Appendix V.

**44.2** In 2024, a survey was sent to Ministers, Session Clerks and Presbytery Clerks who had actively engaged with the existing Act since the General Assembly of 2019. Views were also sought from national office staff who have worked with the Act.

**44.3** In 2025, a consultation was conducted with parish ministers. FAPLT are grateful to those who participated. It lasted four weeks and was completed at the end of November. Besides the opportunity to make comments and ask questions, a webinar took place during the consultation period outlining proposed changes and answering questions.

**44.4** Three proposed changes to the existing Act were part of the consultation.

**44.5** The first change FAPLT seeks is to bring forward the deferred period for Income Protection (IP) assessment from 78 weeks to 52 weeks to allow for earlier medical assessment for IP benefit. Earlier assessment for IP would mean ministers who remain absent at 12 months are making a final decision about return or demission once they know whether IP benefit will be paid.

**44.6** The second change would be a reduction in the maximum length of time for which someone could receive stipend payments during periods of absence from work due to ill health. This would reduce from a maximum of 18 months full stipend to 15 months stipend, comprising six months full stipend, six months of one-half stipend and three months of one-third stipend. This would help provide useful staging points to help focus ministers on reaching a return-to-work decision if they are able to do so. At a time when Church finances are severely constrained this not only reduces costs but, alongside access to support interventions appropriate to the circumstances (e.g. reasonable adjustments, coaching, counselling, supervision, Access to Work provisions and/ or phased return), it helps encourage a return to service where possible. Importantly, a quicker decision would also provide congregations with clarity sooner than at present, when a congregation can be left in a state of uncertainty for a long period.

**44.7** The third change would be a change to the combined absence rules, so that the trigger date in such a situation would be combined absences totalling 180 days over a rolling twenty-four month period. This aligns more equitably with the continuous absence rules, as it roughly equates to six months of total absence.

**44.8** The majority of respondents accepted the suggested changes.

**44.9** In light of feedback and further consideration, additional changes to the existing act agreed by FAPLT include:

1. Cumulative absence to be 500 days in any three-year rolling period
2. Stipend paid during ill-health absence will be six months full stipend, six months half stipend, then three months of one third stipend and this only happens once in a three-year rolling period.
3. Under exceptional circumstances, FAPLT, after appropriate consultation, may extend the date when the pastoral tie should be severed e.g. to allow time for post-operative recovery (see 7(2)(e) iii, 8(2)(e) ii).
4. Under exceptional circumstances FAPLT, after appropriate consultation, may extend stipend paid at a rate of a third of stipend (see 9(3)).

**44.10** These changes have all been incorporated into the Act (see Appendix V). Further additional changes and variations are also pointed to in the table shown in Appendix VI.

The proposed Act strikes a balance between support for ministers and clarity for congregations.

**44.11** In light of feedback received, it is right that a clearer timescale is offered to congregations. At present, if a minister has a chronic recurring health condition which leads, to extended periods of absence, a congregation may have many years of unsustained ministry provision. The new Act, whilst offering a substantial time provision for a minister, also offers a time limit for the congregation, and after 500 days' absence in any three-year rolling period, the Presbytery, after consulting with the Ill Health Committee, may decide to sever the pastoral tie at any time thereafter.

**44.12** It should be noted that a minister may bring along a companion to any Ill Health Committee meeting.

**44.13** An improvement for ministers is the shortening of the deferred date from 18 months to 12 months (ministers are being asked to make a decision about a return to work once they know whether income protection benefit will be paid or not, unlike at present when they are asked to decide six months before when the claim decision is made).

**44.14** If a minister has unrelated absences (e.g. first a mental health illness, a return to work for a year say and then a cancer diagnosis leading to further time off) it is proposed that normally whether for the same or different health conditions the same stipend rules would apply (six months full stipend, six months half-stipend, three months at one-third stipend) in the three-year rolling period. Note though, that the Act allows, in exceptional circumstances, for payment agreed by FAPLT on the advice of the ill health committee to be extended at the one-third stipend rate (see sections 9(3) and 9(4)).

**44.15** One of the challenges in facilitating both the existing and the proposed Act is holding the tension between an internal Church process and an external insurance provider. FAPLT is pleased to note that the service the Church receives from the insurer has improved, and a consistent, effective working relationship has been re-established.

**44.16** One of the continuing themes in a minority of the feedback was the power of people's personal expectation of the Church of Scotland to support them at their most vulnerable time, and genuine hurt when they experienced the limits of it. It therefore remains the case that, at least for some, a more reflective conversation about the expectations that Ministers have towards the Church, whilst financial pressures still exist, may be helpful.

**44.17** We affirm the pastoral care offered by Presbyteries to those under their jurisdiction and encourage best practice in how ministers are supported through the ill health process.

Other comments received as part of the consultation process will contribute to operational aspects of the Support Team's work going forward.

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## **45. FLEXIBLE FORMS OF MINISTRY**

**45.1** A Flexible Forms of Ministry Focus Group has been convened to explore how our present models of ministerial leadership might be enhanced to ensure that training, deployment and recognition of these might better meet the changing demands of the Church at large. There is a widening gap between available stipendiary ministers and the number of charges, and so the Church must move beyond 'managing decline' and instead focus on resourcing through flexibility. The roles of Deacons, Readers and Ministers need to be promoted, affirmed and creatively deployed. Part-time and bi-vocational ministry are not widely used within our Church, and along with emerging roles, e.g., Pioneering Ministry, Youth Ministry and Church Planting, work will consider how these roles could be trained, assessed and deployed.

**45.2** The group in conversation with the wider Church, including with other standing committees where appropriate, will be aiming to develop a creative, theologically grounded and practical framework to ensure that every charge is served by the kind of ministry it requires.

There will be an exploration of how to move from a model of 'one minister per church' to the right ministerial leadership for every community, where the whole people of God are empowered, and no ministry role is considered 'secondary.'

**45.3** An interim report will be brought to the Assembly of 2027, with the intention that firm proposals will follow at the Assembly of 2028.

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## **46. AMENDMENT TO THE CALL, ELECTION AND APPOINTMENT OF MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT ACT (ACT XI 2025)**

**46.1** In the light of Presbytery's experiences in using this Act, it has become clear that there is a need for clarity about the place of the Presbytery's Vacancy Procedure Committee and that Committee's involvement in any processes relating to extending the time allowed for permission to call, or applying the other options in s.28 of the Act when there has been failure to nominate. Similarly sections 3 and 4 are silent on this point, and about the possibility of the VPC's decision on such matters being referred to Presbytery.

**46.2** It makes sense for this to be explicit, and for the VPC to have agency on this question of extending permission to call and exercising the other powers as outlined in the existing s.28 of the Act, and for the VPC in coming to any such decision to have consulted with the Presbytery Committee which has responsibility for implementation and review of the Approved Mission Plan.

**46.3** Accordingly, the FAPLT presents an amending Act to Call, Election and Appointment of Ministers of Word and Sacrament Act (Act XI 2025) in terms of Appendix VII.

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## **47. SABBATICALS**

**47.1** The Old Testament instructed Israel to adopt a pattern of work and rest (Exodus 8:9-11, Exodus 23:10-11). Jesus too built rest into the rhythms of life (Luke 5:15-16). Sabbaticals are not holidays nor are they to prevent rightly attending to health concerns; they are, however, an intentional period of time away, it is suggested between four to six weeks; an opportunity to withdraw from day-to-day service. Thanks are due to the Presbytery of Lothian and Borders for the willing assistance offered by them, and drawing heavily on the scheme operating within that Presbytery, the following template (see Appendix VIII) is offered to urge Presbyteries to adopt a sabbatical scheme.

**47.2** The template offered allows the possibility of a sabbatical after five years of service in a charge and a further sabbatical no earlier than five years later.

**47.3** The agreement of all parties, including Kirk Sessions and Presbytery, is required. Pulpit supply costs are met by the Presbytery. Intentional planning, preparation and implementation of the sabbatical includes a Ministerial Development Conversation (MDC) or the appointment of a trusted colleague to provide support.

**47.4** The adoption of sabbatical schemes by Presbyteries would further broaden the range of support provisions available to those ministers serving in parishes.

**48. HOUSING AND LOAN FUND FOR RETIRED MINISTERS AND WIDOWS AND WIDOWERS OF MINISTERS**

**48.1** The Faith Action Programme Leadership Team is named in the constitution of the above Fund, and is invited to nominate members to serve as Trustees of the Fund. Dr Eilidh Renwick’s term of office has come to an end, and FAPLT places on record its appreciation of her contribution to work of the Fund. FAPLT now brings the name of Miss Elizabeth Fox to the General Assembly to serve as a Trustee.

**49. REMUNERATION AND REIMBURSEMENT OF PARISH MINISTERS**

**49.1** It has also become clear that the Regulations for Remuneration and Reimbursement of Parish Ministers (Regulations I 2015) need updating. With regards to claiming expenses, it is silent on a time limit within which expenses can be claimed. It is proposed that a three-month window for claiming expenses should normally apply. An amendment to s.2 to this effect can be found at Appendix IX.

**49.2** Similarly, while some provision is made in the Regulations for internet use and software, it is recognised that technology has impacted on the practice of ministry, and it is proposed that there be provision for a congregation to reimburse within reason the cost of subscriptions to programmes, apps and other internet services wholly necessarily and exclusively required for ministerial duties. The amendment would be to add wording to this effect to s.2.7 of the Regulations, again outlined in Appendix IX.

**49.3** There are two other changes; one is to delete the reference to the provision of Log Books at s.2, and to amend the references to the Manse Regulations, and the Manse Adjudication Committee, to reflect up-to-date legislation and practice.

**49.4** Finally, the reference to Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs in part 2 of the Schedule should of course be amended to His Majesty’s Revenue and Customs.

**50. PRESBYTERY MISSION PLANNING**

**50.1** There is still work to be done in finalising some of the challenging pieces of adjustment – to do this in the light of the work which the ATs are doing in exploring alternative models of funding ministry, as referenced in the Report of the Assembly Trustees to this General Assembly. The decision of General Assembly 2025 to withdraw Vacancy Allowance for congregations which have no permission to call has focused the minds of Presbyteries and congregations.

**50.2** Agreement was reached with Stewardship and Finance for conversations to take place with Presbyteries on transitional arrangements which would allow Presbyteries to make a case for continuing to pay either the costs of a locum, or pulpit supply, in circumstances where permission to call was being held up because of manse issues, or where imminent permission to call would be granted pending agreement of bases of adjustment which allowed permission to call but which had not yet been fully agreed.

**50.3** The Programme Group would also note the provisions reported to previous General Assemblies for Presbyteries to approach the Programme Group for exceptional permission to call, even though theoretically this would mean that a Presbytery could potentially exceed the ministry number allocated to it by the General Assembly.

**50.4** That possibility is open to all Presbyteries where adjustment has stalled, particularly when implementation is no longer possible either because a congregation has exercised its right to vote against union under a sitting minister, or because a sitting minister has opted not to be part of discussions about adjustment involving their charge.

**50.5** FAPLT notes that no Presbytery is currently at risk of exceeding its ministry allocation. In line with the Presbytery Mission Plan Act (Act 8 2021, as amended), the team presents the table of ministry allocations for the coming year. These figures may introduce changes that impact the current presbytery mission planning model. This work builds on lessons from the past five years and involves collaboration with the General Trustees (GTs). The goal is to ensure the Church has well-equipped spaces in the right places to support mission work and community building.

**50.6** The Presbytery Mission Plan Act requires FAPLT to bring annually to the General Assembly for approval, the proposed total number of ministry posts to be funded by the Parish Staffing Fund, allocated among the Presbyteries, in each of the next five years, so that there is a five-year rolling plan for such allocations. Accordingly, the proposed total number of ministry posts to be funded can be found at Appendix XI. These figures are offered with the proviso that they may be open to change as the Assembly Trustees develop their proposals on new funding models of ministry.

**51. ASSISTANT MINISTERS’ SCHEME**

**51.1** The Assistant Ministers’ Scheme came to an end on 31 December 2025. The General Assembly of 2025 encouraged Presbyteries to identify creative opportunities for local deployment, accompanied by an instruction to FAPLT to make short-term finance available to Presbyteries to fund such posts to 31 December 2026. Positive conversations took place with two Presbyteries, with only one appointment being made. Most of those who were on the Assistant Ministers’ Scheme have found charges, and the number of vacancies on the Church of Scotland website is steady around fifty, with other vacancies coming online as Presbyteries continue to implement Presbytery Mission Plans.

## 52. FAMILY OF MINISTRIES

**52.1** The gifts Christ gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4.11, NRSV)

**52.2** Our vision for our family of ministries describes a Church that seeks to equip all its people to live out God's mission in a changing world, embracing a collaborative approach to ministry.

### 52.3 Foundational Principles

- **Whole People of God:** All ministries take place within the wider ministry of the entire people of God.
- **Equipping for Mission:** The primary purpose of the Family of Ministries is to enable people across the church to live out the mission of God effectively, as faithful disciples, and also discipling others.
- **Diversity and Flexibility:** Ministry expressions will vary, including established parish roles, part-time and flexible positions, local worship leaders, church plants, new worshipping communities, and various chaplaincies.
- **Affirming** the contribution that these expressions of ministry make in different communities and contexts.

### 52.4 Our Vision for those serving in our Family of Ministries

- **Confident Communicators:** Clear and confident preachers and leaders of worship, exploring new expressions and reshaping traditional liturgies as appropriate.
- **Mission-Driven and Spiritually Anchored:** Passionate about the Gospel and mission, with a robust spiritual life that strengthens the practical application of their caring and loving of others.
- **Empowering Leaders:** Encouraging congregations and communities keen to grow spiritually and missionally, raising up leaders from within, and encouraging of leadership around them.
- **Welcoming and Evangelistic:** Finding joy in creating open and welcoming spaces and leading people to faith.
- **Collaborative Partners:** Working within supportive networks that are welcoming, enabling, nourishing, and offering accountability, as a community of disciples
- **Reflective Practitioners:** committed to reflecting on how they practice their ministries, and to ongoing development in how they exercise their roles.
- **Pastoral and Compassionate:** Pastorally sensitive and competent, meeting people where they are and reaching out in times of grief, challenge, celebration, and remembrance.

### 52.5 A Church That Works Together

We envision a Church where different ministries:

- **Value and Affirm Each Other:** Recognising the distinctiveness of each role (Ministers of Word and Sacrament, Deacons, Readers, Worship Leaders, etc.) while appreciating their similarities.
- **Model Unity in Diversity:** Working together in their different contexts, witnessing to and modelling something greater than the sum of their parts.
- **Are Intentionally Utilised:** Presbyteries recognise, and plan for, and make the best use of this diversity of ministries, intentionally seeing their full potential and varied contexts.
- **Demonstrate transformation:** Showing the possibility of transformation of community, both within and out with the church.

**52.6** For these reasons, wherever possible, we will integrate elements of training across our family of ministries, enabling partnership and understanding from an early stage.

### 52.7 Strong Team Ministries at work in many contexts

Team Ministries will model early Church patterns of working together, rooted in Jesus' model of mission and ministry in a way which is contextually appropriate.

**52.8** Team Ministries will enable individual team members to exercise their distinctive gifts and skills and play to their strengths, and will also bring together different skills, and the resources of their collective minds to bear on problems and situations. They will operate by valuing diverse spiritual gifts, encouraging shared decision-making, and fostering mutual respect to address complex challenges.

**52.9** Team Members will have a common vision for their shared ministry, shaped at the beginning of the team, and revisited on a regular basis, often expressed in a mission statement or regularly reviewed aims and objectives.

**52.10** FAPLT is working to offer Team Coaching to a group of Team Ministries and will report back to General Assembly 2028 on this pilot project. It will build on FAPLT's previous experience with coaching and will help Presbyteries as they shape Team Ministries within future Mission Planning. FAPLT recognise there is a need for more support of Team Ministries in their diversity across the country, with over thirty Team Ministries envisaged in Presbytery Mission Plans. The Vision for the Family of Ministries references many of the benefits of collaborative working, and this applies particularly to Team Ministries as defined in the Presbytery Mission Plan Act.

**52.11** This is a challenging but exciting time, with the opportunity to explore how these roles complement each other. How can the local Church, the Presbytery, and the national work together to tease through how these ministries best relate to each other in delivering mission in context in today's church?

**53. ORDAINED LOCAL MINISTRY**

**53.1** FAPLT is aware of varying approaches to the use of Ordained Local Ministries across the Church and commends the diversity of how such ministry is exercised. FAPLT would also encourage Presbyteries to be mindful of their responsibility in reviewing OLM appointments as required in the Act, and to be creative in deploying OLMs, particularly as their engagement as locums reduces in line with implementation of Presbytery Mission Planning.

**53.2** FAPLT apologises to the General Assembly for failing in recent years to report to the General Assembly the amount of the Resource Grant for Ordained Local Ministers (OLMs), as required in the Ordained Local Ministry Act (Act IX, 2011). FAPLT states the Resource Grant as £275 for the period between now and the General Assembly of 2027. A revision of the Ordained Local Ministry Handbook has also taken place, and this has been uploaded to the Church website.

**53.3** FAPLT will explore the appropriateness of providing a resource grant to Ordained Local Ministers who are working as locums in a charge. In a time of budgetary constraint, the wisdom of remunerating an Ordained Local Minister and also offering a resource grant has to be considered.

**53.4** FAPLT would wish to explore with Presbyteries the scope for their contribution towards Resource Grants for Ordained Local Ministries, as was envisaged in the OLM Act.

**54. MINISTRIES SUPPORT**

**54.1** While primary pastoral support for those serving in the family of ministries of the Church lies within each Presbytery structure, FAPLT provides further dedicated and skilled support. The Support Team can offer confidential conversations and facilitate support interventions. Access to support for ill health management, counselling, hardship and support grants, retreats, and a variety of advice relevant to ministry are all part of the everyday work of the Team.

**54.2** Each year, a 24-hour Pre-Retirement Residential Conference takes place, allowing those who are two to three years out from retirement to hear from recently retired ministers and to receive appropriate advice on how to approach retirement. This is a universally well-received event and is open to ministers and spouses.

**54.3** In the autumn of 2025, there was a positively received online webinar aimed primarily at those in ministry around 10 to 15 years away from state retirement age, which encouraged people to think ahead 7

**54.4** The Support Team also oversees ill health matters and absence management, receiving and recording Fit Notes and liaising with Presbyteries accordingly. Requests for Compassionate Leave are also made through the Support Team, and claims for pulpit supply or locum costs in cases of illness are handled by the Team. The Team can be contacted via [pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk).

**55. MINISTERIAL WELLBEING STUDY**

**55.1** Session Clerks were emailed last summer to encourage them to arrange for elders to meet and discuss the Ministerial Wellbeing Survey. FAPLT trusts that these discussions will have led to a deepening understanding of ministerial wellbeing and served as an opportunity to heighten the support and encouragement Kirk Sessions and congregations offer to ministers.

**55.2** The results from the first survey offer a baseline, and the intention is to conduct surveys every two years. This longitudinal study will provide valuable information to 'take the temperature' on ministerial wellbeing. The last survey was conducted in 2024, and preparation for the second survey was issued in March 2026. Variations between surveys will offer a measure to aid the crafting of ongoing and future responses offered by FAPLT.

**55.3** FAPLT reminds stipendiary ministers of their Pulpit Supply provisions for rest and recuperation throughout the year. Congregations are encouraged to exercise their duty-of-care role in supporting Office Holders to take time off, for physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing.

**56. INTEGRATED SUPPORT ALLOWANCE**

**56.1** The Support Allowance of £250 per calendar year is available to full-time stipendiary ministers, Probationers, those who subsequently went on to become Assistant Ministers, those in Familiarisation, and Ordained Deacons in Deacon-specific MDS posts.

**56.2** The Support Allowance can be used for personal or group pastoral supervision, for coaching (either from existing Ascend provision or external providers), or for spiritual accompaniment. This is all subject to agreed invoicing arrangements and appropriate qualifications/credentials for each support provider being forthcoming. Individuals have the freedom to choose whatever support provision they consider will be most beneficial for them.

**57. FUNDED RETREATS**

**57.1** The ongoing possibility of funded retreats, up to £250 per year, through the Todd Endowment Trust continues to be a welcome addition to the support provisions. Serving Ministers and Deacons, each with at least two years' service, may benefit from this opportunity.

## **58. ADDITIONAL SUPPORT**

**58.1** Access to counselling remains in addition to the Support Allowance/Retreat Allowance, as does the ability to request hardship and support grants.

**58.2** Some support provisions are also able to be accessed by Ordained Local Ministers (OLMs), Readers and Mission Development Staff (MDS), but due to the nature of policy decisions, employment terms, and/or Trust Fund terms, we recommend that people speak first with a Line Manager or contact [pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk). We do not seek to minimise the contribution of any who serve in the variety of ministries of the Church, but we also do not want to raise expectations which are unable to be met.

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## **59. REVIEW**

**59.1** All Support provisions and funding arrangements remain under ongoing review as would be expected for good governance and sustainability. FAPLT is committed to offering the best support it can to those serving in ministry into the future. Over the coming year, consideration will be given to the possibility of increasing the Integrated Support Allowance as work is done on the 2027 budget.

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## **60. MINISTRY FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING**

**60.1** Finding suitable ministers for our congregations for the Deaf and hard of hearing has proved near impossible for a number of years now. Each of the congregations have now moved to become Local Mission Churches with host congregations; this has provided a much-needed governance and stability. More work is now needed to address the recruitment challenge and to look at different ways to resource these congregations. This work was started in 2025 and will continue, working in collaboration with key stakeholders, Presbyteries and the Principal Clerk's Office. We thank those that have offered, and who continue to offer locum cover, for these congregations.

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## **61. MANSE ADJUDICATION**

**61.1** Manse Adjudication is the process by which it is possible for a Minister to apply to live in their own home rather than occupy the manse. In Act 5, 2024, The General Trustees Act, provision was made in Schedule 4 for Manse Adjudication Processes. The Manse Adjudication Committee was to be serviced from within the General Trustees. The reality is that on occasion there will be requests for Manse Adjudication relating to Manses where titles are held locally and not with the General Trustees. The General Trustees are of the view, and FAPLT supports this, that Manse Adjudication is better served by a standalone regulation, and that the administration of the process should sit with the Solicitor of the Church. A deliverance to this effect can be found in the Report of the General Trustees to this General Assembly.

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## **62. PARTNERSHIP WITH PLACE FOR HOPE – LIVING PEACE**

**62.1** The partnership with Place for Hope continues. Place for Hope offers mediation, facilitation, and coaching support to Church of Scotland leaders and congregations in times of change and conflict; training to understand conflict, live well with difference, and equip people and congregations to realise their potential as peacemakers.

**62.2** The theme of Living Peace underpins this partnership. Living Peace is a responsibility shared by all serving in ministry, and every member, congregation, Kirk Session and Presbytery of the Church of Scotland. It is not only the call of Christ to live peacefully, but a mark of the Church, to be a people of peace, grace, forgiveness and reconciliation. More details of the services offered by Place for Hope can be found at their website, accessible here: <https://bit.ly/4bPTTaA>.

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## **63. FINANCIAL INFORMATION AND ALLOWANCES**

**63.1** Information re stipend levels and other allowances for 2026 can be found at Appendix XII.

## **Resource & Presence Programme Group Report**

### **64. LIFE AND WORK**

**64.1** The final issue of *Life and Work* was published in August 2025, and we thank the editorial team for their careful curation. News regarding Ministries and Eldership has been integrated into the main Church of Scotland website. The *Life and Work* website closed in the spring of 2026. Our thanks go to those who handled the complex administrative tasks required to wind down subscriptions and operations.

**64.2** The development of a successor publication has been paused due to the implementation of the Assembly Trustees' Communications Strategy, the establishment of the Communications Forum, and a leadership transition between Heads of Communications. We anticipate resuming this project in the spring of 2026 and intend to provide a progress report at the General Assembly.

## 65. REMIT

**65.1** In response to a demanding period for our church, Resource and Presence is refining its approach to focus on deeper integration and partnership with other departments and governance bodies. To support this commitment to collective working, we are proposing an update to our Remit, which can be found in the report of the Assembly Trustees.

*In the name of the Committee*

TOMMY MACNEIL, *Convener*

KAY CATHCART, *Head of Ministries and Mission*

ALISTAIR CUMMING, *Vice-Convener, Convener, Resource and Presence Programme Group*

SALLY SHEAIL, *Vice-Convener, Acting Convener, Public Life and Social Justice Programme Group*

DAVID CLARKSON, *Vice-Convener, Convener, People and Training Programme Group*

SCOTT MCROBERTS, *Vice-Convener, Convener, Mission Support Programme Group*

JONATHAN FLEMING *Vice-Convener, Convener, Presbytery and Partnership Support Programme Group*

### **Addendum – Alistair Cumming, Emma Jackson and Sally Sheail**

#### **Alistair Cumming**

Alistair Cumming steps down from his post of Convener of Resource and Presence after three years of dedicated service. As the first convener of the new Programme Group, he brought years of professional experience and strategic thinking, along with dedication, laughter, and a strong commitment to helping the work of FAPLT flourish. His wisdom and prayerful consideration have steered the committee through a number of challenges and changes, and we are grateful for the manner in which he led the team with care and integrity. Alistair was also exemplary in his role as Depute Convener of FAPLT. As he moves on to pastures and opportunities new, we pray God's blessings on him and wish him all the best.

#### **Emma Jackson**

In the autumn Emma Jackson had to relinquish the role of Convener after a period of consideration of the competing demands on her time due to her high-level role as Director for Social Justice with Citizens Advice Scotland. Emma came into the role as the first convener of the new Public Life and Social Justice programme group with a commitment to professionalism, integrity and most importantly a heart for Jesus. She has inspired many with her words of wisdom and passion at the two General Assemblies that she presented, as well as being a regular contributor to BBC Radio Scotland's thought for the day. We know Emma's service to the Church of Scotland locally, and in ways not directly connected to the institutional church but to furthering God's kingdom will continue, and we thank her and wish her and her family every blessing in the years ahead.

#### **Sally Sheail**

Since November the Public Life and Social Justice Programme Group has been guided and supported with the steady hand of Sally Sheail as Acting Convener. Stepping into a role mid-year is always a big undertaking and we are incredibly grateful that Sally heard the call of the Church and for the way she has helped programme group and staff team in particular over the past 6 months. Sally has made her mark as a FAPLT Vice Convener and in FAPLT meetings, and we know that her work with the Church continues, as a Reader in the Presbytery of Fife, and through her continued leadership of Integrity, the Church of Scotland's task group on gender-based violence.

TOMMY MACNEIL, *Convener*

KAY CATHCART, *Head of Ministries and Mission*

## Appendix I

### SELECTION AND TRAINING FOR NATIONAL MINISTRY OF WORD AND SACRAMENT ACT

Edinburgh, [ ] May 2026, Session [ ]

The General Assembly hereby enact and ordain as follows:

#### Definitions

1. In this Act, the following definitions shall apply:

- (a) "an applicant" is a person who is seeking to be recognised as a prospective candidate for ministry.
- (b) "the Assessment Conference" is the gathering of the body of trained assessors to which FAPLT delegates authority to assess the calling and fitness of applicants for ministry (in terms of section 7), and to accept as prospective candidates those deemed appropriate.
- (c) "a candidate" is a person who has been nominated by their Presbytery for training for ministry, following acceptance by FAPLT as a prospective candidate after an Assessment Conference. The term "candidate" may not be used of, or by, any person who has yet to be, or who has failed to be, nominated by a Presbytery.
- (d) "candidature" means the whole time during which a person is a candidate or graduate candidate.
- (e) "the Director of Studies" is the person within the People & Training Team of FAPLT with responsibility for overseeing and developing education and formation for ministries within the Church of Scotland, including ministry in terms of this Act.
- (f) "FAPLT" is the General Assembly's Faith Action Programme Leadership Team or its successor.
- (g) "the Formation Panel" is the body described in section 2(5) which oversees and encourages the personal, spiritual and ministerial formation and growth of a candidate during their candidature and prior to ordination.
- (h) "the Formation Partner" is the mentor of a candidate who is appointed by FAPLT in conjunction with the Presbytery to work alongside them to develop and support their personal, spiritual and ministerial formation and growth during their candidature and prior to ordination.
- (i) "a graduate candidate" is a candidate who has completed their training and received an exit certificate in terms of section 22, but who has not yet been ordained. The term is to be applied without limit of time to anyone in this situation.
- (j) "IME" means Initial Ministerial Education.
- (k) "the Lead Academic Partner" is the principal provider of academic study within higher education for candidates, appointed by the General Assembly, and the partner of FAPLT in the formation of candidates for ministry.
- (l) "ministry" in this Act refers to national ministry of word and sacrament, being ordained, stipendiary ministry in the Church of Scotland; for the avoidance of doubt not including other ministries such as Ordained Local Ministry, the Diaconate and the Readership whose selection and training is regulated by other Acts of the General Assembly.
- (m) "People & Training Team" means the People & Training Team of FAPLT, or its successor in that role.
- (n) "placement supervisor" is the person who is from time to time supervising a candidate's placement(s).
- (o) "prospective candidate" is a person who has been accepted by FAPLT following an Assessment Conference and who is awaiting the outcome of their application to Presbytery for nomination.

#### Overview of the Purpose and Progress of Ministry Training

2.
  - (1) The purpose of ministry training shall be the personal, spiritual and ministerial formation of a candidate for their apostolic, missional and pastoral vocation in ministry; through transformational learning and integrated, reflective practice, to equip them and the whole people of God to embody the Gospel of Jesus Christ and enable participation in the mission of God in the world; alongside the attainment of the level of skills and competencies necessary to fulfil their anticipated ministry.
  - (2) A candidate for ministry shall undertake training comprising four phases of formation, being: (i) an 'Initial Phase' prior to acceptance as a candidate during a period of discernment or under the 'apprenticeship route'; (ii) a 'Core Phase' of IME following such acceptance, consisting in the normal course of degree level study with the Lead Academic Partner integrated with accredited ministry placements; (iii) a 'First Five Years Phase' of compulsory additional training following ordination; and (iv) a 'Continuing Ministerial Development Phase' for the remaining duration of their ministerial life. This Act sets out requirements in the first two of these phases.
  - (3) All ministry training shall be guided by the provision within the Formation Framework of the eight values of ministerial training, three layers of formation and eight dimensions of formation, as set out in Schedule 1 to this Act.
  - (4) The training and formation programme for ministry will be developed and implemented by a partnership of FAPLT, represented by the Director of Studies and the People and Training Team of FAPLT, and the Lead Academic Partner, supplemented by provision from other academic providers, ecumenical partners and external individuals and training bodies.
  - (5) A Formation Panel shall be responsible for overseeing, on behalf of the Church, the implementation of the training and formation programme for ministry as defined in section 1(k) and the Diaconate. A Formation

Panel will oversee the shared partnership work between FAPLT and the Lead Academic Partner, together with other key stakeholders. The Formation Panel shall have six core members at each meeting; being the Director of Studies who will chair the Panel; a member of the People & Training Team of FAPLT; the Principal or Vice Principal or Clerk of the College within the Lead Academic Partner and one further representative from the Lead Academic Partner; a representative on behalf of the Presbyteries of the Church; and an elder or member of a Church of Scotland congregation with appropriate experience in academia or in vocational training; supplemented when appropriate by the candidate, their Formation Partner, and/or their placement supervisor.

- (6) The progress in formation and in the skills and competencies of ministry of a candidate within the Core Phase, their course of study and the nature and location of placements, shall also be overseen and reviewed by the Formation Panel. The Formation Panel will work with the Director of Studies and the Lead Academic Partner to review academic course provision, and with FAPLT through the People & Training Team and Presbyteries to oversee the placement provision for candidates. The Formation Panel shall decide whether a candidate trains under the standard three-year course of IME training, or qualifies within an exception so as to follow a modified two-year course of training, or a bespoke route, as set out in section 15. The Formation Panel shall oversee the personalised training plan for each Candidate that has followed an Initial Formation Meeting, and shall thereafter do so on an annual basis. The final decision on the assessment, progress and direction of a candidate, and recommendation of the nature and location of placements, shall be taken by the Formation Panel, informed by the decision(s) and any recommendations of the appraisal process set out in section 21, the input of FAPLT via the People & Training Team and also the Lead Academic Partner.
- (7) If satisfied in terms of this Act, the Formation Panel will grant an exit certificate in terms of section 22, to allow a candidate to be ordained as a minister of word and sacrament. In order for the Formation Panel to recommend the ordination of a candidate by the Church following completion of the Core Phase of IME, the Formation Panel shall be satisfied that the candidate now demonstrates readiness for ministry as defined in section 1(k) in displaying the formational 'attributes' required, as set out in Schedule 2 to this Act; the relevant skills and competencies for the beginning of ordained ministry which will, from time to time, be agreed by the Director of Studies, the People & Training Team of FAPLT and the Formation Panel.; and has completed successfully their academic training

**INITIAL PHASE**

**Discernment Conversation and Initial Screening process**

3.
  - (1) A person wishing to apply for ministry in the Church of Scotland shall have a discernment conversation with a staff member of FAPLT's People and Training Team to determine how they will proceed, and should they subsequently make application, this will be followed by an Initial Screening process arranged by FAPLT, including psychometric testing and an application to Disclosure Scotland for a PVG certificate.
  - (2) A person deemed ready to proceed after the Initial Screening process shall be entitled to apply in terms of section 5 to be recognised as a candidate for ministry. Any person who makes such an application shall be known as an applicant.
  - (3) A person who is not deemed ready to proceed after the Initial Screening process must normally wait a period of between one and three years, as notified to that person by FAPLT in writing, before they may again participate in an Initial Screening process
  - (4) The outcome of each Initial Screening process shall be final and not subject to any form of review or appeal (save as specified in section 10 below).
  - (5) The provisions of this section are subject to those of section 4.

**Age, Time and Membership Limits for applicants**

4.
  - (1) FAPLT will not consider an application from any person who has not attained the age of eighteen years by the date on which FAPLT receives the application.
  - (2) FAPLT will not normally consider an application from any person who has not been either a member or adherent of the Church of Scotland, or who has not been actively involved in a congregation of the Church of Scotland, or who has not been a member of one of the following denominations, in each case for a period of at least 3 years immediately prior to receipt of the application:
    - i. the United Reformed Church;
    - ii. the Presbyterian Church in Ireland;
    - iii. the Presbyterian Church in Wales;
    - iv. A denomination in the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) or Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe (Leuenberg Fellowship) which is reformed in theology and Presbyterian in governance;
    - v. the Church of England (in terms of the Columba Declaration);
    - vi. the Scottish Episcopal Church (in terms of the St Andrew Declaration); and
    - vii. any other denomination whose orders are in accordance with the standards of the Church of Scotland to administer the sacraments, which application would only be accepted after such accordance has been confirmed by the Ecumenical Relations Committee.

- (3) FAPLT will not consider an application from any person who in all normal circumstances could not complete a route of training set out in section 15 before 31 December of the year in which that person will turn 60 years of age. The acceptance of a candidate who has delayed commencement of the prescribed route of training will be discontinued if in all normal circumstances that route of training could not be completed before 31 December of the year in which that candidate will turn 60 years of age.
- (4) The acceptance of a candidate may be reviewed by FAPLT if the prescribed route of training has not been commenced within three years of acceptance.

### **Submission of Application**

5.
  - (1) FAPLT will, on request, issue the relevant application forms to each applicant who has fulfilled the requirements as set out in sub-section 3(2) and section 4, 4, which shall be completed by the applicant and sent to FAPLT by a specified date.
  - (2) FAPLT will inform Presbyteries of applicants within their bounds, the appropriate Presbytery being determined according to section 12 of this Act.

### **Period of Discernment and Local Review**

6.
  - (1) Following FAPLT's receipt and acceptance of their application, the applicant will enter a period of discernment with a mentor. During the period of discernment, the applicant and the mentor shall explore together the nature of the applicant's call and gifting. The period of discernment shall normally last for six months. The mentor will be chosen by FAPLT and shall undertake such training as may from time to time be specified by FAPLT. The mentor shall be responsible for supervising the period of discernment according to the guidelines and standards established by FAPLT, and shall produce assessment materials as required using such Indicators for Assessment as may be from time to time in use by FAPLT. During the period of discernment the applicant shall also meet regularly with a representative (or representatives) of their Presbytery.
  - (2) At the end of the period of discernment the applicant shall proceed to a Local Review. The Local Review will be undertaken by a group consisting of a national assessor appointed by FAPLT, the mentor and an assessor appointed by their Presbytery. In the event that the mentor or presbytery assessor cannot attend the Local Review, it may still proceed if the applicant consents and the Local Review paperwork is complete. No individual shall serve as the national assessor appointed by FAPLT for the same applicant more than once.
  - (3) Before the end of a period of discernment, the Presbytery or FAPLT may require that an early Local Review takes place. Such a Review shall be undertaken by the same group as specified in section 6(2) but may only reach a decision in terms of section 6(4) (ii), (iii) or (iv). Sections 6(5) and 6(6) shall still apply.
  - (4) The Formation Panel will determine prior to the Local Review, and inform the applicant, as to the probable route of training and the likely nature of the first placement were the applicant to be successful at both the Local Review and the Assessment Conference.
  - (5) Subject to the provisions of section 6(3), arising out of the Local Review, one of the following written decisions shall be reported to FAPLT:
    - i. That the applicant is ready to proceed to national assessment in terms of section 7;
    - ii. That the applicant should undergo a further period of discernment of such length as may be determined by the Local Review before a decision to proceed to national assessment can be made;
    - iii. That the applicant is not yet ready to proceed to national assessment in terms of section 7;
    - iv. That the applicant is not suitable to proceed to national assessment in terms of section 7.
  - (6) Applicants in respect of whom a decision is made in terms of section 6(4)(iii) shall be subject to the terms of section 8 below.
  - (7) Applicants in respect of whom a decision is made in terms of section 6(4)(iv) may have a right of appeal in terms of section 9 below, subject to the terms of section 10.
  - (8) All materials received by FAPLT from the Local Review in terms of sub-section 6(4) shall be available to those making consideration in terms of sub-section 7(1).

### **National Assessment**

7.
  - (1) National Assessment shall consist of an Assessment Conference at which there shall be careful consideration and assessment of the applicant's apostolic and missional vocation and calling to ministry, integration of faith and life, existing personal and spiritual formation, character and beliefs, skills and gifts from prior employment or volunteering, motivation and general suitability for ministry in the Church of Scotland. The assessors shall utilise 'Indicators of Assessment' specified from time to time by FAPLT in reaching their decision. The Assessment Conference shall normally be an in-person residential event but FAPLT reserves the right to hold an Assessment Conference online should circumstances make this necessary or desirable.

- (2) At the Assessment Conference a decision shall be made as to whether or not the applicant shall be accepted as a prospective candidate for ministry, based on the 'Indicators of Assessment' specified from time to time by FAPLT, and the applicant and the Presbytery shall be informed of the decision.
- (3) All applicants who attend an Assessment Conference shall receive, as part of their training and development, feedback in the form of a report.
- (4) An applicant who is accepted as a prospective candidate shall, following Assessment Conference, undergo a medical check in the form prescribed by FAPLT and may only proceed as a prospective candidate if this check is, in the opinion of FAPLT, satisfactory. There shall be no appeal against FAPLT's decision on this matter.
- (5) An applicant who has not been accepted as a prospective candidate following an Assessment Conference shall be subject to the terms of section 8 below.

**Opportunities to become a prospective candidate**

- 8.**
- (1) A person applying under this Act shall have up to three opportunities in total to progress through Initial Screening, Local Review and Assessment Conference to become a prospective candidate, unless they receive a decision in terms of section 6(5)(iv) at Local Review. In that case, no further applications can be received for national ministry of word and sacrament, Ordained Local Ministry, the Diaconate or the Readership, if an appeal under section 8(5) has been unsuccessful.
  - (2) For the purposes of this section, each time the person is not accepted, whether at Initial Screening, Local Review in terms of section 6(5)(iii) or at Assessment Conference, shall count as one "non-accept" decision. Once a total of three "non-accept" decisions have occurred, no further entry into the assessment process, at any stage, will be possible for that person. A person will however have a right of appeal as set out in section 9 below, subject to the terms of section 10.
  - (3) Following a 'non-accept' decision at any stage, a person must wait for the period specified by FAPLT, normally being a minimum period of one year, before being assessed again.
  - (4) After any "non-accept" decision at any stage, a person who chooses to re-enter the assessment process shall start again at section 3 i.e. at the stage of discernment conversation and Initial Screening.
  - (5) On receipt of a decision at Local Review in terms of section 6(5)(iv) a person will have the right to appeal as set out in section 9, subject to section 10, on one occasion only. A refusal of that appeal will be final.

**Appeals**

- 9.**
- (1) Subject always to the provisions of section 10 below, an applicant who has not been accepted at Initial Screening, Local Review or Assessment Conference, shall have the right to appeal to the Ministries Appeal Panel.
  - (2) Notification of the intention to appeal shall be made to FAPLT and to the Principal Clerk within 14 days of the date upon which the decision of the Initial Screening, Local Review or Assessment Conference, as the case may be, was intimated to the applicant. At the Appeal Hearing the applicant shall be entitled to appear either online or in person, as determined by FAPLT, and to address the Panel. The applicant may be accompanied by a companion, who shall not be entitled to speak to the Panel, but who may confer with the applicant. A representative of FAPLT shall also appear to present the case for the decision under appeal. All parties will be in possession of the reports from the Initial Screening, Local Review and/or the Assessment Conference, as the case may be.
  - (3) An appeal to the Ministries Appeal Panel can only be brought on one or more of the following grounds: (a) that in the course of the Local Review or Assessment Conference there were irregularities in the process contrary to natural justice which may have had a material effect on the outcome or (b) that the final decision of the Initial Screening, Local Review or Assessment Conference was unduly influenced by incorrect or immaterial facts, or failed to take sufficient account of relevant material facts.
  - (4) The outcome of an appeal shall be either to uphold the decision of the Initial Screening, Local Review or the Assessment Conference, as the case may be, or to annul that decision, in which case sub-sections (5) and (6) below will apply.
  - (5) If the outcome of the appeal is to annul a decision, whether at Initial Screening, Local Review or Assessment Conference, the person shall be entitled to enter the discernment and assessment process again on one occasion only, beginning immediately before the stage in the process where they were not accepted. Such re-entry into the process must commence within one year of the appeal decision and shall be permitted notwithstanding the terms of section 4(3) of this Act. Any further "non-accept" decision on that next occasion at any stage shall terminate that person's eligibility to enter the assessment process for national ministry of word and sacrament, Ordained Local Ministry, the Diaconate or the Readership, and there shall be no further right of appeal.
  - (6) If the outcome of the appeal is to uphold the decision of the Initial Screening, Local Review or the Assessment Conference, as the case may be, that shall terminate the assessment process for that person and shall terminate that person's eligibility to enter the assessment process for national ministry of word and sacrament, Ordained Local Ministry, the Diaconate or the Readership, and there shall be no further right of appeal.

### **Appeal at third “non-accept” decision, after Local Review or if age-barred**

- 10.** A person shall only have the right to appeal to the Ministries Appeal Panel as follows:
- (a) following a third “non-accept” decision, whether that is at Initial Screening, Local Review in terms of section 6(5)(iii) or Assessment Conference, or
  - (b) Following a decision at Local Review in terms of section 6(5)(iv), or
  - (c) following a first or second “non-accept” decision whether that is at Initial Screening, Local Review in terms of section 6(5)(iii) or Assessment Conference, where the person would thereafter be age-barred in terms of section 4(3) from pursuing a fresh application for Assessment. For the avoidance of doubt, in no circumstances other than as set out at sections 10(a) or (b), shall an appeal be possible after a first or second “non-accept” decision.

### **Nomination by the Presbytery**

- 11.** A prospective candidate seeking nomination by the appropriate Presbytery as a candidate for ministry shall apply in writing to that Presbytery as soon as, but not before, FAPLT indicates acceptance as a prospective candidate following an Assessment Conference.
- 12.** Application for nomination shall normally be made to the Presbytery within whose bounds is situated the congregation of which the prospective candidate is a communicant member. With the written agreement of that Presbytery, such an application may be considered by the Presbytery within whose bounds the Lead Academic Partner is situated, or by the Presbytery within whose bounds the prospective candidate resides, always provided that nomination does not precede communicant membership of the Church of Scotland.
- 13.** If satisfied with the prospective candidate’s apostolic, missional and pastoral vocation and calling to ministry, integration of faith and life, existing personal and spiritual formation, character and beliefs, skills and gifts from prior employment or volunteering, motivation and general suitability for ministry in the Church of Scotland, the Presbytery shall then nominate him or her as a candidate for ministry and shall give notice of such nomination to FAPLT as soon as possible.
- 14.**
- (1) A prospective candidate who has been refused nomination by the Presbytery has the right of appeal to the Ministries Appeal Panel. The prospective candidate may in any event submit a re-application for nomination on up to two further occasions, provided that at least one year elapses between each application.
  - (2) Notification of the intention to appeal to the Ministries Appeal Panel shall be made to FAPLT and to the Principal Clerk within 14 days of the date upon which the Presbytery’s decision was made. At the Appeal Hearing the prospective candidate shall be entitled to appear either online or in person, as determined by FAPLT, and to address the Panel. They may be accompanied by a companion, who shall not be entitled to speak to the Panel, but who may confer with the prospective candidate. Such an appeal can only be brought on one or more of the following grounds: (a) that in making the decision as to nomination, there were irregularities in the Presbytery’s process contrary to natural justice which may have had a material effect on the outcome, or (b) that the final decision of the Presbytery as to nomination was unduly influenced by incorrect or immaterial facts, or failed to take sufficient account of relevant material facts.

## **CORE PHASE**

### **Formation Routes for Ministry of Word and Sacrament**

- 15.**
- (1) The formation routes of the Core Phase of training for ministry shall normally consist of degree level study with the Lead Academic Partner integrated with accredited ministry placements.
  - (2) The primary route for the Core Phase will be to undertake a three-year undergraduate Bachelor of Divinity degree or equivalent with the Lead Academic Partner, integrated with three accredited ministry placements, each of one-year duration and running from September to August.
  - (3) As a first exception to section 15 (2), and at the discretion of the Formation Panel, the candidate may instead undertake a two-year Diploma degree with the Lead Academic Partner, integrated with two accredited ministry placements each of one-year duration and running from September to August. This exception may apply if the candidate fulfils at least three of the following four criteria, being:
    - (a) aged over 50 years;
    - (b) previous theological study;
    - (c) significant prior experience as an employee or volunteer in the Church of Scotland or another Reformed Christian denomination, as defined in section 4(2); and
    - (d) one other relevant and significant circumstance in prior life, work, academic study or calling, taken into account at the Formation Panel’s discretion.
  - (4) (a) As a second exception to section 15(2), and at the discretion of the Formation Panel, if the candidate has a prior theology degree or a period of prior training for ministry in the Church of Scotland or another Reformed Christian denomination, as defined in section 4(2), they may be directed towards the route set out as a first exception in section 15(2), or to a bespoke route which would be better suited to their formational goals towards attaining the ‘attributes’ for ministry at ordination.

- (b) The bespoke route for such a candidate would be expected to ensure that, taken as a whole from the past and present, the candidate's training has encompassed the academic subject areas and integrated placements anticipated in the primary or first exception routes. The bespoke route for such a candidate may involve postgraduate study, a project on behalf of the Church, and/or forms of supervised ministry or placement, and may be of any duration.
- (5) The Formation Panel shall have the right, at its discretion, to direct that the course of training being followed by a candidate be amended after that route has commenced, having first consulted with the candidate, the People and Training Team, and the Lead Academic Partner.

**Content of Study & Placement**

16. The Core Phase will seek to enable the formation of a candidate for their apostolic, missional and pastoral vocation in ministry; through transformational learning and integrated, reflective practice. To that end, unless an exception applies in terms of section 15(4)(b) the candidate will complete:

- (1) (a) A degree course at the Lead Academic Partner as outlined in section 15, which will consist of a curriculum developed and agreed in partnership between the Lead Academic Partner and FAPLT through the Director of Studies, and which includes a balanced provision of core courses within the following subject areas:
  - (i) Critical academic reflection on the Life of Faith and Discipleship;
  - (ii) Christian Scriptures, History and Thought;
  - (iii) Practice of Ministry;
  - (iv) Mission; and
  - (v) In any other relevant subject area as may be agreed by that partnership.
- (b) Whilst the expectation will be that a candidate will study on a full-time basis with the Lead Academic Partner, part-time study and placements may be permitted with the consent of the Lead Academic Partner and the agreement of the Formation Panel.
- (2) Contextualised, assessed placements which are focused on the growth in formation of the candidate through theological reflection and reflective practice, whilst also developing core skills and competencies for ministry. For those purposes, the candidate will engage in key areas of ministry, including:
  - (a) The calling and vocation of ministry, and its varied forms including team ministry;
  - (b) Personal development, devotion and faith, prayer, study, resilience and self-care;
  - (c) Identity as a minister in the Church of Scotland in the light of its history and present formation, and its social context;
  - (d) Preaching and the leading of worship in different contexts, and the conduct of the sacraments, funerals and weddings;
  - (e) The knowledge, interpretation, understanding and application to everyday life of Scripture, key beliefs and doctrines of Christian faith in the Reformed tradition, and in applying Christian ethics and theology to major issues in our country and world;
  - (f) The nurturing of Christian faith in the congregation and community, and the provision of Christian education;
  - (g) Mission and discipleship, including the enabling of church members in mission and the training and support of volunteers;
  - (h) Theology and practice of pastoral care;
  - (i) Pioneer ministry and fresh expressions of church;
  - (j) Church communication, education and mission via digital platforms;
  - (k) Adaptive leadership through challenge and change, church management, relationship building and governance in the local context, and within the broader Presbyterian polity; and
  - (l) Knowledge and application of Church law, including Church structures and courts; and relevant civil law, including safeguarding law and practice and charity law.
- (3) Attendance and active participation in further areas of formation and education required by FAPLT and the Lead Academic Partner throughout their candidature (i) in such courses, seminars, conferences, events and candidate gatherings as are prescribed by FAPLT and (ii) in seminars, events, candidate gatherings and worship services provided by the Lead Academic Partner where their attendance and participation are required.

**Placements**

- 17. (1) As part of the Church requirements in section 15, under the primary and first exception routes, periods of placement work of one year duration from September to August shall be undertaken by the candidate and must be completed to the satisfaction of FAPLT and the Formation Panel. All placements bar one must take place within Scotland. Placements of a duration specified by the Formation Panel may also be required under the second exception route.

- (2) (a) Placements will be allocated by the People & Training Team of FAPLT using placement supervisors trained and assessed by them. At the beginning of each placement a Learning Covenant will be agreed by the placement supervisor and the candidate on placement. The placement supervisor shall be responsible for supervising the placement according to guidelines and standards established by FAPLT, and in conjunction with the materials provided for the integration of the placement by the Lead Academic Partner, and shall produce assessment documentation as required. It shall be competent for FAPLT or the Formation Panel to refuse to sustain a placement.
- (b) The location of placements will be the decision and responsibility of the People & Training Team of FAPLT, acting on any recommendations of the Formation Panel;
- (c) The People & Training Team of FAPLT will liaise with the placement supervisor, candidate and Presbytery in relation to the ongoing progress of the placement; and any issues of unsatisfactory progress or conflict that arise; as well as considering any questions of a placement location and placement supervisor being changed;
- (d) Recognising the roles of the Lead Academic Partner and the Presbytery in also doing so, the People & Training Team of FAPLT will provide pastoral support to the candidate in relation to issues that might arise during the placement.
- (e) At the end of each placement, the People & Training Team of FAPLT will collate the assessment reports of the candidate and the placement supervisor, and hold the appraisal meeting in relation to the progress of the candidate, reporting to the Formation Panel thereafter.

**18.** In relation to the management and assessment of integrated placements, the Lead Academic Partner will take the lead role in the following aspects, acting in partnership with the Director of Studies and the People & Training Team of FAPLT:

- (1) The development of the placement course from the University perspective that will lead to accreditation; including proposed course aims and intended learning outcomes for the candidate of the placement course;
- (2) The provision of all teaching, and academic materials, required by the candidate in order to undertake the course and the placement;
- (3) The provision of appropriate materials to the placement supervisor to ensure that they are aware of the tasks set by the LAP for the candidate in their placement, and can work with the candidate accordingly;
- (4) Liaison with the candidate and, if necessary the placement supervisor, during the placement to ensure that there is understanding of the goals, and satisfactory development towards the proposed outcomes;
- (5) To undergo a thorough basis of academic assessment at the end of the placement that is related to theological reflection/reflective practice and the formational goals of training; and
- (6) Liaison with the People & Training Team of FAPLT and the Formation Panel about the outcome for the candidate from the course, following assessment.

### **Presbytery Supervision during Core Phase**

- 19.**
- (1) Throughout the Core Phase of training a candidate must remain under the oversight and pastoral supervision of a Presbytery, initially the Presbytery which nominated that person, and must inform the Presbytery of any change of address.
  - (2) Having been nominated by a Presbytery, a candidate shall remain under the supervision of that Presbytery unless the candidate's place of residence changes so that they come within the bounds of a different Presbytery, in which case the candidate may apply to FAPLT to change the supervising Presbytery, and after consultation by FAPLT with both Presbyteries, permission to change the supervising Presbytery may be granted at FAPLT's discretion.

### **Initial Formation Meeting**

- 20.**
- (1) At the outset of the candidate's training an Initial Formation Meeting shall be held, attended by the candidate and a staff member of the People & Training Team of FAPLT.
  - (2) At the Initial Formation Meeting the candidate and the staff member will discuss the route of training decided by the Formation Panel, a personalised training plan, training policies (including the performance review policy) and the Expectations and Responsibilities document. Academic, practical and personal goals for the first year of training will also be discussed. In due course, all of these documents will be agreed.
  - (3) Other tasks of the Initial Formation Meeting, and its structure and procedure, shall be determined from time to time by the People & Training Team of FAPLT or the Formation Panel.
  - (4) At the Initial Formation Meeting or soon thereafter, a Formation Partner will be allocated to the candidate by agreement with their Presbytery.

### **Appraisal during Candidature**

- 21.**
- (1) An appraisal meeting shall take place by September towards the end of each yearly placement and the beginning of each academic year, with the exception of the appraisal meeting relating to the final placement in training that will potentially grant an exit certificate under section 22, which will take place in June or thereby.

- (2) The functions of each appraisal meeting shall be to confirm whether or not there is satisfactory progress in the formation of a candidate and their skills and competencies in ministry, the need for any additional steps in learning and development in formation; to set formation and learning goals through a facilitated conversation and discussion, and to implement the performance review policy if applicable. Other tasks of the appraisal meeting shall be as determined from time to time by FAPLT.
- (3) The member of staff of the People & Training Team of FAPLT who has been allocated responsibility for chairing the appraisal meeting shall receive written reports from the candidate, the supervising minister and the Lead Academic Partner; and shall use them along with any other written reports which the staff member obtains and the Formation Framework to prepare a Pre-Appraisal Form, to be circulated to all those attending the appraisal meeting, containing the significant points to be considered at the meeting. The appraisal meeting shall make an Appraisal Report to the Formation Panel setting out their decision.
- (4) (a) A 'satisfactory' decision on the candidate's progress shall mean that the candidate has made sufficient progress in their formation and their skills and competencies in ministry and that the candidate can proceed to the next stage of training without condition.  
 (b) A decision of 'learning and development needed' shall mean that the candidate ought to undertake one or more specific area(s) of training in order to improve an aspect(s) of formation, or skills and competencies in ministry, within a period of time to be specified in the report, normally to be reviewed thereafter at a further appraisal meeting and by the Formation Panel, following which progress will be reviewed to now be 'satisfactory', or 'unsatisfactory'.  
 (c) An 'unsatisfactory' decision at any time on the candidate's progress shall mean that one of the following decisions may be reached:
  - (i) that an extension of training requires to be arranged by FAPLT with specific goals, and a further, final appraisal meeting thereafter conducted; or
  - (ii) that the candidature should be terminated.
- (5) At any appraisal meeting the following shall apply:
  - (a) Any person who acts as a representative of Presbytery or FAPLT shall receive appropriate training as shall be determined and provided by the FAPLT.
  - (b) The representatives appointed by the Presbytery and FAPLT shall each be appointed with powers to make decisions on behalf of the Presbytery and FAPLT respectively; if a member or representative of FAPLT is not present, it shall be the member of staff who has powers to make decisions on behalf of the FAPLT.
  - (c) In attendance shall be the candidate, the member of staff of FAPLT who has been allocated responsibility for the appraisal and will chair the meeting, a further member or representative of FAPLT and a representative of Presbytery.
  - (d) The Meeting shall be co-convened on behalf of FAPLT and the Presbytery.
- (6) Following the appraisal meeting, an Appraisal Report will be prepared by the member of staff of FAPLT who has been allocated responsibility for the appraisal and circulated within 7 working days of the meeting to all those who attended the meeting and the Formation Panel. If the candidate dissents from the Report or any part thereof, their dissent and the reasons for it shall be recorded in the Report, but shall not alter the status of the Report for the purposes of this Act.
- (7) The Appraisal Report shall contain a decision to be sent to the Formation Panel of 'satisfactory, 'learning and development needed' or 'unsatisfactory', with the meaning and consequences as set out in sub-section (4):
- (8) The decision of the appraisal meeting shall be considered by the Formation Panel who may either confirm that the decision of the Appraisal Report will apply, or modify the outcome. The decision of the Formation Panel will be final, subject to the right of appeal in sub-section (9), and the candidature will proceed on the decision following the meeting of the Formation Panel.
- (9) The decision of the Formation Panel to confirm that the decision of the Appraisal Report will apply, or will be modified, will be communicated by the Formation Panel to the candidate and to FAPLT within 7 working days of the Formation Panel meeting. The candidate may appeal to the Ministries Appeal Panel against a final decision of the Formation Panel which is a section 4(c)(ii) decision (i.e. a decision that candidature is unsatisfactory and should be terminated) on one or more of the following grounds: that in the course of the appraisal meeting or meeting of the Formation Panel there were (a) irregularities in the process contrary to natural justice which may have had a material effect on the outcome, or (b) that the decision of the appraisal meeting or the decision of the Formation Panel was unduly influenced by incorrect or immaterial facts, or failed to take sufficient account of relevant material facts. Notification of the intention to appeal shall be made to FAPLT and to the Principal Clerk within 14 days of the date upon which the decision of the Formation Panel was intimated to the candidate. At the Appeal Hearing the candidate shall be entitled to appear in person and a member of the Formation Panel shall appear to present the case for the appraisal decision. The candidate may be accompanied by a companion, who shall not be entitled to speak to the Panel but who may confer with the candidate.
- (10) Notwithstanding the above provisions, at any time during candidature an appraisal meeting with full powers may be called and held, at the discretion of FAPLT.

## Issue of Exit Certificate/Graduate Candidate Certificate

### 22.

- (1) Where final approval on behalf of the Presbytery, FAPLT and the Formation Panel has been given in terms of section 21, and FAPLT is satisfied that the requirements of sections 2(7) and 15 to 18 have been fulfilled, including all academic requirements, the Formation Panel shall thereafter have the power to issue an exit certificate enabling the candidate to be ordained, subject to the satisfactory completion of their final training placement. At that point the candidate shall become a graduate candidate and shall remain under the supervision of their Presbytery, pending ordination to a charge or appointment.
- (2) The Presbytery shall in each calendar year assess in terms of the criteria set out in section 13 above, the general suitability of each graduate candidate and, if satisfied, shall issue a graduate candidate's certificate confirming continuing approval, and shall advise FAPLT by 31 December. Candidates will have a right of appeal in terms of sub-section (3) below in the event of the Presbytery declining to issue a certificate.
- (3) The graduate candidate may appeal to the Ministries Appeal Panel against a decision in terms of section 22(2) on one or more of the following grounds: that in the course of the Presbytery's decision there were irregularities in the process contrary to natural justice which may have had a material effect on the outcome, or (b) that the decision of the Presbytery was unduly influenced by incorrect or immaterial facts, or failed to take sufficient account of relevant material facts. Notification of the intention to appeal shall be made to the Presbytery and to the Principal Clerk within 14 days of the date upon which the Presbytery's decision was intimated to the graduate candidate. At the Appeal Hearing the graduate candidate shall be entitled to appear in person and a representative of the Presbytery shall appear to present the case for the Presbytery's decision. The graduate candidate may be accompanied by a companion, who shall not be entitled to speak to the Panel but who may confer with the graduate candidate.
- (4) A Presbytery must obtain a current graduate candidate's certificate for any graduate candidate whose call or appointment is to be sustained by that Presbytery after 31 December of the year in which their exit certificate was awarded.
- (5) A Presbytery may issue a graduate candidate's certificate on up to two occasions only. Thereafter, in order to obtain a graduate candidate's certificate, the graduate candidate must apply for such a certificate to the Registration of Ministries Committee, following an application procedure equivalent to that set out in section 27 of the Registration of Ministries Act (Act II 2017) (Application for Category **O** registration).

### Complaints Procedure

**23.** Subject always to the provisions of the Discipline Act (Act I 2019), which shall apply in respect of a Disciplinary Complaint (as that term is defined in the Discipline Act) relating to a candidate or graduate candidate, the provisions of this section shall apply:

- (a) where any party to an *Expectations and Responsibilities* document asserts that another party is in breach thereof; or
- (b) where the Presbytery or the FAPLT assert that a candidate has failed to fulfil their obligations under the agreed *Learning Covenant*; or
- (c) where a material complaint is made to FAPLT or Presbytery about the candidate's conduct during training; or
- (d) where circumstances come to the attention of FAPLT or Presbytery which give cause for concern about the candidate's conduct during training.

Any such assertion complaint or circumstances shall be intimated by lodging with the senior staff member of FAPLT within People and Training, a written statement providing specific details thereof. The senior staff member shall intimate the statement to the candidate, the Convener of FAPLT and the Presbytery.

### 24.

- (1) As soon as is reasonably practicable after receipt of the statement referred to in section 23, a staff member of the FAPLT shall meet with all relevant parties to discuss the matter, seeking to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of all concerned, if that is possible and advisable.
- (2) In the event that such resolution is not possible or advisable, any of the parties mentioned in section 23 may request a formal meeting of all parties in order to determine what is required to effect resolution.
- (3) Such a formal meeting shall be attended by up to two representatives of each party, shall be called by FAPLT and shall be convened by a staff member of FAPLT, who will notify all parties in writing of the conclusions of the meeting and any agreement reached between the parties to resolve the matter. Such notification shall provide details of the consequences that will ensue in the event of failure by any parties to adhere to the conclusions and agreement from the meeting.
- (4) The provisions of section 24 shall not apply where FAPLT makes a resolution in terms of section 25(2) below.

- 25.**
- (1) In the event that no agreement is reached between parties at such a formal meeting as to the facts, or no agreed resolution is reached; or in the event that any party fails to adhere to the agreed conclusions, the Convener of FAPLT shall convene a further hearing of all relevant parties.
  - (2) Furthermore, FAPLT shall have power to resolve that it will not be possible to reach a resolution under a section 24 process, in which case the Convener of FAPLT shall convene a hearing of all relevant parties without recourse to the procedure set out in section 24.
  - (3) The hearing shall be held as soon as is reasonably practicable. At such a hearing the Candidate shall be present and may be accompanied by a companion who shall not be entitled to speak to the panel, but who may confer with the candidate. The panel for the hearing, in addition to the Convener, shall comprise two representatives of Presbytery and two representatives of FAPLT, none of whom shall have had prior personal involvement with the assertion, complaint or circumstances giving rise to the Hearing. The two representatives appointed by the Presbytery and FAPLT shall each be appointed with powers to make decisions on behalf of the Presbytery and FAPLT respectively. A FAPLT staff member shall attend as an adviser.
  - (4) At the hearing all parties shall be entitled to present evidence, to question witnesses and to make a concluding statement. At the conclusion of the hearing, or as soon as may be practicable thereafter, the panel shall issue its decision and advise all parties. Such a decision shall be final and binding on all parties, subject only to appeal to the Ministries Appeal Panel in terms of Act VI 2007 on the following grounds (a) that in the course of the hearing there were irregularities in the process contrary to natural justice which may have had a material effect on the outcome, or (b) that the decision taken at the conclusion of the hearing was unduly influenced by incorrect or immaterial facts, or failed to take sufficient account of relevant material facts. The intention to appeal shall be intimated to the FAPLT and to the Principal Clerk within 14 days of the panel's decision.

**Repeals and Amendments**

**26.** This Act will come into force from 1st September 2026 onwards in relation to all people accepted as candidates for training following national assessment and nomination by Presbytery after that date. For the training of all such individuals, Act X 2004, as amended, is repealed as of that date. For the avoidance of doubt, for all those who have been accepted as candidates or graduate candidates prior to 1st September 2026, the provisions of Act X 2004, as amended, will continue to apply until the end of their candidature; subject always to the discretion of FAPLT to determine that this Act applies to such persons, such as in cases of deferment.

**SCHEDULE 1 – THE FORMATION FRAMEWORK**

- (1) The eight values of ministerial training in the Formation Framework are that it should be: Christ-centred, student-focused, mission-orientated, responsible, reflective, diverse, reforming and community-building.
- (2) The three layers of formation in the Formation Framework are: Who We Are; Theory, Tradition and Knowledge; and Skills, Practices, Abilities and Qualities.
- (3) The eight dimensions of formation in the Formation Framework are: Faith, Vocation & Spirituality; Character, Ethics & Development; Leadership & Relationships; Worship, Sacraments and Preaching; Pastoral Care; Mission; Discipleship; and Church Management.

**SCHEDULE 2 – ATTRIBUTES OF A CANDIDATE FOR ORDINATION**

- (1) a deep personal faith in God, a commitment in discipleship to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, and the capacity to articulate and communicate the Christian faith contextually;
- (2) the practice of Christian spiritual disciplines of personal prayer and devotion, Bible study, regular participation in public worship and the sacrament of communion; and embodying faith in their own lives, as disciples of Jesus Christ;
- (3) a mature knowledge of the Bible and Christian theology and the ability to apply them to the realities of everyday life and the world, and to help the Church shape its future in the light of them;
- (4) a contextual theologian, worship leader and preacher rooted in the Reformed tradition, able to craft worship and communicate faith and its implications, within and beyond congregations;
- (5) a desire to serve God and as a pastor amongst the people of God, with a growing self-awareness of personal identity, gifting and lifelong calling in that context;
- (6) articulating a call by God through the Church to give themselves to the ministry for which they are to be ordained, following Jesus' example of love and service;
- (7) a well-developed and reflective understanding of being an ordained minister within the Church of Scotland within Presbyterian polity, with a commitment to serve the Church and be answerable to its supervision and discipline;
- (8) a commitment to speaking truth to power, and challenging injustice, prejudice and marginalisation in Christ's name.
- (9) the ability to exercise ministry as a reflective practitioner, and as a deep listener in pastoral care;
- (10) the ability to exercise ministry by interacting in a humble, courteous, tolerant and respectful manner with others, no matter their personal identity, faith or social background.
- (11) a commitment to the practice of ministry without discrimination on grounds of gender, sexuality, religion or ethnic origin;

- (12) personal development which demonstrates integrity, maturity, honesty, stability, emotional intelligence, stamina and resilience; and the desire to live a personal life which reflects the God-given calling of the office of Christian ministry.
- (13) a desire to enable and nurture the new or developing Christian faith of others, and for them to grow in discipleship, encouraging the expression and development of their gifts and calling from God;
- (14) equipped and energised to engage in God's mission in the world, with a mature understanding in theory and practice of what that might entail in a rapidly changing and diverse cultural and social context, and within both inherited and new expressions of church;
- (15) the ability to engage in the tasks of ministry with critical imagination, courage, emotional maturity, theological judgment and self-reflection; and to exercise this ministry by enabling and empowering others within the ministry of the whole people of God;
- (16) readiness for the practice of day-to-day ministry in its necessary skills and competencies; including the ability to exercise bold, imaginative and strategic leadership, collaboration and team-building, and to manage change and conflict;
- (17) an understanding of the history, Presbyterian polity and historic Christian doctrine of the Church of Scotland within the global Reformed tradition, and an ability to relate those to the contexts and challenges of the present day, including in the need for renewal and reform;
- (18) a commitment to the unity of the Church of Scotland in recognition of its full diversity, and to work ecumenically with respect amongst other Christian denominations and with other faith traditions; and
- (19) a well-developed understanding of the meaning and commitments of the vows of ordination, including the breadth and contents of the Church of Scotland's Book of Confessions
- (20) the capacity for, and commitment to, intentional life-long learning in ministerial practice.

## Appendix II

### REPORT OF THE SELECTION PANEL

#### 1. The Vision Shaping the Panel's Work

The panel's work took place within a wider movement of renewal across the Church of Scotland. The Church has recognised the need for a more integrated, mission-focused approach to the formation of ministers – one that is apostolic in nature, rooted in Christ, and capable of shaping leaders who can serve faithfully and imaginatively in today's rapidly changing contexts.

The Church's emerging vision for Initial Ministerial Education is grounded in five long-standing principles of ministerial formation: knowledge, wisdom, holiness, competency, and role modelling. These are not discrete outcomes but interwoven dimensions of a single formation process. Academic study and placement experience must therefore function not as parallel tracks but as partners in shaping ministers for lifelong, dynamic ministry.

This integrated approach is expressed in the Church's Formation Framework, which understands ministerial formation as a whole-of-life discipline. Initial training is not an end in itself, but the beginning of a lifelong practice of theological reflection, vocational discernment, and adaptive leadership. Formation must cultivate in candidates a discipline of ongoing discernment, enabling them to grow in calling and purpose throughout their ministry. Space must also be created for specialisation, recognising that individuals are called by God to varied ministries, even within similar settings.

Candidates must be equipped not only for traditional settings of ministry – parish, chaplaincy, and congregational leadership – but also for mission on the margins, where the Church meets the lived realities of contemporary Scotland and where God is already at work. Exposure to the wider mission of the Church – including contexts such as CrossReach, the Iona Community, the Grassmarket Project, Chaplaincy, Pioneer Ministry, Urban and Rural Ministry – is an important part of this formation.

To support this renewed vision, the Church has appointed a Director of Studies, Rev Dr Sandy Forsyth, whose role the panel recognised as pivotal. The Director of Studies will hold strategic oversight of the integrated formation process, ensuring that academic modules, placement experiences, and reflective practices are aligned with the Church's missional priorities. The person appointed to the role will act as both the glue that holds the whole system together and a creative developer of ideas, enabling innovation and coherence across the formation pathway.

The panel therefore approached its task with a clear sense that the Lead Academic Provider (LAP) must be a partner capable of flexibility, imagination, courage, and innovation. The Church must remain the lead in ministerial formation, but the LAP must be able to work collaboratively, adaptively, creatively and with a shared commitment to transformational learning. Mission is the imperative – not an optional emphasis for those so minded. The LAP must be able to support both the core, foundation, traditional tasks of ministry that the Church, and the people it serves, value so highly, and blend this with training towards the additional types of fresh expressions of mission and ministry.

The traditional foundations will remain a key part of training, and the Church will continue to look for academic strength toward these ends from its LAP.

## 2. Composition and Integrity of the Panel

The Selection Panel consisted of four members. During the process, two changes in personnel were required due to workload and conflict of interest, but the panel remained balanced and robust throughout.

The final composition included:

- Two Ministers of the Church of Scotland, each with extensive experience in accompanying candidates through training and formation.
- Two panel members with backgrounds in ministerial education in other denominations and training institutions, with theological teaching and writing experience, bringing external insight and comparative perspective.

While it is impossible in a small national church to eliminate all relational links with institutions, the panel's composition ensured that such links were balanced and did not compromise the integrity of the process. The panel operated prayerfully and with transparency, independence of judgment, and a shared commitment to the Church's missional future.

## 3. The Process Followed

### 3.1 Criteria and Scoring

The Selection Panel was tasked with assessing the submissions and interviews of four potential providers for the Church of Scotland's Initial Ministerial Education (IME) partnership.

Though discernment and prayer were key factors in the Panel's deliberations, the Criteria Scoring contributed solid support to the decision of the Panel.

The Criteria assessment was conducted using a structured scoring framework comprising 22 weighted criteria, developed by a Working Group and approved by the Church. These criteria reflect the Church's priorities for ministerial formation, including theological depth, reflective practice, curriculum design, partnership capacity, and the ability to support candidates.

This weighting ensured that the most mission-critical aspects of formation—such as vision, theological reflection, integrated placements, hybrid learning, and partnership with the Church—carried appropriate influence in the final assessment.

Each panel member independently scored the providers, with the final totals representing the averaged and collated scores across all four panellists. This process ensured both rigour and transparency, enabling the Panel to test its shared discernment against a consistent evaluative framework.

### 3.2 Overview of Scoring Outcomes

The total averaged scores for each institution were as follows:

Trinity College (University of Glasgow)	124.25
New College (University of Edinburgh)	121.5
Christ's College (University of Aberdeen)	101.25
Highland Theological College (HTC) (University of Highlands and Islands)	94.25

The scoring demonstrates a clear separation between the two strongest proposals (Trinity and New College) and the two institutions whose submissions and interviews revealed more significant limitations (Christ's College and HTC). Within the top two, Trinity's proposal showed the greatest consistency across the highest-weighted criteria, particularly in communicating a bold and imaginative vision for ministry, formational outcomes, integrated curriculum and placements, partnership capacity, and support for individual candidates. These strengths are reflected in Trinity's consistently high scores across the Ranking 1 criteria, which carry the greatest weight in the assessment system.

New College also performed strongly, especially in institutional standing, clarity of vision, and interview professionalism. However, its proposal scored less well in comparison to Trinity in areas the Church has identified as essential for the next phase of ministerial formation, including specialist ministry pathways, hybrid delivery, broader engagement with the Church's training programmes, and the imaginative re-shaping of courses in response to changing ministry contexts.

Christ's College and HTC both demonstrated areas of genuine strength—Christ's College in theological reflection and institutional standing; HTC in motivation, pastoral commitment, and an integrated placement model. However, their proposals scored less well in categories central to the Church's formational goals, including curriculum integration, community formation, specialist pathways, hybrid provision, as well as adaptive and creative responsiveness to the changing context of ministry.

References from current or recent students, offering insight into their lived experience of formation, confirmed that all four institutions provide high-quality academic training and pastoral support. All offer robust curricula, a range of delivery modes, and the ability to challenge candidates' theological assumptions. Had the Church simply required a single provider to deliver the existing BD-equivalent academic provision, the evidence showed that any of the four could have fulfilled that requirement competently.

The scoring therefore did not simply identify “who can do the job,” but helped the Panel discern which institution was best placed to partner with the Church in re-imagining ministerial formation in line with its missional priorities.

### 3.3 Beyond capability: a discernment of vision

Through the process it became clear that the Panel’s task was not to identify which institution could maintain the status quo. The Church is seeking something more: a partner capable of shaping a new, integrated, mission-focused formation pathway—one that is risk-enabling, adaptive, and capable of supporting a complete re-imagining of ministerial formation rather than incremental adjustment.

The Panel therefore engaged in a process that was both analytical and spiritual. Each interview with the Academic Providers began with worship, acknowledging that this was not merely a competitive bidding exercise but a sacred act of discernment. The training of ministers is not simply a logistical or academic undertaking; it is a spiritual responsibility entrusted to the Church for the sake of Christ’s mission.

Over months of reading, discussion, and interviews—sometimes with the Director of Studies and People and Training Manager present, sometimes independently—a shared sense of direction began to emerge. With hindsight, Panel members recognised a growing, Spirit-led agreement and coherence in their reflections, culminating in a clear and unanimous consensus at the final meeting.

Taken together, the scoring outcomes and the Panel’s discernment provided a clear and coherent picture. The quantitative assessment highlighted distinct strengths and limitations across the four institutions, while the qualitative, spirit-led discernment helped the Panel interpret these findings considering the Church’s wider missional priorities. With this foundation in place, the Panel turned to a more detailed reflection on each institution’s submission and interview, considering how their strengths, approaches, and capacities aligned with the Church’s vision for integrated, mission-focused formation.

### 3.4 Alignment of Scoring with Panel Discernment

The Panel’s qualitative discernment during the interview process aligned closely with the quantitative scoring. Trinity’s submission and interview demonstrated:

- A creative, compelling and coherent vision for ministry
- Strong articulation of formational outcomes
- A well-developed and integrated curriculum, including placements
- Clear capacity for collaborative partnership with the Church
- A strong commitment to supporting individual candidates
- Confidence in the ability to deliver a hybrid, flexible, imaginative curriculum which is contextual, missional and future-oriented

These strengths are reflected in Trinity’s consistently high scores across the Ranking 1 criteria, which carry the greatest weight in the assessment system.

New College also performed strongly, particularly in institutional standing, clarity of vision, and interview professionalism. However, its proposal scored less well in areas the Church has identified as essential for the next phase of ministerial formation, including specialist ministry pathways, hybrid delivery, and broader engagement with the Church’s training programmes.

Christ’s College and HTC both demonstrated areas of genuine strength, but their proposals scored less well in categories central to the Church’s formational goals.

## 4. Reflections on Each Institution

### 4.1 Christ’s College (University of Aberdeen)

Christ’s College presented itself as a research-intensive institution with strong staffing and a track record in delivering OLM training and the impactful work of the Centre for Ministry Studies. Their proposal emphasised foundational theological literacy and offered a stable, low-risk option.

However, the panel felt that the approach suggested only minor adjustments to existing provision. While reliable and competent, the proposal did not convey a strong appetite for the deeper re-imagining of formation that the Church is seeking.

### 4.2 New College (University of Edinburgh)

The New College presentation was polished and professional. The panel appreciated the emphasis on placements as sites of integrated learning and the creative use of Honorary Teachers drawn from diverse missional contexts such as Iona, CrossReach, the Grassmarket Project and globally through their Centre for the Study of World Christianity.

New College demonstrated institutional strength and resilience in the face of sector-wide funding pressures. Yet the panel discerned a degree of distance between the presentation and the lived experiences of candidates navigating formation today.

### 4.3 Highland Theological College (HTC) (University of the Highlands and Islands)

HTC offered a confessional environment and a commitment to challenging students across all theological positions. HTC expressed a clear motivation for training practitioners and has consistently demonstrated a valuable and significant contribution to ministerial training. However, the institution acknowledged significant constraints: limited staff, reliance on external specialists, and the relocation from Dingwall to a smaller facility unsuitable for in-person teaching. Their current provision is almost entirely remote.

The panel felt that HTC's proposal involved minimal change, with minor adjustments in curriculum, and lacked the physical and structural capacity required for the Church's vision.

#### 4.4 Trinity College (University of Glasgow)

The Trinity College submission was a compelling one that asked critical questions of training reflected on the place of church today and laid out an aligned vision to meet the opportunities of the present and the future. Their starting point was not "this is what we will offer" or "this is our institutional capacity," but a set of searching questions about the needs of future ministers: What tools will a minister require for mission in today's Scotland? How can formation cultivate courage, imagination, and adaptability?

Trinity articulated a clear commitment to serving the mission of the Church of Scotland. Their proposal emphasised:

- mission-focused curriculum development
- partnership with the Church in designing new modules
- a confessional community that nurtures calling and purpose
- hybrid learning combined with essential in-person gatherings
- cohort-based formation across Scotland
- willingness to be bold and courageously rethink existing structures

The panel also noted Trinity's strong track record in Practical Theology, theological reflection, online education, and publication focused on ministerial formation and the life of the Church.

Trinity expressed this posture succinctly in stating that their primary purpose is to serve the mission of the Church of Scotland, and that their academic work exists in service of that calling.

The panel found that Trinity's vision, courage, imagination, and strategic coherence — particularly its integrated approach to academic and experiential formation — aligned most closely with the Church's aspirations for "something new."

#### 4.5 Summary of Strengths and Weaknesses of Institutions based on Criteria Scoring

##### Trinity College - University of Glasgow

###### Strengths:

- Highest overall score
- Strongest performance across the highest-weighted criteria
- Expressed a clear vision and motivation for ministry with imagination and flexibility
- Integrated curriculum and placement model
- Strong support for candidates as individuals on unique pathways
- Confidence in partnership demonstrated at interview
- Demonstrated the integration of context-based learning in developing and refining teaching.

###### Weaknesses:

- Some resource implications for the Church
- Institutional standing score slightly lower than Edinburgh's

##### New College - University of Edinburgh

###### Strengths:

- Very strong institutional standing and academic capacity
- Clear vision
- Excellent interview professionalism
- Strong curriculum and placement integration

###### Weaknesses:

- Offered less clear support towards individual ministry pathways
- Lower engagement in broader Church training
- Hybrid delivery and lifelong formation less fully developed
- Lower expression of imagination for what ministry could look like

##### Christ's College - University of Aberdeen

###### Strengths:

- Strong theological reflection
- High institutional standing
- Good engagement with diverse candidates
- Less expansive partnership with less demand on church

Weaknesses:

- Weaker curriculum integration and community formation
- Limited support towards specialist pathways
- Moderate interview performance
- Demonstrated little contextual awareness of the practical challenges facing ministers

Highland Theological College – University of the Highlands and Islands

Strengths:

- Clear motivation and pastoral commitment
- Strong sense of mission focussed approach
- Strong integrated placement model
- Expressed a commitment to training practitioners

Weaknesses:

- Lower scores across most Ranking 1 criteria
- Limited hybrid provision and community formation though in-person work
- Lower institutional capacity
- Limited demonstration of refining content to match changing context of ministry
- Weakest interview performance

### 5. The Panel's Discernment and Decision

Two institutions emerged with the highest scores. Yet when the panel gathered after the final interview, there was immediate and unanimous recognition that one institution had demonstrated alignment with the direction of travel that had been forming through months of discernment and prayer.

Trinity College responded to the primary criteria of 'Vision for Ministry' and 'Motivation', by offering a partnership and commitment to serving the Church. It felt as though the invitation being extended to the Church was: "Let us shape this and journey together, beginning with the needs of candidates and the mission of the Church for today's society, work, and the challenges of people and the wider world." It felt relevant, grounded, and aligned with the lived experiences of people both within and beyond the Church.

In the final meeting, the panel became acutely aware that the months of discussion, prayer, and reflection had led to a shared spiritual clarity, and that the decision reached was part of a deeper process of discernment, discussion and ongoing reflection rather than simply the outcome of scoring.

The panel judged that Trinity's approach was more aligned with the Church's missional priorities, more responsive to the realities of contemporary ministry, and more open to the creative, integrated formation the Church seeks. The decision was therefore both evidence-based and spiritually and prayerfully grounded. The panel experienced a unanimously shared sense that Trinity's proposal was in harmony with the wider movement of renewal already emerging across the Church.

### 6. Recommendations Accompanying the Decision

In recommending Trinity College as the preferred Lead Academic Provider, the panel identified several conditions essential for becoming the LAP:

- A fully costed model to be developed jointly by the Director of Studies and Trinity College early in 2026, demonstrating feasibility and sustainability.
- Assurance of long-term viability and capacity.
- A genuinely whole-of-Scotland approach to training.
- Clarity regarding the relationship between Trinity College and the University of Glasgow, including recruitment processes and the Church's voice in staffing decisions.
- Protection of the Church's broad theological spectrum, ensuring that candidates from all traditions are both supported and challenged.
- A commitment to partnership in shaping a curriculum that is mission-focused, contextually aware, and responsive to the diverse callings of candidates.

These recommendations form the basis for the collaborative work undertaken between the Church and Trinity College in developing the final training package which is laid out in detail.

## Appendix III

### CURRICULUM FOR MINISTRY

The following text was drafted by Trinity College and amended following consultation and discussion with the Director of Studies and People & Training Team. The curriculum was developed in partnership.

#### 1. Introduction

The University of Glasgow/Trinity College proposal for Initial Ministerial Education (IME) is aligned with the Church of Scotland's Formation Framework and has been developed in consultation with the Church of Scotland's Curriculum Document of 2019. It is conceived as a unified and integrated process, developed and delivered in an active partnership between University of Glasgow (UG)/Trinity College and the Church of Scotland's People and Training Team, with UG independently responsible for academic (SCQF) assessment and the Church of Scotland independently responsible for assessment of formation for ministerial candidates.

The overall vocational IME experience will be delivered through a Formational Year, which is overlaid on the UG semesters and academic year; and incorporates and conforms to standard UG assessment schedules and deadlines. The Formational Year will include non-UG credit bearing elements linked to the confessional position of the church and to vocational formation of candidates, which will be delivered in partnership by Trinity College and the Church of Scotland, or commissioned by the Church elsewhere.

- **The standard academic element of IME will continue to be delivered through Glasgow University's Bachelor of Divinity (BD) degree programme**, but key areas of this programme will be revised and refreshed to accommodate an increased amount of context-based learning and to enable integration of academic and placement learning through assessed reflective practice at every level of the degree.

**The standard programme will be a three year, 360 credit Ordinary BD Degree, with three integrated assessed placements delivered in 8 themed segments and assessed via 5 x 10 credit modules** - within the Church's pathway to ordination, this will normally mean that a candidate who is awarded the BD, and who has developed in formation so as to be granted an exit certificate by the Church, will be immediately eligible for ordination without a further probationary period.

Whilst the three-year BD is the standard and most comprehensive route, the diversity of student experience and prior learning means that some candidates for ministry will need alternative academic pathways:

- Depending on certain conditions, a candidate may be approved by the Church to undertake **an alternative or bespoke route** of training and will take a selection of BD and/or Masters courses, exiting with **a Diploma, Certificate, or Masters degree**, where applicable, alongside placements and formational activities identified by the formation panel.
- To ensure that the Church will continue to have a stream of ministers who are qualified to doctoral level to contribute to scholarship and teaching, BD candidates who show academic promise can be approved and funded by the Church to undertake a further year of study in order to gain the 480 credits necessary for the award of a BD Hons.
- Some candidates who already have a theology degree may also be approved to begin doctoral studies and will undertake placements alongside their doctoral research.

The Training Act of the Church identifies four subject areas relevant to formation:

- (1) Critical academic reflection on Life of Faith and Discipleship
- (2) Christian Scriptures, History and Thought
- (3) Practice of Ministry
- (4) Mission

In terms of pedagogy and delivery within the Formational Year, there are eight possible delivery modes of education and formation:

- (1) Retreats (not for credit [NFC])
- (2) For Credit [FC] Placement experience + Reflective Practice
- (3) NFC Placement experience + Reflective Practice
- (4) Semester-long FC courses
- (5) Intensive FC Courses
- (6) Intensive NFC Courses
- (7) FC study or formational trips
- (8) NFC study or formational trips

3 Year Ordinary BD Programme (whole) – weighting by subject areas and modes of delivery

FC Placements	5 x 10	50
Bible Courses	3 x 20	60
Theology + Doctrine	3 x 20	60
Church History	2 x 20	40
Mission	1 x 20, 2 x 10	40
Practice of Ministry	4 x 20, 3 x 10	110
TOTAL		360

**1. Draft Curriculum Plan for the Bd 2.0**

New courses are highlighted in bold. New assessed placements are in italics. Existing Trinity courses that need their scope, level, basis of assessment and/or credit amended have an asterisk. Not For Credit Courses run by Trinity/CofS as intensives are in the final column. The remainder are existing courses that can be taught as at present, with the potential to include candidate-specific seminar groups. University of Glasgow levels come after the course names, and course credits are in the first set of brackets, with the relationship to the four subject areas in the second set of brackets. The proposed curriculum is subject to development prior to intended implementation in September 2027.

<b>YEAR ONE 120 Credits – WORSHIP/SPIRITUALITY</b>					Trinity NFC Intensives (121 + UG/Trinity Staff)
Semester One	Biblical Studies - Level 1 - Creation to Apocalypse (20 credits) <i>(Bible)</i>	History of Worship Level 1 (10 credits) <i>(Practice of Ministry)</i> <b>Or</b> Biblical Hebrew (10/20) Or NT Greek (10/20)	<b>Intro to Preaching and Prayer – Level 1</b> (20 credits) * <i>(Practice of Ministry)</i>	<i>Assessed Placement 1a (10 credits)</i>  <i>RP Focus: Worship/ Designing + Leading</i>	Intensive – Personal Faith & Spirituality  Voice Training Workshop
Semester Two	Theology 1 - The God Question (20) <i>(Theology)</i>	Listening in Mission 1 (10) <i>(Mission)</i>	<b>Bible for Ministry</b> 1 (20) <i>(Bible)</i>	<i>Assessed Placement 1b (10)</i>  <i>RP Focus: Mission/ Listening to Context</i>	Intensive – Visual Arts, Music, and Drama in Church and Worship
Summer Placement				<i>Assessed Placement 1c (assessed with 2a)</i>  <i>RP Focus: Pastoral/ Anthropology</i>	Specialist Placement + Creative Reflection/ Response

<b>YEAR TWO 120 Credits – MISSION/CHURCH</b>					
Semester One	World Religions, including Judaism, Christianity & Islam - The Search for Meaning 1 (20) (Theology)	Church History 2 Traditions & Transformations (20) (including history of mission) (Church History)	<b>Leadership &amp; Innovation 2</b> (10) (Practice of Ministry 10/2) <b>Or</b> Biblical Hebrew (20) Or NT Greek (20) (for any Sem 1 course)	<i>Assessed Placement 2a (10)</i>  <i>RP Focus: Worship/ Sacraments</i>	Intensive – ‘How to Run a Church’ – An Introduction
Semester Two	Theology 1 Theology for Ministry/ Mission including sacraments, ecclesiology (20) (Theology)	<b>Managing Conflict &amp; Change 2 (10)</b> <b>(including power/diversity/ equality)</b> (Practice of Ministry)	Mission in Contemporary Scotland 2 (20) * – Culture, Population, Religious Diversity, Secularity (Mission)	<i>Assessed Placement 2b (10)</i> <i>RP Focus: Mission/ Pioneering + Planting</i>	Intensive – Parish Renewal: Missional Innovation and Church Growth
Summer Placement				<i>Assessed Placement 2c (assessed as part of 3a)</i>  <i>RP Focus: Pastoral/ Congregational Life + Dynamics</i>	Specialist Placement + Creative Reflection/ Response
<b>YEAR THREE 120 Credits – PASTORAL/PUBLIC</b> (NB – Dissertation available in place of one subject (auditing that subject), focussed on another course below)					
Semester One	Biblical Studies 3 (20) <i>OT or NT Texts (Bible)</i>	Pastoral Theology L3 (20) (Practice of Ministry)	Pioneering & Church Planting 2 (10) (Mission)	<i>Assessed Placement 3a (10)</i>  <i>RP Focus: Worship/Pastoral Weddings + Funerals/Family Systems/Sexuality + Gender</i>	Intensive – End of Life, Funerals and Bereavement Care
Semester Two	Theology 3 (20) Christology/ Doctrine of God (Theology)	Church History 3 Scottish Church History since 1500 (20) (Church History)	Christian Ethics (Level 2) (20) (Practice of Ministry)	<i>(no formal assessment)</i>  <i>RP Focus: Holistic Mission/ 5 Marks/ JPIC</i>	Intensive – Digital Communication, Mission and Theology
<b>YEAR FOUR 120 Credits – for those on academic track</b> – Church will decide how much placement work or if candidates should focus on academic work					

Assessed placements will involve two hours of compulsory contact time for candidates per week in semester: one hour with the Pastoral Studies Tutor/ Field Education Director supporting reflective practice through online teaching; and one hour in reflection groups (replacing the MTN), with the potential for local ‘in-person’ groups where possible. Modes of reflection will vary over the three years, and will include journaling, verbatims, critical incident analysis, role play etc. Summer placements will produce journal and project work which will generate material for assessment within the subsequent semester one placement course.

**2. Two-Year Diploma Curriculum**

Weighting by subject areas and modes of delivery

Credit Bearing Placements	4 x 10	40
Bible Courses	1 x 20	20
Theology + Doctrine	2 x 20	40
Church History	2 x 20	40
Mission	1 x 20, 1 x 10	30
Practice of Ministry	2 x 20, 3 x 10	70
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>240</b>

**YEAR ONE 120 Credits WORSHIP/MINISTRY**

Biblical Studies 1 Creation to Apocalypse (20)	History of Worship incl. sacraments 1 (10)	Intro to Preaching & Prayer 1 (20) *	<i>Assessed Placement 1a (10)</i>  <i>RP Focus: Worship/ Designing + Leading</i>	Intensive – Personal Spirituality  Voice Training Workshop
Theology for Ministry/Mission 1 <i>including sacraments, ecclesiology (20)</i>	Listening in Mission 1 (10)	Bible for Ministry 1 (20)	<i>Assessed Placement 1b (10)</i>  <i>RP Focus: Mission/ Listening to Context</i>	Intensive –Visual Arts, Music, and Drama in Church and Worship
			<i>Assessed Placement 1c (assessed with 2a)</i>  <i>RP Focus: Pastoral/ Anthropology</i>	Specialist Placement + Creative Reflection/ Response

**YEAR TWO 120 Credits PASTORAL/MISSIONAL**

Church History 2 Traditions & Transformations (20) (including history of mission)	Pastoral Practice for Church Leaders 2 (20)	Leadership & Innovation 1 (10)	<i>Assessed Placement 2a (10)</i>  <i>RP Focus: Worship/ Pastoral Weddings + Funerals/ Family Systems/ Sexuality + Gender</i>	Intensive – End of Life, Funerals and Bereavement Care
Christian Ethics (Level 2) (20)	Managing Conflict & Change 1 (10) (incl power/diversity/ equality)	Mission in Contemporary Scotland 2 (20) * – Culture, Population, Religious Diversity, Secularity	<i>Assessed Placement 3b (10)</i>  <i>RP Focus: Holistic Mission/ 5 Marks/JPIC</i>	Intensive – Digital Communication, Mission and Theology

### 3. Not For Credit (Nfc) Additional Courses for Formation

The Director of Studies and People & Training Team, in consultation with Trinity College, will develop a suite of additional courses and subject areas for formation, utilising various modes of delivery including online platforms, in order to create a reserve of flexible resources which can also be shared or adapted for public access via Church of Scotland Learning. Such courses for candidates could be intensives in the summer, short day or weekend courses, conferences, or online provision via Church of Scotland Learning, to be taken at some point during the 'core phase', and/or as part of an integrated First Five Years (FFY) programme post-ordination. Courses where prospective course leaders have been identified are marked.

#### Life of Faith and Discipleship

- *Nurturing Personal Faith & Spirituality in Ministry*
- *Life as Clergy: Boundaries, Safeguarding and Self-Care*
- *Power and Discrimination in Ministry, including EDI - prospective course leaders*

#### Christian Scriptures, History and Thought

- *The Global Reformed Tradition, Churches and Presbyterianism*
- *Ecumenical Studies & World Christianity (potentially with Scottish Episcopal Institute)*
- *Hebrew & Greek – if not taken as part of the BD*

#### Practice of Ministry/Mission (marked where suitable course leaders can be identified within the Church)

- *Workings of the Church (building management, accounts, manses, Kirk Session, General Trustees, Assembly Trustees, Presbytery Planning etc)*
- *The Law and Polity of the Church of Scotland, incorporating The Churches and the Civil Law – prospective course leaders*
- *What Do We Believe In? The Doctrine and Confessions of the Church of Scotland - available course leader*
- *Discipleship – Growing and Nurturing the Faith of Adults*
- *Religious Questions in Ministry ('Apologetics'), including e.g. suffering, war, human sexuality*
- *Mission as Justice – Public and Political Theology, including refugees and asylum seekers, poverty and injustice*
- *Eco-theology and Creation Sustainability*
- *Team Ministry in Practice, including working with volunteers*
- *Conflict and its Resolution in Practice – prospective course leaders*
- *Stewardship in a Congregation – Generosity and Giftings – available course leader*
- *Schools and Youth Ministry and Spirituality - available course leaders*
- *Rural Ministry and Mission*
- *Mental Health and Pastoral Practice*
- *Disability, Neurodiversity and Trauma-informed Practice in the Church.*
- *Priority Area Congregations and Ministry amongst the Poor*
- *Asian Religions – including Buddhism, Hinduism & Sikhism*

Plus, as presently above as start-of-year 'intensives' taught by Trinity + CofS:

- *Personal Spirituality*
- *Voice Training*
- *Visual Arts, Music, and Drama in Church and Worship – prospective course leaders*
- *'How to Run a Church' – An Intensive Introduction - available course leader*
- *Digital Communication, Mission and Theology*
- *End of Life, Funerals and Bereavement Care*
- *Parish Renewal: Missional Innovation and Church Growth*

## Appendix IV

### CAPABILITY PROCEDURE FOR PARISH MINISTERS ACT (ACT [ ] 2026)

Edinburgh, [ ] May 2026, Session [ ]

The General Assembly enact and ordain as follows:

#### Definitions

- 1.1 In this Act, the following words shall have the following meanings:
- (1) "Appointed Person" means a suitably competent minister appointed by Presbytery to act on its behalf, selected from a list maintained by the Legal Questions Committee of ministers with significant experience of parish ministry and who have received training in the administration of the Procedure.
  - (2) "Capability Committee" means a body of three persons, including at least one minister and at least one elder, drawn from the Capability Pool and constituted to deal with the Procedure under this Act.
  - (3) "Capability Pool" means a pool of up to fifteen ministers, elders, deacons and members appointed by the General Assembly on the nomination of the Nomination Committee, in line with the process set out in General Assembly Standing Orders for appointing persons to legal bodies, to serve on Capability Committees and Capability Appeal Panels.
  - (4) "Capability Appeal Panel" means a body of three persons drawn from the Capability Pool and constituted to deal with appeals against capability decisions under Part 3 of the Appendix to this Act.
  - (5) "Charge" means a sphere of pastoral duty to which a Minister is inducted and may include a Team Ministry Role as referred to in section 7(10) of the Presbytery Mission Plan Act (Act VIII 2021).
  - (6) "Minister" means a Minister of Word and Sacrament inducted by a Presbytery to a Charge and who is not serving under a contract of employment.
  - (7) "Procedure" means the Capability Procedure set out in the Appendix to this Act.
- 1.2 The Faith Action Programme Leadership Team shall make suggestions to the Legal Questions Committee of persons who are suitable for appointment to the Capability Pool. All persons appointed to the Capability Pool shall receive training in the administration of the Procedure.

#### The Procedure

2. In dealing with matters of capability, a Presbytery shall follow the Procedure set out in the Appendix to this Act.

#### Purpose of the Procedure: Improvement

- 3.1 The principal objective of the Procedure is to help Ministers whose performance falls below an acceptable minimum standard to improve in cases where the problems are not disciplinary in nature. It is designed to be supportive and to give Ministers the time, training and resources they need to improve performance.
- 3.2 It is expected that most performance-related matters will be identified and addressed informally without engaging the Procedure. Nevertheless, there will be occasions where informal steps are not appropriate and, in such cases, it will be necessary to implement the Procedure. If an improvement in performance cannot be achieved through the Procedure, it is possible that the pastoral tie will be severed.
- 3.3 Capability is demonstrated by the execution of the duties of parish ministry, in an individual context, to an acceptable minimum standard over a sustained period of time. It is about both what a Minister does and how he or she does it.
- 3.4 In assessing what is an acceptable minimum standard, there should be taken into account: (1) the requirements of the post, (2) the Competency Framework approved by the General Assembly of 2025, (3) the more general requirements of the Code of Professional Practice and Good Conduct for the ministries of the Church of Scotland approved by the General Assembly of 2022 and (4) the Terms of Responsibility for Ministers Serving in the Church of Scotland agreed by the General Assembly of 2024.
- 3.5 Lack of capability in one particular charge does not necessarily mean that the Minister is not capable of exercising any Ministerial function. Removal from one particular charge on capability grounds does not remove a Minister's status nor does it debar him/her from seeking another charge. However, a Minister who has been removed from a pastoral charge following use of the Procedure will be re-registered in the Register of Ministry maintained in terms of the Registration of Ministries Act (Act II 2017) in such category and with such conditions attached to his or her registration as may be determined by the relevant Capability Committee.

#### Principles for operating the Procedure

- 4.1 The Procedure is based on the following principles:
- a. the Procedure must not be used in response to complaints that are found to be frivolous or unsubstantiated;
  - b. unsatisfactory performance;
  - c. the Procedure should be carried out in a way that is fully in accord with the principles of natural justice;
  - d. appropriate HR and legal advice should be taken by those responsible for operating the Procedure;
  - e. the Minister should be given the opportunity to respond to all points made;
  - f. reasonable notice should be given in advance of any meeting;

- g. the Minister should have the right to be supported by a colleague or some other appropriate person who is not acting in a legal capacity;
  - h. sanctions should only be imposed if the Minister has not reached the specified level of improvement having been given reasonable opportunities to do so;
  - i. there should be a right of appeal against a decision to sever the pastoral tie;
  - j. meetings to resolve matters should be held as soon as reasonably possible after the issue has been raised and the evidence gathered, in order to minimise the level of anxiety experienced by those involved;
  - k. incapability related to ill health should be handled with reference to section 10 of this Act; and
  - l. the Presbytery should ensure that appropriate pastoral support and care is provided for Ministers undergoing the Procedure.
- 4.2 A decision to sever the pastoral tie on the ground of lack of capability should never be the outcome of a single meeting, but only after a series of conversations that have:
- assessed the evidence;
  - recorded dissatisfaction with performance;
  - provided evidence of opportunities given to improve and develop; and
  - noted where there was persistent failure to improve.
- 4.3 Before a Procedure begins, a Minister shall be informed in writing of:
- a. any matters relating to his/her performance which are to be taken into account in assessing his or her performance;
  - b. the details of the Procedure which is to be followed in assessing his or her performance which shall include the opportunity of a meeting between the Minister and the Appointed Person;
  - c. any action which may be taken following the completion of the Procedure;
  - d. the Minister's right of appeal against any decision to sever the pastoral tie.
- 4.4 Once the formal stage of the Procedure has been initiated by the issuing of a letter to the Minister in terms of paragraph 5 of the Procedure, a Minister shall not be entitled to demit his or her status or charge.

#### **Keeping records**

- 5.1 It is important, in the interests of all parties, to keep written records during the Procedure. All personal data should be held and used in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018. Records should include:
- the concerns raised about the Minister's capability;
  - the Minister's response;
  - findings made and actions taken;
  - the reasons for actions taken;
  - whether an appeal was lodged;
  - the outcome of the appeal; and
  - any subsequent developments.
- 5.2 Records should be treated as confidential.
- 5.3 Copies of meeting records should be given to the Minister, including copies of any formal minutes that have been taken. In certain circumstances (for example to protect a person supplying information) the Data Protection Act 2018 may allow some information to be withheld.

#### **After the severing of the pastoral tie**

6. Where the final Capability Committee at stage 3 of the formal part of the Procedure decides that the Minister is unsuitable for his or her current position, and should be removed from it, it is important to continue to provide support and pastoral care. In some cases, it might be appropriate to provide career counselling.

#### **Membership of the Capability Committee**

- 7.1 The Minister should be given the right to object to membership of the Committee, but only on cause shown.
- 7.2 Membership of the Capability Committee should where possible be the same at each stage of the Procedure, but no member of the Capability Committee may sit on any Capability Appeal Panel in the same case. Where necessary, for example because of illness, the Appointed Person may ask a substitute to serve on the Committee.
- 7.3 A decision may be reached by a majority of two out of three Committee members.

**Use of a shortened Procedure**

- 8.1 There will be exceptional cases in which the Procedure may be shortened, but the principles of natural justice and the opportunity to appeal against severance of the pastoral tie must not be jeopardised. They will include the following:
  - a. Cases where immediate improvement can be expected, through an easily acquired alternative pattern of behaviour or action likely to produce immediate effects. If the expected improvement does not occur, and there are no mitigating circumstances such as ill health or personal difficulties, the Procedure could move through each stage fairly quickly.
  - b. Cases arising during the first year of a Minister’s tenure where it becomes clear that he or she is not suited to the post and so not capable of undertaking what is required.
  - c. Cases of ill health (see section 10 below).
- 8.2 In these very particular cases, the Appointed Person, with advice as appropriate from the Head of HR and the Solicitor of the Church, may decide that a shortened Procedure should be used. Only one stage of the Procedure may be dropped: that is, there must always be a formal warning stage prior to holding a final capability meeting that might result in the severing of the pastoral tie.

**Implementation of decision at Presbytery**

- 9.1 The Presbytery shall meet within not less than 21 and not more than 35 days after receiving intimation of the written decision of the Capability Committee at stage 3 of the formal part of the Procedure and shall take any steps which may be required to implement the decision.
- 9.2 In the event of an appeal being lodged by a Minister against such a decision of the Capability Committee, the Presbytery shall meet not less than 21 and not more than 35 days after receiving intimation of the written decision of the Capability Appeal Panel and shall take any steps which may be required to implement the decision.

**Incapability due to Ill-Health - Dealing with absence**

- 10.1 The Procedure should be followed where the Minister is not off sick, or is off sick only occasionally or intermittently, but is not performing the duties of the post to an adequate standard. The Procedure should not normally be used if the Trigger Date in terms of the provisions of the Ill Health and Income Protection Act (Act [ ] 2026) or the Income Protection and Ill Health Act (Act VI 2019) has been reached; but the Procedure may on occasion be used in conjunction with these Acts where their application has been so triggered and it is evident that the Minister’s absence from work arises in whole or in part from the context in which the Minister is placed.
- 10.2 Where the Procedure is being used and there are ill health issues, the Procedure must still be followed and must be clearly documented to demonstrate that every attempt has been made to improve attendance or performance. In cases of persistent sickness absence or poor performance as a result of illness, it may be necessary to make clear to the Minister that, however genuine the health problem, severance of the pastoral tie is a possibility because the duties of the office are not being carried out or are not being performed to an adequate standard.
- 10.3 The handling of incapability due to sickness or injury needs to be distinguished from other capability issues. The Appointed Person should take a sympathetic and considerate approach, and the needs of the Minister must be borne in mind. The Appointed Person shall be entitled to require the Minister to undergo a medical examination (including an Occupational Health assessment) where he/she has reasonable concerns about their health. If the Minister fails to comply with such a direction or authorise the disclosure of any relevant medical records when requested to do so, those operating the Procedure may draw such inferences as appear to them to be appropriate in all the circumstances. In every case there will be different circumstances and varying factors to take into account, so the Procedure must be applied flexibly, for example by using a shortened Procedure as described at section 8 of this Act. In all cases:
  - a. evidence must be gathered;
  - b. the Minister must be offered the opportunity to comment;
  - c. a warning of the consequences of a lack of improvement must be given;
  - d. help and time must be given to improve;
  - e. a hearing should be held, if practicable, at which progress is reviewed; and
  - f. a formal warning stage must take place.
- 10.4 Time limits for the operation of each stage of the Procedure in sickness cases should, wherever possible, be established by agreement, after taking medical and other appropriate professional advice.
- 10.5 When thinking about how to handle these cases it is helpful to consider:
  - i. whether medical advice has been sought or an occupational health referral has been made;
  - ii. whether, if the Minister has a disability in terms of the Equality Act 2010, steps have been taken to make reasonable adjustments to the working environment or the way the role is carried out;
  - iii. whether, in other cases of sickness absence, steps have been taken to make temporary adjustments to the working environment or the way the role is carried out, to ease the Minister back to full duties;

- iv. the likelihood of, and prospective timescale for, a resumption of the full range of duties to the required standard;
- v. whether alternative work might be available and what support might be required to enable the Minister to obtain such work;
- vi. the effect of the Minister's absence on the parish and congregation; and
- vii. how any similar situations involving the Minister have been handled in the past.

**Currency of warnings**

- 11.1 Different periods can apply to different types of warnings. The period of validity should be clear. For example, as a guideline ACAS recommends that a first formal written warning might remain in force for up to six months while a final written warning may remain in force for twelve months (or more in exceptional circumstances). Warnings should cease to be 'live' following the specified period of satisfactory conduct. A decision to sever the pastoral tie should not be based on an expired warning but the fact that there is an expired warning may explain why the Capability Committee does not substitute a lesser sanction.
- 11.2 There may be occasions where a Minister's conduct is satisfactory throughout the period the warning is in force, only to lapse very soon thereafter. If such a pattern emerges, this should be borne in mind in deciding how long any warning remains in force.

**Suspending the Procedure**

- 12.1 If at any time during the course of the Procedure the Appointed Person decides that the concerns that have been identified should properly be dealt with by way of proceedings for discipline in terms of the Discipline Act (Act I 2019), the Appointed Person may by written notice to all parties suspend the Procedure. In such circumstances the capability inquiry will be sisted until such time as the Presbytery Clerk notifies all parties in writing either that the Procedure will be discontinued or that it will be resumed.
- 12.2 In no circumstances should the Procedure and Discipline proceedings operate at the same time in respect of the same conduct.

**APPENDIX – THE CAPABILITY PROCEDURE**

**PART 1: INFORMAL STAGE – STEPS BEFORE INVOKING THE FORMAL PROCEDURE**

**1. The role of the Appointed Person**

- 1.1 The oversight of parish ministry is the responsibility of the Presbytery, and it is for the Presbytery to use the Procedure to address inadequate service given by inducted Ministers. An Appointed Person will act on behalf of the Presbytery in these matters and to oversee the Procedure, particularly in the early stages. Where necessary, for example because of illness, the Appointed Person may ask a substitute Appointed Person to serve.
- 1.2 Any report that raises issues of capability should be referred initially to the Presbytery Clerk, who will refer the matter to the Appointed Person. When the Appointed Person is made aware of a potential capability matter, he or she should ensure that appropriate investigations are made to establish whether there is a capability issue and that written records are kept for later reference. The Procedure should not be taken further if the report that originated it is found to be vexatious or unsubstantiated.
- 1.3 The Appointed Person should collect information about the issue(s). If the person reporting the alleged capability problem is not prepared to be put on record or participate in the Procedure, the Appointed Person should normally not take the matter any further. If it appears to the Appointed Person that there is nevertheless an issue which requires to be addressed, he or she shall consult with the Presbytery Clerk and may decide to meet with the Minister to discuss any concerns.
- 1.4 The Appointed Person may discuss the matter with the Kirk Session where concerns have been raised on behalf of the Kirk Session and should ensure that both the person(s) reporting the issue and the Minister are informed about the substance of any such conversation.
- 1.5 The Appointed Person should consider any other information (which may include the content of a Congregational Action Plan) that helps to provide an overview of the Minister's performance. While some cases may be fairly clear-cut, others may be more complex and might require information to be gathered from a variety of sources.
- 1.6 Before deciding to implement the informal stage of the Procedure, the Appointed Person should:
  - discuss the case with the Head of HR in the Church's HR Department;
  - consider (in consultation with the Principal Clerk and the Solicitor of the Church) whether the case should be handled under another procedure e.g. complaints, discipline or ill-health. If poor performance is caused by ill-health, the case should proceed in accordance with section 10 of this Act.
  - check whether there might be issues related to misunderstanding arising from (e.g.) cultural assumptions or whether the issue can be resolved in some other way, for example by a timely offer of help or advice.
- 1.7 Whenever the Appointed Person holds a meeting with a minister, a note-taker should be present.

## **2. Informal meeting with the Minister**

- 2.1 If the Appointed Person decides to take the matter further, he or she should arrange a meeting with the Minister. The Appointed Person should write to the Minister a letter which complies with the requirements set out in section 4.3 of this Act. The meeting should be held without unreasonable delay whilst allowing the Minister reasonable time to prepare his or her case.
- 2.2 At the meeting the Appointed Person must review the issues with the Minister. In assessing whether there is a capability issue, the Appointed Person should take account of the Minister's particular strengths and gifts, but should remember that the primary issue will be the requirements of the charge and whether the post holder is meeting them to an acceptable standard.
- 2.3 One outcome may be that, after the facts have been gathered and considered, a complaint or concern is found to be unjustified or trivial. The Appointed Person may also take the view that the problems that have been identified are the result of particular circumstances or unrealistic expectations and do not give rise to any concerns about capability in the longer term.
- 2.4 If he or she decides that there is a capability issue, the Appointed Person should:
- indicate a commitment to identifying and overcoming shortcomings in the Minister's performance and a willingness to help with remedial measures;
  - explore with the Minister any contributory factors (such as domestic circumstances);
  - explore what can be offered to the Minister to assist in improving performance (see paragraph 3 below on helping to improve performance );
  - seek to agree with the Minister a plan of action to improve performance;
  - and set a date for reviewing progress, in no later than three months' time.
- 2.5 If the concerns were raised by others, the Appointed Person should inform them that action is being taken and that improvement is expected and will be monitored.

## **3. Helping to improve performance**

- 3.1 Ways in which a Minister may be helped to improve their performance include:
- coaching
  - training
  - counselling
  - altering working arrangements
  - a period of special leave
  - mediation
  - mentoring
  - exploring the possibility of transferring the Minister to other work, if such work is available suggesting that the Minister may wish to have an interview with the Church's People and Training Manager, who will be able to offer confidential advice about the Minister's abilities and help them consider whether it might be appropriate to explore the possibility of finding an alternative post.
- 3.2 This list is not exhaustive, and other options may be considered in the particular circumstances of each case.

## **4. Review of progress and decision on whether to move to formal stage**

- 4.1 After the agreed interval, the Appointed Person should review with the Minister and separately with those who initially raised the concerns whether improvement has taken place as hoped. If this review does not include the Kirk Session, the Appointed Person may decide to seek feedback from the Kirk Session.
- 4.2 The Appointed Person should also review the evidence in consultation with the Head of HR.
- 4.3 Having carried out such reviews, the Appointed Person should decide, on the basis of information gathered from the Minister and those who have been monitoring his or her performance, whether there has been sufficient improvement and, if not, whether or not to move to the formal stage of the Procedure. If the Appointed Person decides that sufficient improvement has taken place, he or she should write to the Minister confirming this and that no further action will be taken in relation to these concerns unless there is a recurrence in the future. If the appointed Person decides that sufficient improvement has not taken place, he or she should move to Part 2 (the Formal Stage) of the Procedure.

## **PART 2: THE FORMAL STAGE OF THE PROCEDURE**

### **5. Initiating the formal stage of the Procedure**

- 5.1 The Appointed Person should inform the Minister and the Presbytery Clerk that formal action will be taken.
- 5.2 From this point on, the Head of HR (or another member of staff of the HR department in the national office), who should work with the Appointed Person to ensure that the Procedure is properly followed, should be involved at every stage.

## 6. The right to be accompanied

6.1 The Minister should be given the right (subject to making a reasonable request) to be accompanied at all formal stages by a colleague or other appropriate person who is not (other than as permitted in terms of paragraph 9.5 below) acting in a legal capacity. What is reasonable will depend on the circumstances of each individual case. However, it will not be reasonable for a Minister to insist on being accompanied by someone whose presence would prejudice the hearing.

## 7. Formal procedure stage one – Appointed Person and first formal written warning

- 7.1 The Appointed Person, after taking advice from the Head of HR, should write to the Minister requiring him or her to attend a meeting with the Appointed Person and a representative from the HR Department. The meeting should be held without unreasonable delay whilst allowing the Minister reasonable time to prepare his or her case.
- 7.2 The letter referred to in paragraph 7.1 should provide information about the alleged incapability including copies of any documents which will be produced at the meeting and an invitation to the Minister to request the support of a colleague or other appropriate person who is not acting in a legal capacity.
- 7.3 A Minister who cannot attend a meeting should inform the Appointed Person well in advance whenever possible. If the Minister fails to attend through circumstances outside his or her control and unforeseeable at the time the meeting was arranged (e.g. illness) the Appointed Person should arrange another meeting. A decision may be taken in the Minister's absence if the Minister fails to attend the re-arranged meeting without good reason being notified to the Appointed Person before the time of the meeting.
- 7.4 If a Minister's colleague or other appropriate person cannot attend on a proposed date, the Minister may suggest another date, so long as it is reasonable.
- 7.5 At the meeting, the Appointed Person should explain the nature of the issues to the Minister and go through the information and documentation that has been gathered. The Minister should be given the opportunity to set out his or her case and answer any allegations that have been made. The Minister should also be allowed to ask questions.
- 7.6 The Minister's colleague or other appropriate person should be permitted, with the Minister's permission, to ask questions and make representations, but they should not be allowed to answer questions on behalf of the Minister.
- 7.7 Following the meeting, the Appointed Person should decide whether or not there is an ongoing capability issue. If not, the Minister should be informed in writing, and the matter goes no further.
- 7.8 If the Appointed Person decides that there is a capability issue, he or she should then go on to consider whether a warning is justified or not. In coming to a decision, account should be taken of:
- the Minister's service as a whole
  - the available information and documentation
  - actions taken in any previous case involving the Minister;
  - the explanations given by the Minister; and
  - whether the imposition of a formal warning is reasonable in all the circumstances.
- 7.9 If the Appointed Person decides that a first formal written warning should be given, he or she should write to the Minister:
- setting out the performance problem which has been identified and the improvement required, including an improvement plan incorporating targets, standards, deadlines and any further support or assistance;
  - seeking the commitment of the Minister to reaching the required standards;
  - setting up regular progress review meetings during the review period;
  - issuing a first formal warning with reasons, which the Minister is told will be placed on his or her personal file; and
  - informing the Minister that if there is no satisfactory improvement within a specified time period (normally between six weeks and three months depending on the nature of the issue) the outcome may be severance of the pastoral tie.
- 7.10 The Appointed Person should at the same time give a copy of the letter referred to in paragraph 8.9 to the Presbytery Clerk and to the Convener of the Superintendence Committee (or equivalent body) of the Presbytery.
- 7.11 A copy of the letter should be used as the basis for monitoring and reviewing performance over the specified period. This monitoring should be carried out by the Appointed Person in consultation with the Head of HR and should involve discussion with the Minister, the Session Clerk and those who initially raised the concerns to determine whether improvement has taken place. Any separate conversations with those who raised the matter or with the Session Clerk should be reported to the Minister. If at the end of the review period the Appointed Person considers that there has been a substantial but insufficient improvement, he or she may decide to extend the review period for a maximum of a further four weeks.

## **8. Formal procedure stage two - final formal written warning**

- 8.1 At the end of the period specified in the first formal written warning, the Appointed Person should again gather information as appropriate from those who have reported problems with the Minister's capability and others and from the Minister. The Appointed Person may decide that the required improvement has taken place; or that it is necessary to move to the next stage. He or she should inform the Presbytery Clerk accordingly.
- 8.2 The Appointed Person should write to the Minister as soon as possible after the end of the period specified in the first formal written warning.
- 8.3 The letter should either:
- a. advise the Minister that the Procedure is being discontinued in view of improved performance, with the expectation that standards will be maintained and that if his or her performance falls below the expected standard in the future the Procedure will be re-commenced, or
  - b. set out the unresolved performance issues and invite the Minister to a meeting with a Capability Committee to discuss the matter. The meeting should be held without unreasonable delay whilst allowing the Minister reasonable time to prepare his or her case.
- 8.4 The same process should be followed as for the first formal meeting described above. Notice of the decision of the Committee, with reasons, should be given to the Minister as soon as possible after the meeting.
- 8.5 If the Committee agrees that a final formal written warning should be given, the Committee should write a letter to the Minister:
- setting out the performance problem and improvements required;
  - issuing a final formal warning with reasons, which he or she should be told will be placed on his or her personal file; and
  - informing the Minister that, if there is no satisfactory improvement within a specified time period (normally between six weeks and two months from the date of the final written warning, depending on the nature of the issue), the outcome may be the severance of the pastoral tie.
- 8.6 The Committee should at the same time give a copy of the letter referred to in paragraph 9.5 to the Presbytery Clerk and to the Convener of the Superintendence Committee (or equivalent body) of the Presbytery.
- 8.7 A copy of the Committee's letter should be used as the basis for monitoring and reviewing performance over the specified period. This monitoring should be carried out by the Appointed Person in consultation with the Head of HR and should involve discussion with the Minister, the Kirk Session and those who initially raised the concerns to determine whether improvement has taken place. Any separate conversations with those who raised the matter or with the Kirk Session should be reported to the Minister. If at the end of the review period the Appointed Person considers that there has been a substantial but insufficient improvement, he or she may decide to extend the review period for a maximum of a further four weeks.

## **9. Formal procedure stage three – severing the pastoral tie**

- 9.1 The same process should be followed as for the first and second stages described above.
- 9.2 If at the end of the period prescribed in the final formal written warning the Appointed Person considers that the required improvement has taken place, no further action will be taken unless there is a recurrence of the concerns. If at the end of the period specified in the final formal written warning the Appointed Person considers that the required improvement has not taken place, he or she should write to the Minister notifying him or her that the required improvement has not taken place and requiring him or her to attend a formal hearing of the Capability Committee (which should where possible comprise the same people who sat on the previous Committee) to determine whether or not the pastoral tie should be severed.
- 9.3 The Appointed Person should give reasonable notice of the date of the hearing. The Minister should also be given:
- 9.4 If the Appointed Person and/or the Minister intend to call relevant witnesses they must give advance notice to the other party and the Committee members.
- 9.5 The Minister should be given the opportunity of making a representation to the Committee as to how he or she is able to meet the required standard and why the pastoral tie should not be severed. At this hearing (but not at any prior hearings) the Minister shall be entitled to legal representation and to apply for financial assistance towards the cost of such representation in terms of the Legal Aid in Disciplinary Proceedings Regulations (Regulations I 2018). The Committee should also have legal representation, provided by a solicitor within the Church's Law Department, if the Minister is legally represented at this hearing.
- 9.6 Notice of the decision of the Committee, with reasons, should be given to the Minister and to the Presbytery as soon as possible after the meeting. If so instructed by the Committee, the Presbytery shall forthwith re-categorise the Minister in the Register of Ministry and record any conditions attached to such categorisation. A copy of the Committee's decision shall be intimated to the Presbytery Clerk, to the Head of the Ministries and Mission, Faith Action Programme and to the Registrar of the Registration of Ministries Committee.

- 9.7 If the Committee decides that the pastoral tie should be severed, the Presbytery Clerk should normally serve notice in writing on the Minister:
- severing the tie with effect from a date three months after the date of the notice (the severance may be with immediate effect, with stipend being paid in lieu of notice and the Minister being entitled to remain in the manse for that three-month period);
  - stating the reason for severing the pastoral tie;
  - informing the Minister that he or she has the right to appeal;
  - giving the Minister normally seven days after the date of receipt of the letter (or longer if in all the circumstances seven days is unreasonable) to indicate his or her intention to appeal in writing to the Solicitor of the Church as Clerk to the Capability Appeal Panel; and
  - requiring him or her to state briefly the grounds of any appeal.

**PART 3: APPEALS**

- 10.1 If a Minister appeals within the period specified in paragraph 9.7, the Solicitor should promptly arrange to appoint a Capability Appeal Panel, who should invite the Minister to an appeal hearing. The appeal hearing should be held without unreasonable delay whilst allowing the Minister reasonable time to prepare his or her case. For the avoidance of doubt, the appeal shall be dealt with in terms of this procedure and not in terms of the Appeals Act (Act I 2014) nor the Ministries Appeal Panel Act (Act VII 2007).
- 10.2 No-one who is a member of a Capability Committee may serve on a Capability Appeal Panel in the same case, although the Capability Appeal Panel may ask members of the Capability Committee to appear before it or provide information in writing.
- 10.3 A Minister may appeal on the following grounds:
- that in the course of the stage three hearing there were irregularities in the process contrary to natural justice which may have had a material effect on the outcome, or
  - that the decision of the stage three hearing was unduly influenced by incorrect or immaterial facts, or failed to take sufficient account of relevant material facts
- 10.4 The Minister’s Notice of appeal should indicate briefly the grounds on which the appeal is based. The Capability Appeal Panel may request further information in writing prior to the date of the appeal hearing. A decision by the Capability Appeal Panel not to hear an appeal on the basis that no competent grounds of appeal have been put forward shall require the concurrence of the Principal Clerk and the Solicitor of the Church.
- 10.5 The appeal may be a complete re-hearing of the matter or it may be a review of the fairness of the original decision in the light of the process that was followed and any new information that may have come to light. This will be at the discretion of the Capability Appeal Panel depending on the circumstances of the case. The decision of the Capability Appeal Panel may be reached by a majority of two out of three members and may be to confirm the original decision, revoke the original decision or substitute a different decision. Notice should be given to the Minister as soon as possible after the appeal hearing setting out the decision of the Capability Appeal Panel, with reasons.
- 10.6 The appeal hearing should be attended by:
- the Appointed Person;
  - a legal adviser, from the Church’s Law Department;
  - the Head of HR;
  - the Capability Appeal Panel;
  - the Minister and his or her companion (if any); and
  - any relevant witnesses for either party where due notice has been given.
- 10.7 The Minister shall be entitled to legal representation at the appeal hearing and to apply for financial assistance towards the cost of such representation in terms of the Legal Aid in Disciplinary Proceedings Regulations (Regulations I 2018).
- 10.8 If an appeal is against severance of the pastoral tie, the date on which that takes effect will be delayed pending the outcome of the appeal.
- 10.9 The decision of the Capability Appeal Panel shall be final. Notice of the decision of the Panel, with reasons, should be given to the Minister and to the Presbytery as soon as possible after the meeting. If so instructed by the Committee, the Presbytery shall forthwith re-categorise the Minister in the Register of Ministry and record any conditions attached to such categorisation. A copy of the Committee’s decision shall also be intimated to the Principal Clerk, to the Head of the Ministries and Mission, Faith Action Programme and to the Registrar of the Registration of Ministries Committee.
- 10.10 If the Panel upholds the decision of the Capability Committee to sever the pastoral tie, then once procedure has been followed under section 9.2 of this Act, the Presbytery Clerk should normally serve notice in writing on the Minister confirming that the pastoral tie has been severed with effect from a date one month after the date of the notice (the severance may be with immediate effect, with stipend being paid in lieu of notice and the Minister being entitled to remain in the manse for that one-month period).

## Appendix V

### ILL HEALTH AND INCOME PROTECTION ACT (ACT [ ] 2026)

Edinburgh, [ ] May 2026, Session [ ]

The General Assembly hereby enact and ordain as follows:

#### **Definitions and Interpretation**

1. For the purposes of this Act and the Schedule attached hereto:
  - (a) "absence" shall mean absence from duties through ill health and "absent" shall be construed accordingly; absence for any other reason, including compassionate leave or study leave, shall be notified to the Presbytery and, in all cases except where this is not reasonably practicable, shall be subject to the permission of the Presbytery, but shall not be otherwise subject to the provisions of this Act;
  - (b) "FAPLT" shall mean the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team;
  - (c) "Ill Health Committee" shall mean a committee of three persons, comprising the Presbytery Clerk (or his or her appointed substitute), one member of the Presbytery of the bounds appointed for a fixed term to that office and one staff member of FAPLT;
  - (d) "Income Protection" shall mean insurance, with a deferred period of fifty two weeks, to protect against loss of income due to long term ill health;
  - (e) "Income Protection Provider" shall mean the Church's income protection provider for ministers from time to time;
  - (f) "Medical Assessment" shall mean an assessment from the Income Protection Provider of medical information supplied to the Income Protection Provider, which Medical Assessment may be indicative or final and which Medical Assessment shall give a view as to whether or not the minister is at that time (i) able or unable to perform his or her current role, and (ii) eligible or ineligible for Income Protection;
  - (g) a "minister" shall mean a minister inducted to a charge;
  - (h) "OHP Report" means a report prepared by an Occupational Health Physician appointed by FAPLT as to the ability of the minister to perform his or her current role;
  - (i) "Overall Absence Threshold" shall mean an absence period of a total of 500 days in any rolling three-year period;
  - (j) the phrase "return(s)(ed) to work" shall include a phased return;
  - (k) "Trigger Date" means the date on which a minister's absence has extended to six months continuously, or has totalled 180 days out of any rolling twenty four month period;
  - (l) "UK State Pension Age" shall mean a person's UK State Pension Age as determined at the relevant time by the UK Government's calculations<sup>[1]</sup>;
  - (m) Where months are referred to, that means calendar months.
  - (n) The headings in this Act are for information only and do not form part of this Act.

#### **Procedure for notifying ill-health**

2.
  - (1) Whenever a minister is absent from work due to ill-health, he or she shall inform FAPLT in terms of the Procedure appended as Schedule A to this Act.
  - (2) Failure to fulfil the requirements of Schedule A shall be intimated to the Presbytery, which may consider whether the minister is in desertion of his or her charge or whether any other matter of discipline has arisen.
3. The Presbytery shall be informed by its Clerk of the minister's absence (a) if an Interim Moderator is to be appointed, or (b) if the Presbytery requires to take any action in support or superintendence of the minister's congregation(s).

#### **OHP Report**

- 3A. At any time, whether or not a Trigger Date has occurred in terms of this Act, a Presbytery or an Ill Health Committee or FAPLT (in the case of FAPLT, after consultation with the Presbytery) may, in respect of a minister who is subject to the Presbytery's jurisdiction, make a referral to an Occupational Health Physician appointed by FAPLT and may require that an OHP Report be obtained. If this occurs, the minister shall co-operate fully in the preparation of the OHP Report. An Ill Health Committee shall consider, when following process under section 7 of this Act (ie in respect of a minister who is of an age such that after Medical Assessment he or she might be eligible to receive Income Protection), whether or not it might be helpful also to obtain an OHP Report in addition to ascertaining whether the minister might be eligible to receive Income Protection.

**Pastoral support**

4. FAPLT and the Presbytery shall work together throughout any period of absence of the minister to offer pastoral support, assistance and advice to the minister and to the affected congregation(s).
5. In relation to pastoral support of the minister, the following arrangements shall apply:
  - (1) Where an absence continues for four weeks or there have been several recent absences, the minister and FAPLT shall consult on the nature of his or her ill-health, and the extent to which it might be work-related;
  - (2) FAPLT shall, through its staff members or through external support services, offer to provide the minister with access to support interventions appropriate to the circumstances of the minister's absence, which may include provision of reasonable adjustments, coaching, counselling, supervision, therapy, Access to Work provisions, obtaining an OHP Report and/or phased return
  - (3) The minister will be expected to do all that he or she can to ensure a return to optimum health and to work.

**Ill Health Committee**

6. A Presbytery shall form an Ill Health Committee as required to deal with matters arising under this Act. Where a Committee is to be formed, the Presbytery shall request confirmation from FAPLT of the name of the staff member to appoint.

**Minister's ill health – procedure for ministers eligible for Income Protection**

7.
  - (1) Where the minister is of an age such that after Medical Assessment he or she might be eligible to receive Income Protection, the procedure set out in subsections 7(2) to (4) below shall apply.
  - (2) Following the Trigger Date:
    - (a) FAPLT shall as soon as practicable contact the minister to advise him or her of the terms of this Act and shall contact the Presbytery of the bounds to confirm that the provisions of this Act have been triggered;
    - (b) FAPLT shall as soon as practicable make a referral in respect of the minister to the Income Protection Provider, shall supply and facilitate provision of the required information to the Income Protection Provider and shall request that an indicative Medical Assessment on the minister is prepared; the minister shall co-operate fully in the preparation of any Medical Assessment;
    - (c) once the indicative Medical Assessment is available, normally around three months after the Trigger Date, the Ill Health Committee shall meet with the minister as soon as possible, to discuss the indicative Medical Assessment and to consider whether or not the minister is likely to be able to return to work within six months after the Trigger Date;
    - (d) subject to section 7(4), if the minister returns to work no later than six months after the Trigger Date then no further process shall occur under this Act at that time;
    - (e) the Ill Health Committee shall meet again with the minister once the final Medical Assessment is available, normally around six months after the Trigger Date. Within a further period of one month (ie by seven months after the Trigger Date) the minister must intimate whether or not he or she shall demit his or her charge with effect from a date which is at latest nine months after the Trigger Date. The Ill Health Committee shall, as soon as practicable after receipt of such intimation (or, in the absence of such intimation, within a period of eight months after the Trigger Date), report to Presbytery that the pastoral tie should be severed with effect from the date nine months after the Trigger Date, save that the Ill Health Committee shall have discretion to report otherwise in the following situations:
      - (i) the minister is undergoing medical treatment, or is in the process of post-operative recovery, and the prognosis is that he or she will be able to return to work imminently; or
      - (ii) the absence of the minister has resulted from more than one unrelated health cause in succession and it has not been possible to carry out a Medical Assessment for that reason; or
      - (iii) where FAPLT, after appropriate consultation, agrees that discretion should be exercised.
    - (f) Following the Presbytery's receipt of the Ill Health Committee's report under subsection 7(2)(e), the Presbytery (or those with delegated powers in this respect) shall meet within twenty one days to implement it. The Presbytery's decision shall be intimated without delay to the minister.
    - (g) If the Presbytery does not sever the pastoral tie, it (or those with delegated powers in this respect) shall meet again with the Ill Health Committee at regular intervals thereafter to consider whether the pastoral tie should be severed. If a minister has not returned to full work duties by the date which is twelve months after the Trigger Date, then subject to section 9A, the Presbytery shall sever the pastoral tie with effect from twelve months after the Trigger Date.
  - (3) For the avoidance of doubt, the Presbytery may sever the pastoral tie whether or not the minister is, in terms of the final Medical Assessment, eligible for Income Protection.
  - (4) This section 7 is subject to sections 8A and 8B.

### **Minister's ill health – procedure for ministers ineligible for Income Protection**

- 8.**
1. Where the minister is of an age such that he or she will not be eligible to receive Income Protection, the procedure set out in subsections 8(2) and (3) below shall apply.
  2. Following the Trigger Date:
    - (a) FAPLT shall as soon as practicable contact the minister to advise him or her of the terms of this Act and shall contact the Presbytery of the bounds to confirm that the provisions of this Act have been triggered;
    - (b) FAPLT shall as soon as practicable make a referral in respect of the minister to an Occupational Health Physician appointed by FAPLT and shall request that an OHP Report on the minister is prepared; the minister shall co-operate fully in the preparation of the OHP Report;
    - (c) once the OHP Report is available, the Ill Health Committee shall meet with the minister as soon as possible, to discuss the OHP Report and to consider whether or not the minister is likely to be able to return to work within six months after the Trigger Date;
    - (d) subject to section 8(3), if the minister returns to work no later than six months after the Trigger Date then no further process shall occur under this Act at that time;
    - (e) the Ill Health Committee shall meet again with the minister around six months after the Trigger Date and may request a further OHP Report. Within a further period of one month (ie by seven months after the Trigger Date) the minister must intimate whether or not he or she shall demit his or her charge with effect from a date which is at latest nine months after the Trigger Date. The Ill Health Committee shall, as soon as practicable after receipt of such intimation (or, in the absence of such intimation, within a period of eight months after the Trigger Date), report to Presbytery that the pastoral tie should be severed with effect from the date nine months after the Trigger Date, save that the Ill Health Committee shall have discretion to report otherwise in the following situation:
      - (i) the minister is undergoing medical treatment, or is in the process of post-operative recovery, and the prognosis is that he or she will be able to return to work imminently; or
      - (ii) where FAPLT, after appropriate consultation, agrees that discretion should be exercised.
    - (f) Following the Presbytery's receipt of the Ill Health Committee's report under subsection 8(2)(e), the Presbytery (or those with delegated powers in this respect) shall meet within twenty one days to implement it. The Presbytery's decision shall be intimated without delay to the minister.
    - (g) If the Presbytery does not sever the pastoral tie, it (or those with delegated powers in this respect) shall meet again with the Ill Health Committee at regular intervals thereafter to consider whether the pastoral tie should be severed. For the avoidance of doubt, if a minister has not returned to full work duties by the date which is twelve months after the Trigger Date, then subject to section 9A, the Presbytery shall sever the pastoral tie with effect from twelve months after the Trigger Date.
  3. This section 8 is subject to sections 8A and 8B.

#### **Overall absence**

- 8A. Where a minister is absent for a duration of or exceeding the Overall Absence Threshold, whether or not Trigger Date(s) have been reached and whether or not process has occurred to any extent under sections 7 or 8 of this Act, but the minister is still inducted to the charge, the Presbytery, after consulting with the Ill Health Committee, may decide to sever the pastoral tie at any time thereafter. The provisions of section 9 as to overall stipend payments shall apply, and the minister may remain in the manse for a further period of up to three months after the tie is severed under the General Trustees' Standard Conditions for Occupation of a Manse on a Caretaker basis; if this happens, the minister shall be responsible for any payments due to HMRC in respect of his or her occupation of the manse other than any National Insurance contributions due, payment of which shall be made by the Presbytery.

#### **Further absence**

- 8B. Where a minister returns to full work duties such that no further process occurs at that time, but then is absent again within the twenty four month period following the date of his or her return to full work duties, such subsequent absence which occurs within any rolling twenty four month period will be taken into account for the purposes of calculating a new Trigger Date and implementing the other provisions of this Act.

**Stipend and Income Protection**

- 9.**
- (1) A minister who is absent in terms of this Act and who is eligible to be assessed for Income Protection benefit shall receive payment as follows, subject to sub-section (4):
- (a) He or she shall be entitled to receive payment of an amount equivalent to (i) stipend appropriate to the charge and years of service at the date absence commenced for an overall period of twelve months if Income Protection is received, and fifteen months if not. Payment shall be at full rate for six months, half rate for the next six months and one third rate for a further three months (if applicable), (ii) the appropriate employer’s pension contribution, and (iii) if applicable, Car Allowance, all subject to deduction of tax and National Insurance contributions
  - (b) Subject to sections 9(1)(c) and 9(1)(d), where such a minister is found, in terms of the final Medical Assessment, to be eligible for Income Protection, he or she shall be entitled to receive payment of an amount equivalent to one third of stipend appropriate to the charge and years of service at the date absence commenced (subject to appropriate deductions) plus the appropriate employer’s pension contribution. Payment will begin on:
    - (i) where this Act is triggered by six months’ continuous absence, the date twelve months after absence commenced, or
    - (ii) where this Act is triggered by an absence of 180 days out of a twenty-four-month period, the date six months after the Trigger Date.

Payment will continue until the minister is assessed by the Income Protection Provider as able to return to full work duties, or as no longer eligible for Income Protection, or until the date of the minister’s UK State Pension Age, whichever of the three is earliest.
  - (c) During the whole time that a minister is in receipt of payments in terms of this section 9(1), the minister shall require to provide continuous medical certificates (fit notes) to FAPLT.
  - (d) The minister’s eligibility for Income Protection will be determined according to the rules and procedures of the Income Protection Provider as they exist from time to time, which rules may include regular reassessment of the minister as to eligibility.
  - (e) The amount payable to the minister in terms of this section 9(1) may be reduced if income over a certain amount (determined by the Income Protection Provider) is earned by the minister while he or she is in receipt of payments under this section 9(1).
- (2) A minister who is absent in terms of this Act and who is not eligible to be assessed for Income Protection benefit shall receive payment as follows:  
He or she shall be entitled to receive an amount equivalent to (i) stipend appropriate to the charge and years of service at the date absence commenced for an overall period of fifteen months. Payment shall be at full rate for six months, half rate for the next six months and one third rate for a further three months, (ii) the appropriate employer’s pension contribution, and (iii) if applicable, Car Allowance, all subject to deduction of tax and National Insurance contributions.
- (3) Notwithstanding sections 9(1) and (2), FAPLT may agree, on the advice of the Ill Health Committee, that a minister who is absent in terms of this Act may, once payments under section 9(1) or (2) have expired and where the pastoral tie has not been severed, receive payment equivalent to one-third of stipend appropriate to the charge and years of service at the date absence commenced (subject to appropriate deductions) and employer’s pension contribution, for such period as it may determine is appropriate, in its sole discretion, in the following circumstances:
- (a) the minister falls under section 8(1) and the Presbytery has not severed the pastoral tie because the minister is undergoing medical treatment or is in the process of post-operative recovery and the prognosis is that he or she will be able to return to work imminently; or
  - (b) the absence of the minister has resulted from more than one unrelated health cause in succession; or
  - (c) the minister is awaiting the outcome of a review/appeal under section 12(2);
- (4) Save as specified in section 9(3), and subject to the discretion of FAPLT, after appropriate consultation, no minister shall be entitled to receive, in any rolling three year period, overall payments equivalent to stipend, during period(s) of absence, of more than full rate for six months, half rate for six months and one third rate for three months.

**Phased return**

**9A.** On a phased return, the minister will receive full stipend for up to six weeks. If the minister has not returned to full work duties after six weeks, discussions shall take place between the minister, FAPLT and the Presbytery with a view to agreeing the minister’s duties going forward, on the understanding that a part-time role may not be feasible and stipend paid shall be appropriate to duties performed.

## **Manse**

### **10.**

- (1) Wherever this Act applies and results in the minister demitting his or her charge or in the pastoral tie being severed, then subject to subsections (2)(a) and (b) below, the minister shall be entitled to remain in his or her manse for one or other of the following periods:
  - (a) where this Act is triggered by six months' continuous absence, for a maximum period of fifteen months from the date when absence commenced, or
  - (b) where this Act is triggered by an absence of 180 days out of a twenty four month period, during that absence and then for a further period of nine months from the Trigger Date.
- (2) Exceptionally, where the Ill Health Committee deems it to be necessary, the minister may remain in occupation of the manse for a further period of up to three months after the date ascertained by subsection 10(1) and that under the General Trustees' Standard Conditions for Occupation of a Manse on a Caretaker basis; if this happens, the minister shall be responsible for any payments due to HMRC in respect of his or her occupation of the manse other than any National Insurance contributions due, payment of which shall be made by the Presbytery.

## **Confidentiality**

11. The Ill Health Committee shall conduct its proceedings and hold meetings in private and shall treat all its information and discussions in confidence. Meetings shall be minuted and the minute held in a Record Apart. For the avoidance of doubt, the Ill Health Committee shall retain in confidence all Medical Assessments and OH Reports received.

## **Appeals**

### **12.**

- (1) An appeal against a decision of the Presbytery taken in terms of section 7(2)(f) or (g) or 8(2)(f) or (g) of this Act may be brought by a minister on the following grounds: (a) material irregularity of process; or (b) decision influenced by incorrect material fact. The intention to appeal must be intimated to the Principal Clerk by the minister within fourteen days of the date on which the Presbytery's decision was intimated to the minister. The appeal shall be heard by the Ministries Appeal Panel in terms of the Ministries Appeal Panel Act (Act VI 2007). For the avoidance of doubt:
  - (a) no appeal may be brought as to the terms of an indicative Medical Assessment;
  - (b) the terms of a final Medical Assessment may only be appealed as referred to in sections 12(2) and 12(3) below respectively; and
  - (c) no appeal may be brought as to the exercise by the Ill Health Committee or FAPLT of any discretion given to them under this Act.
- (2) A minister who is aggrieved at the terms of a final Medical Assessment may ask FAPLT to invoke the Income Protection Provider's appeals process, in which case FAPLT, if it agrees, may do so, and the decision of the Income Protection Provider on the matter after the appeals process has been completed shall be final. To initiate this process, the minister must make a written request to FAPLT to invoke the Income Protection Provider's appeals process within fourteen days of receiving the final Medical Assessment.
- (3) No appeals save as stated in sections 12(1) and 12(2) shall be available in respect of matters covered by this Act.

## **Registration of Ministries**

13. Where in terms of this Act a minister demits his or her charge or a pastoral tie is severed, the minister shall thereafter be registered on the Register of Ministry in Category R or Category I, the decision as to which category being determined by the Ill Health Committee or the Presbytery, as appropriate. The normal rights of appeal against the decision of the Ill Health Committee or the Presbytery, as the case may be, (as set out in the Registration of Ministries Act (Act II 2017)) shall be available to the minister.

## **Meetings**

14. Meetings between the Ill Health Committee and the minister may take place by conference call, video conference call or other appropriate medium.

## **Commencement of this Act & Transitional provisions**

### **15.**

- (1) This Act shall come into force from 1 June 2026.
- (2) Sections 1, 2, 3, 3A, 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13 and 14 shall apply from that date.
- (3) In respect of the remaining provisions of the Act (ie sections 7, 8, 8A, 8B, 9, 9A and 10), they shall apply as follows: (i) if the Trigger Date for a minister is to be calculated on the basis of six months' continuous absence, they shall apply to any minister whose first day of absence is on or after 1 June 2026; (ii) if the Trigger Date for a minister is to be calculated on the basis of absence totalling 180 days in a rolling twenty four month period, they shall apply to any minister who reaches that total on or after 1 December 2026 (ie whose Trigger Date is on or after 1 December 2026); and (iii) all other ministers (with the exception of those falling within 3(ii)) who are already absent at 31 May 2026 shall continue to be assessed in terms of the relevant provisions of the Income Protection & Ill Health Act (Act VI 2019).

**Repeal**

**16.** The Income Protection and Ill Health Act (Act VI 2019) shall remain in force until such time as all ministers who are absent are being assessed in terms of this Act, at which point it shall be repealed.

**Schedule A**

**Procedure for notifying a minister’s absence to FAPLT**

1.
  - (1) Whenever a minister is absent through ill-health, then such minister, or his or her appointed nominee, shall on the first day of such absence notify the Pastoral Support Team of FAPLT in writing.
  - (2) Where an absence continues for more than seven days, the minister, or his or her appointed nominee, shall, within fourteen days of the first day of absence, provide a medical certificate to the Pastoral Support Team of FAPLT.
  - (3) The minister, or his or her appointed nominee, shall continue to provide medical certificates covering the whole period of absence, and a final medical certificate showing the date of return to work, throughout the whole period of absence, each such medical certificate to be sent to the Pastoral Support Team of FAPLT within seven days of its date of issue. Payment of stipend during the period of absence, in terms of the foregoing Act, is conditional on compliance by the minister with this requirement.
2. Whenever FAPLT is initially informed by a minister of his or her absence due to ill-health, it shall notify the Clerk to the Presbytery of the bounds. FAPLT shall keep the Payroll Unit of the Stewardship & Finance Department informed as to stipend payable from time to time.
3. FAPLT shall maintain the appropriate absence records and shall provide information to the Presbytery upon request.

[1] Ascertained currently by the calculator found on the gov.uk website

**Appendix VI**

**ILL-HEALTH AND INCOME PROTECTION ACT 2026 TABLE OF CHANGES FROM INCOME PROTECTION AND ILL HEALTH ACT 2019.**

TITLE OF SECTION	CHANGE MADE	OLD SECTION	NEW SECTION
Definitions and Interpretations	Minor tidying up of wording	1	1
	Income Protection Insurance deferred period reduces from 78 to 52 weeks	1(d)	1(d)ff
	NEW DEFINITION Overall absence threshold to be 500 days in any 3-year rolling period		1(i)
	REVISED DEFINITION Trigger date	1(k)	1(j)
Procedure for Notifying Ill-Health	Minor tidying up of wording	2	2
OHP Report	NEW SECTION this highlights the procedure for obtaining OHP reports.		3Aff
Pastoral Support	Wording update	5(1)	5(1)
	Insertion of OHP report into list of support interventions	5(2)	5(2)
	New sub-section		5(3)
Ill Health Committee			

Minister's Ill health – Procedure for ministers eligible for Income Protection	Clarified wording	7(2)(b)	7(2)(b)
	Updates/tidying of wording	7(2)(c,e,f)	7(2)(c,e,f)
	Severing of pastoral tie moves from 18 months after trigger date to 12 months after trigger date.	7(2)(g)	7(2)(g) ff
	New section subject to 8A and 8B	7(4)	7(4)
Minister's Ill health – Procedure for ministers ineligible for Income Protection	Clarified wording	8(2)(b,g)	8(2)(b,g)
	Updates/tidying of wording	8(2)(c,e,f)	8(2)(c,e,f)
	New section subject to 8A and 8B	8(3)	8(3)
Overall Absence	NEW SECTION		8A
Further Absence	NEW SECTION		8B
Stipend and Income Protection	Change to stipend payments to 6 months full stipend, 6 months of one half stipend and 3 months of one third stipend.		9(1)(a) ff
	Change the combined absence rules from 300 days in any 22 month period to 180 days in any 24 month rolling period.	9(1)(b)(ii)	9(1)(b)(ii) ff
	Update of Wording		
	Agreed stipend paid during ill -health only once in a 3-year rolling period.	9(1)(c)	9(1)(c)
	Updates	9(1)(4)	9(1)(4)
	New sub-section	9(3)(b,c)	9(3)(b,c)
			9(4)
Phased Return	NEW SECTION		9A
Manse	Variation/update	10 (2) (b)	10(2)
Appeals	Previous Section 3 removed	12(3)	
Registration of Ministries	Unchanged	13	13
Meetings	Unchanged	14	14

Commencement of this Act & Transitional provisions	Updated wording and addition of transitional Provisions	15	15
Repeal	Updated wording	16	16
Schedule A	Minor Tidying of wording	1(1), 2	1(1), 2

**ACT AMENDING THE CALL, ELECTION AND APPOINTMENT OF MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT ACT (ACT XI 2025)**

*Edinburgh, [ ] May 2026, Session [ ]*

The General Assembly hereby enact and ordain that the Call, Election and Appointment of Ministers of Word and Sacrament Act (Act XI 2025) be amended as follows:

1. *Delete the existing section 28 and substitute the following:*

**“28. Failure to Nominate**

The exercise by a congregation of its right to call a minister shall be subject to a time-limit of twelve months; this period shall be calculated from the date when intimation is given of the grant of Permission to Call.

If no election has been made and intimated to the Presbytery by the expiry of that time then the Permission to Call expires and the Vacancy Procedure Committee shall review the matter in consultation with the Presbytery Committee which has responsibility for implementation and review of the Approved Mission Plan. Thereafter the Vacancy Procedure Committee may either (1) remit the matter to the said Committee, which may resolve to review the relevant aspects of the Approved Mission Plan in accordance with the PMP Act or (2) if the Vacancy Procedure Committee is still satisfied that a minister should be appointed, resolve that the Permission to Call shall be reinstated and the Vacancy Procedure Committee shall proceed in one of the following ways:

- (a) grant an extension, which shall usually be for a further six months and instruct the Kirk Session to revise and update the Parish Profile in line with the template published in the Guidelines for Kirk Sessions. If no appointment is made in this further period, the Vacancy Procedure Committee shall proceed again in terms of this section of the Act and may select any option, including further extensions;
- (b) instruct that a fresh Nominating Committee be elected in terms of section 15 above, subject to a further time-limit on the right to call of six months, calculated from the date that the Vacancy Procedure Committee so resolves. The process shall then be followed in terms of this Act from the point of the election of the Nominating Committee; or
- (c) take steps to make such an appointment, proceeding as follows:-
  - (i) The Vacancy Procedure Committee shall discharge the Nominating Committee, instruct the Advisory Panel as a whole to bring forward to a subsequent Presbytery meeting the name of an eligible individual for appointment to the charge and intimate this instruction to the Presbytery and the congregation. If satisfied with the recommendation brought by the Advisory Panel, the Presbytery shall thereupon make the appointment.
  - (ii) The Presbytery Clerk shall thereupon intimate to the person concerned the fact of his or her appointment, shall request him or her to forward a letter of acceptance along with a certified extract from the Register of Ministry showing that the minister has Category **O** registration or other evidence of eligibility to be called in terms of section 18(1) above, as the case may be, together with evidence of membership of the PVG Scheme, as defined in the Safeguarding Act (Act XVI 2025) (and in addition if applicable Safeguarding clearance as specified in section 22(4)(d)(ii) above), and shall arrange with him or her to conduct public worship in the vacant church or churches on an early Sunday.
  - (iii) The Presbytery Clerk shall cause intimation to be made in the form of Schedule J that the person appointed will conduct public worship on the day specified and that a Call in the usual form will lie with the Session Clerk or other suitable person, for not less than eight free days within a two week window, to receive the signatures of the congregation. The conditions governing the signing of the Call shall be as in section 26 above.
  - (iv) At the expiry of the time allowed, the Call shall be transmitted by the Session Clerk to the Presbytery Clerk who shall lay it, along with the documents referred to in sub-paragraph (ii) above, before the Presbytery at its first ordinary meeting or at a Specific Purpose meeting.”

## Appendix VIII

### PROPOSED SABBATICAL SCHEME

#### What do we understand by a Sabbatical?

At its most basic, a sabbatical is an intentional period of time away from normal day-to-day work agreed between the person on sabbatical and their workplace. Increasingly, secular employers are seeing the value of giving people breathing space from the hectic pace of today's work practices.

For those in Christian service, the above understanding has the wrong focus. Whilst a pastoral sabbatical should include rest and involve time away from day-to-day duties, these are to allow the person on sabbatical to reconnect with God and to renew their soul for the next phase of Christian leadership.

#### Why undertake a sabbatical?

In the Old Testament, God instructed Israel to adopt rhythms of work and rest. Even the land rested:

"Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy." [Exodus 8:9-11]

"For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the beasts of the field may eat." (Exodus 23:10-11)

The Gospels also show Jesus taking himself away to a quiet place on numerous occasions. He too built rest into his rhythms:

"Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed." [Luke 5:15-16]

Between ever-present emails and messages demanding an instant response, the world we live in today does not naturally offer times of rest. Whether you are at home, in the office or on the highest mountain, stepping out requires a conscious act of willpower. Over time, the effect of this can be to disconnect us from God because we spend so much time running just to keep up. How can you hear God when you are so busy keeping everything around you going?

**A sabbatical offers the chance to slow down and refocus on God;** to let go of the noise to hear God's voice, and to stop answering all the emails so we can see God is talking to us. A sabbatical should reinvigorate a leader for their next phase of ministry.

#### What is proposed?

Presbyteries would work with applicants to help ensure everything is in place to go on sabbatical.

This includes:

- Reimbursing congregations for pulpit supply fees during the sabbatical
- Managing Expectations
- Clarifying your reasons for wanting to go on sabbatical
- Clarifying expectations on what you want out of the sabbatical
- Clarifying your congregation's expectations of what the sabbatical will and will not be
- Clarifying what Presbytery is hoping to achieve from your sabbatical

#### Planning

- Ensuring preaching and pastoral cover is in place, to extend to the week following the end of the sabbatical, so you are not thrown back in at the deep end
- Setting the duration of sabbatical, from four to six weeks.
- Prayer support arrangements whilst you are on sabbatical
- Working with the congregation beforehand to identify boundaries, such as popping round to see you whilst on sabbatical or if a significant member of the congregation dies
- Working with you to clarify if you are staying at home or going away, and other practicalities
- Making clear the cost of your sabbatical and any split between local/presbytery funding

#### Other

- Any other areas to be settled prior to sabbatical

## Eligibility

- Anyone in Christian leadership of a congregation
- Agreement of the Kirk Session of all congregations from which sabbatical will be taken
- Agreement of the Presbytery
- A minimum of 5 years within the current charge or congregation that went on to become part of the current charge
- A minimum of 5 years since last taking a presbytery sabbatical

Agreement to undertake a Ministry Development Conversation either at the start or end of the Sabbatical [[MIN-Ascend-MDC-BROCHURE-WEB.pdf \(churchofscotland.org.uk\)](#)] or to find a trusted colleague to support you throughout, who will report on the experience at the end of the Sabbatical.

Note: Pulpit supply will only be reimbursed when evidence of a Ministry Development Conversation or the appointment of a trusted colleague is submitted to Presbytery.

It is also important to remember that rhythms of rest and reflection should be part of our normal Christian lives. It is hoped this initiative will show the value of such rhythms and help applicants to embed them in their day-to-day practice long after their sabbatical period has concluded.

**National schemes such as Study Leave, taking regular days off, going on retreat and regular supervision are all also commended to all.**

## Appendix IX

### REGULATIONS AMENDING REGULATIONS FOR REMUNERATION AND REIMBURSEMENT OF PARISH MINISTERS (REGULATIONS I 2015) (AS AMENDED)

Edinburgh, [ ] May 2026, Session [ ]

The General Assembly hereby enact and ordain that the Regulations for Remuneration and Reimbursement of Parish Ministers (Regulations I 2015), as amended, be amended as follows:

1. *In the opening paragraph of section 2, after the word "congregation" on line 3 add "*, provided that any claim by the minister must normally be submitted within three months of incurring the expense".
2. *In section 2.7, after the word "duties" add "*, and the cost of subscriptions to programmes, applications and other internet services wholly, necessarily and exclusively required for ministerial duties".  
*In the penultimate paragraph of section 2, for the words "Log Book" on line 1, substitute "record (either electronically or in hard copy format)" and for the words "Log Books" on the final line substitute "travelling expenses".*
3. *In the second bullet point of the Schedule, Part 2, for "Regulations VII, 2007 (Manses) and III, 2013 (Manse Adjudication Committee)" substitute "The Manse Adjudication Regulations (Regs [ ] 2026)"*
4. *In the third bullet point of the Schedule, Part 2, for "Her Majesty's Revenue and Custom" substitute "His Majesty's Revenue and Customs".*

**Appendix X**

**PUBLIC LIFE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE – 2025 DELIVERANCE ACTIONS**

Summary of activity as a result of the Deliverance of the 2025 General Assembly in relation to the Report of the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team – Public Life and Social Justice Programme Group

Deliverance	Comment
<b>JOINT REPORT OF THE THEOLOGICAL FORUM AND THE FAITH ACTION PROGRAMME LEADERSHIP TEAM ON ASSISTED DYING</b>	
4. Acknowledging that the introduction of assisted dying legislation has the potential to negatively impact the quality and accessibility of palliative and end-of-life care, call on the Scottish Government to prioritise the development of excellent palliative care services to ensure that they are universally available and urgently review the funding models currently in place.	In our work in relation to advocacy on the Assisted Dying Bill, we have continued to prioritise the importance of palliative care, and we will continue to do so in future policy reviews and in our engagement with MSPs and the Scottish Government.
5. Acknowledging the diversity of sincerely held theological views within our broad Church, reaffirm the Church of Scotland’s opposition to assisted dying.	We have been clear in our advocacy work that the view of the General Assembly was to oppose legislation allowing assisted dying. This deliverance has been the basis for our engagement and the Moderator’s role, particularly in the run-up to the Stage 3 debate and vote.
6. Agree that if assisted dying is legalised, robust safeguards must be in place for all involved, including medical staff whose ethical and moral principles should be respected, and to support and protect potentially vulnerable groups, including those with life-limiting illnesses, disabilities, mental health issues and dementia.	In our advocacy and messages to MSPs ahead of Stage 3, we emphasised our concerns in relation to these points, should the Bill pass.
7. Acknowledge that further resources and pastoral care training will be required, from FAPLT, should assisted dying be legalised.	At the time of writing, we are still awaiting the outcome of Stage 3, but we expect it will be some years before the first assisted death would take place if passed. We remain committed to developing resources if necessary.
8. Recognising the value of open discussion around death and dying, commend the Report for further study, reflection and dialogue.	The Report and associated materials are available on the website, along with some discussion starter questions.
<b>FAITH ACTION PROGRAMME LEADERSHIP TEAM – PUBLIC LIFE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE</b>	
9. Instruct the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team to consider what it means to be a justice-seeking Church, and to report to a future Assembly on how work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation is being supported and developed ( <i>Section 11</i> ).	Work on this project has begun, though it was delayed somewhat due to the mid-year departure of the Programme Group Convener.  We expect that a substantive report will be brought to the 2027 General Assembly.
10. Welcome and endorse the initiative for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty and encourage congregations to consider how to promote opportunities for worship, education, advocacy and practical action to support care for creation ( <i>Section 12</i> ).	We contacted the Fossil Fuel Treaty Initiative to confirm the Church of Scotland could be listed; we have spoken out against further offshore fossil fuel exploitation in Scottish waters, including Rosebank.
11. Instruct the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team to continue to support the development of the Church’s work around the legacies of slavery, including by a) engaging Presbyteries in the creation of the statement of acknowledgement and apology; b) reviewing the recommendations of the 2023 report ‘The Church of Scotland and the Legacies of Slavery’; and c) bringing an updated plan of action to the General Assembly of 2026 ( <i>Section 13</i> ).	This Report is presented to the 2026 General Assembly.

<p>12. Encourage the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team, as part of the Church of Scotland’s witness in seeking justice, to consider the need to uphold truth and uprightness in the public square, and challenge misinformation and lies which so often lead to division and distrust.</p>	<p>The Programme Group, FAPLT and Media Relations team have kept in close touch through the course of the year and have sought to work together when making views known either in private or public. We recognise the risks of being seen to be party political, but also the wish of the Assembly that we remain steadfast in our support for truth and respect in public discourse.</p>
<p>13. Encourage congregations to engage with the anti-poverty Poverty Alliance march in October 2025 and instruct FAPLT to share information of the march with Presbyteries and instruct Presbyteries to share this information with Session Clerks and Ministers.</p>	<p>We were grateful to the many groups and thousands of people who participated in the event on 25 October, and we continue to work with the Policy Alliance for events, policy campaigning and awareness raising of the reality of poverty in Scotland.</p>

**Appendix XI**

**ALLOCATION OF MINISTRIES NUMBERS**

Presbytery Number	Name	Allocation
1	Edinburgh & West Lothian	65.5
2	Lothian and the Borders	44
3	South West Total	78
4	Clyde	40
5	Glasgow	84
6	Forth Valley and Clydesdale	59.5
7	Fife	44.5
8	Perth	78
9	North East and the Northern Isles	87
10	Clèir Eilean Ì	71
11	Lewis	5
12	England	4
13	International	5
		665.5

## Appendix XII

### FINANCIAL INFORMATION AND ALLOWANCES

#### IX.1 Stipends and Salaries

The Assembly Trustees approved an increase of 2.5% to stipend & salary scales for 2026.

##### Stipend Scale (including Associate Ministers) 2026

Point 1 £33,244

Point 2 £35,418

Point 3 £37,591

Point 4 £39,766

Point 5 £40,853

##### Ministries Development Staff Scales 2026

###### MDS General Scale

Point 1 £30,274

Point 2 £31,264

Point 3 £32,251

Point 4 £33,242

Point 5 £34,224

###### Team Leader Scale

Point 1 £36,859

Point 2 £37,682

Point 3 £38,503

Point 4 £39,328

Point 5 £40,150

##### Deacon Scale (Genuine Occupational Requirement)

Point 1 £32,251

Point 2 £33,242

Point 3 £34,224

Point 4 £35,213

Point 5 £36,200

##### Island Allowance

Island allowances also increase by 2.5% for 2026.

Outer Island Allowance: £2,166 pa

Inner Island Allowance: £852 pa

##### Travel Expenses 2026

Travel expenses payable remain as:

Rates for those providing their own car:

a) to be reimbursed locally to ministers and MDS providing their own car for pastoral duties:

45p per mile for the first 10,000 miles

25p per mile for all additional mileage

Ministers also receive capital reimbursement of £80 per month paid through central payroll.

- b) reimbursement of travel expenses for students, probationers, OLMs, auxiliary ministers and locums:
  - 45p per mile for the first 10,000 miles
  - 25p per mile for all additional mileage
- c) reimbursed locally to ministers and MDS providing their own motor bike for pastoral duties:
  - 24p per mile travelled per annum
- d) reimbursed locally to ministers and MDS providing their own pedal bike for pastoral duties:
  - 20p per mile travelled per annum

#### IX.2 Recommended Pulpit Supply Fee and Expenses

In Charges where there is only one diet of worship, the Pulpit Supply Fee shall be a Standard Fee of £100. In Charges where there are additional diets of worship on a Sunday, the person fulfilling the Supply shall be paid £50 for each additional service.

In all cases, Travelling Expenses shall be paid. Where there is no convenient public conveyance, the use of a private car shall be paid for at the standard rate of 45p per mile.

#### IX.3 Removal and Disturbance Allowance

When a Minister is called to a Charge, the congregation(s) to which the Minister is called shall meet the removal costs incurred in transporting the minister's personal effects into the manse of the Charge. In addition, a manse disturbance allowance of up to £1,740 can be paid on production of appropriate receipts.

When a minister retires on account of age or infirmity, and in the case of a widow(er) of a Minister who dies in service, Faith Action will meet the cost of removal expenses. The removal costs paid are classed as a taxable benefit.

#### IX.4 Funerals

Where a congregation calls upon the services of a minister not already in receipt of a stipend, or other suitably qualified person, to conduct a funeral, a fee of £100 may be paid by the congregation. On no account should such a fee be charged to the family of the deceased.

For the avoidance of doubt, no fee may be offered to or received by a serving Parish Minister for the conduct of a funeral service, whether in their own or another parish.

#### IX.5 Vacancy Allowance

From 1st January 2026 only vacant congregations who have permission to call can have the costs of a locum (for two pastoral days plus a Sunday service or two services for a linked charge) paid for by FAPLT, or if no locum is in place, can be reimbursed for the costs of pulpit supply for Sunday service (two for a linked charge).

#### IX.6 Guardianship Allowance

For 2026 the Guardianship Allowance remains at £933 per month.