



The National Church

Presbyterianism commits people to work together. Decisions are made at all levels by groups of people in Kirk Sessions, Presbyteries and the General Assembly. Issues brought to these bodies, and the developments they instruct, are often carried out by teams working together.



The General Assembly

The General Assembly meets for only one week annually. The Assembly's agencies - a range of Councils and Committees sometimes referred to collectively as the 'National Church' - take forward the Assembly's instructions the rest of the time. Committees have responsibility for issues concerning the Church and its various relationships with many bodies. Most Councils and Committees report directly to the General Assembly through reports contained in a publication, which is known as the 'Blue Book', which detail their recent work. The Church of Scotland website and the Church of Scotland Yearbook, which is a collection of statistical data published annually, provide more general information.

“The ‘National Church’ in the Church of Scotland refers to the agencies of the General Assembly, a range of Councils and Committees, in a collective manner.”

The members of all Councils and Committees come from local churches. Offering age and gender balance and a fair geographical representation, they bring their insights and experience as a key contribution to the work of Councils and Committees. So, elders, deacons, ministers and members are the ones who meet, pray and discuss - and form the National Church. While staff offer guidance and assistance, provide background reports and prepare papers, it is the members who take decisions and their conveners who give an account of this work at the following General Assembly.

If You were to Serve on a Committee ...

If you were to serve on a Committee, you would find yourself working alongside people from all across Scotland and beyond, learning about a wide range of worship styles, church involvement in local communities, and varied opportunities seized in many ways. You would meet people involved in different walks of life whose insights are fascinating, and you would have opportunities to contribute your unique viewpoint which would help make the church more effective in engaging in God's mission. Some members' knowledge and experience of church life is extensive and for others



theological reflection is minimal. However, the views of those who have more recently become involved in church life are no less valuable. You are likely to find yourself working alongside people who are rather like you, as well as those whose varied views will enrich your own. The insights of all are welcome, and some lasting friendships have begun at committee meetings. You are also likely to learn a great deal about the Church of Scotland in its breadth of understanding, the ways it engages in the life of the nation and the world, and its wide-ranging service in Christ's name. This involvement gives unparalleled opportunities to learn first-hand what is happening across the whole diverse, energetic church.

Attentive Listening and the Courage to Share

Committee work requires attentive listening and the courage to share your ideas and experiences. Some of the issues are complicated and may seem to have few straightforward solutions, but you are not expected to come up with all the answers. Instead, your role as a Committee member is to work in a team to develop as helpful a response as possible, to plan creatively and sensitively and to discern, alongside others, the movement of God's Spirit and to respond appropriately. Councils are not simply reacting to events: they often think radically, dream with vision and enthusiastically plan new ideas and initiatives so that the people of God may be energised and enabled to worship, witness, serve and grow in faith.

Information about nominating individuals to serve is available on the Church website. Membership usually lasts four years and meetings take place, on the whole, in major cities and often at the Church of Scotland national offices (121 George Street, Edinburgh). Travelling is a challenging part of serving but can be a useful time to read, work or reflect, and travel costs are reimbursed. Meetings invariably start with prayer or a reflection and end by all together saying 'the Grace' to one another. God does not merely



book-end the discussions but is present amongst people of faith who, offering their knowledge and expertise, together seek to serve God's Church and Kingdom. Your contribution could be invaluable.

Further reading and resources

General Assembly - www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about_us/general_assembly

Councils and Committees -

www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about_us/councils_committees_and_departments

Nomination Committee -

www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about_us/councils_committees_and_departments/committees/nomination_committee