

Nomination Committee Speech—General Assembly 2023

Rev Julie Rennick

Moderator, it gives me great pleasure to bring the report of the Nomination Committee to the General Assembly. This is my fourth and final speech, and, for the first time, I am delighted to be able to share with commissioners that we received enough nominations this year!

Taking over, as I did, in May 2020, when we did not, of course, meet in General Assembly, my term of office has been very different to all my predecessors.

The 2020 report was delivered in an empty Assembly Hall in October of 2020, which is why I, unlike my predecessors, am presenting for the fourth time. The subsequent years have seen further change and transition; we now meet virtually rather than in person, and the committee numbers are fewer, but possibly more focussed because of this. I cannot thank the team that makes up the Nomination Committee enough for their diligence and insight. They have risen to the challenge and their contributions and dedication have been truly invaluable.

This year, we present nominations for a whole new body: The Faith Action Programme Leadership Team. The interviews, and recruitment for this were rigorous and we took time to seek the right people for a very challenging new way of working. The membership includes nominees from Presbyteries; it includes those who have very particular experience and skills, and it is hoped that it will be able to grasp the vision of what is practical, missional and aspirational for the future of our church.

One of the biggest challenges we face when considering nomination to any of the standing committees is to ensure there is balance. We seek to achieve a balance between ministers and elders, age profiles, geographical spread and gender. It is not a small task, and we strive to ensure that in all final tallies, wherever possible, there is balance.

This year, as we began, we received nominations—from 67 men and 53 women.

We received nominations from as far north as Orkney, and from as far south as Jersey. We received nominations from ministers, deacons, elders and congregation members; they were nominated by ministers, presbyteries, Kirk Sessions, Guilds, deacons and elders.

In the final tally, new appointments were offered to 49 men and 43 women.

The process for appointing conveners to Standing Committees varies between each committee, each adopting their own process, consulting the Nomination Committee and outlining the steps they have taken to reach their preferred appointee.

For the new Faith Action Programme Leadership Team, we conducted interviews via Teams, and had conversations with a variety of folks who had both vision and enthusiasm, and we feel that this will give the new body the best start possible in this season of change and challenge for the Church of Scotland.

Many of the reports we have heard this week have been difficult to listen to; there is a sense of fear and anxiety for what the coming years will bring. We are in a season of transition, coming out of the pandemic, into a church which is experiencing accelerated decline. We need to come together to find new ways of working. There are hard choices to be made, but there is also hope. There are still those who are prepared to offer their services to the wider church, there are still those who are prepared to give their time and skills and share their knowledge and understanding to help us move forward, embracing necessary change and finding a new and hope-filled future – this gives me hope, even in these demanding days.

As I deliver this, my final report as convener, there are changes afoot within our committee and the staff support team; I am delighted to hand over to my vice convener, Andrew Gardner and wish him well as he takes on the convener role.

For the staff, Dave Kendall has been the committee secretary for the past four years, but now we welcome Victoria Linford as she takes up her new position as Presbytery Resource Advisor, working very closely with both Presbyteries, and as the Secretary to the Nomination Committee. Carron Lunt has been the administrator for the committee for many years, and her depth of knowledge has been a real blessing; Gordon Macnaughton has been shadowing her, and has gradually taken the reins during this year, and I know that he will be a great asset to the committee when they start up again after the summer to prepare for the next round of nominations. Thanks to all who have worked with us, in whatever way, and I wish you all well in the season to come.

Moderator, it gives me pleasure to present the report of the Nomination Committee, and move the deliverances.