

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

# GENERAL ASSEMBLY REMITTS

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2 & 3 OCTOBER 2020



# GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2020

## REMITTS

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Instructions to both (1) Presbyteries, Kirk Sessions, Congregations and Individuals and (2) GA Standing Committees and Trustees

### Notes

**Congregational meeting Protocols can be found here:**

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/covid-19-coronavirus-advice/conducting-congregational-meetings>

### LEGAL QUESTIONS COMMITTEE

4. In relation to Youth Representatives:
  - (a) Amend Standing Order 35(ii) as detailed in section 2.2 of the Report.
  - (b) Instruct the Faith Nurture Forum to devise a suitable process for selecting the additional ten Youth Representatives from the applications received and report to the General Assembly of 2021.
  - (c) Instruct the Legal Questions Committee in consultation with the Faith Nurture Forum and the Assembly Business Committee to review the arrangements for Presbytery Youth Representation at the General Assembly and report to the General Assembly of 2024 or sooner.
5. Note that (1) the Vacancy Protocol and (2) the arrangements for Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions to meet and vote by video-conferencing or audio-conferencing or a combination of the two, agreed by the Commission of Assembly on 7 July 2020, have proved useful and continue these arrangements until the General Assembly of 2021.
6. In relation to congregational meetings:
  - (i) Agree that until the opening day of the next General Assembly it shall be permissible for a Presbytery to effect adjustment in terms of the Appraisal and Adjustment Act (Act VII 2003) ("the Act") where a Basis of Adjustment has been considered and voted upon by the congregation(s) involved in the manner specified in the Congregational Meetings on Bases of Adjustment Protocol set out in Appendix E, provided that the adjustment process otherwise complies with the terms of the Act.
  - (ii) Agree that until the opening day of the next General Assembly it shall be permissible for the Delegation of Assembly to issue a Unitary Constitution in terms of the Congregational Constitutions Act (Act XIX 1964) where the congregation(s) has/have agreed to adopt that Constitution in the manner specified in the Congregational Meetings for Adopting the Unitary Constitution Protocol set out in Appendix F.

- (iii) Agree that the Protocols set out in Appendices E and F may subsequently be amended as directed by the Committee, acting reasonably and in the interests of all parties.
- 7. Agree that until the opening day of the next General Assembly, a Financial Board of a congregation (as that expression is used in the General Trustees (Delegated Powers) Act (Act VII 1995)) may meet and vote by video-conferencing or audio-conferencing or a combination of the two, provided that the principles set out in the Protocol agreed by the Commission of Assembly on 7 July 2020 shall be adhered to by all involved.
- 8. In relation to congregational meetings held in relation to the sale or disposal of church buildings:
  - 1. Agree that until the opening day of the next General Assembly it shall be permissible for a congregation to make a decision on the proposed sale or disposal of a church or hall building in terms of the General Trustees (Delegated Powers) Act (Act VII 1995) where the congregation has proceeded in the manner set out in the Congregational Meetings on Sale or Disposal of Church Buildings Protocol set out in Appendix G, and
  - 2. Agree that the Protocol set out in Appendix G may subsequently be amended as directed by the Committee, acting reasonably and in the interests of all parties.

#### **FAITH NURTURE FORUM**

- 14. Affirm the priorities outlined for the Forum's work (Section 7).
- 15. Instruct the Forum to additionally prioritise engagement with under 40s, in the first instance through: a) working with those already engaged with the Church to find out their experience of lockdown and what the national Church can be doing for and with them, b) providing a range of digital discipleship options for engagement of young adults, and c) working ecumenically wherever possible, including learning from the experience in these areas of other denominations.
- 16. Instruct the Forum, in consultation with the Assembly Trustees and Presbyteries, to review the Appraisal and Adjustment Act (Act VII 2003), with a view to bringing to the General Assembly of 2021 proposed amendments to the Act which would enable Presbyteries to overcome barriers encountered when seeking to implement robust planning, and to include in such a review the exploration of whether, where appropriate and after careful consideration, a Presbytery should be enabled to dissolve the pastoral tie so that adjustments can be made.
- 17. Instruct the Forum to work with the General Trustees to effect the transfer of the functions of the Committee on Church Art and Architecture to the General Trustees, thank the Committee and discharge its members on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020.
- 18. Instruct the Forum to publish the report of the Youth Attitudes Survey undertaken in 2019 as a matter of urgency and at latest by end of March 2021, making this publicly available and accessible, and encourage the whole church to listen to the voices contained within it.

#### **SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE**

- 3. Instruct the Committee to work with the IT department to prioritize the development of a system through which the SG7 and SG11 forms can be submitted electronically to the Safeguarding Department and report progress to the General Assembly of 2021.

#### **ASSEMBLY TRUSTEES**

3. (a) Approve congregational Ministry and Mission contributions in 2021 of £38.172m, being an 18% reduction from 2020.  
 (b) Note the targeted reduction in the 2021 expenditure budgets of Faith Nurture and Faith Impact Forums of £4m.  
 (c) Note the commitment of around £8m of General Reserves and the accompanying constraints which are being applied in order to maintain fiscal control throughout 2021.
4. Homologate the decision of the Trustees to suspend the implementation of the Growth Fund for the time being; but note the intention of the Trustees to institute an interim system which would make some element of funding available for local church pilot schemes and further note the decision of the Trustees to build investment in local church into the **Faith Action Plan**.
5. Welcome the use of the Church of Scotland Vision Statement and the Five Marks of Mission which underpin the **Faith Action Plan** and endorse the incorporation of the Radical Action Plan in the **Faith Action Plan**.
6. Encourage the Chief Officer and the Head of Communications to undertake a review of External Communications with a view to ensuring a fully integrated and professionally-led strategic communications programme across all external media, and instruct the Assembly Trustees to bring an update on its implementation to the General Assembly in 2021.
7. Note the Fundamental Aims and Key Areas of Work of the Faith Nurture and Faith Impact Forums set out in the Schedules to Appendix 2 and adopt the **Faith Action Plan** as a framework for establishing priorities and determining future budgets.
8. Instruct Presbyteries, in this year's annual review of Presbytery Plans, to exercise robust oversight which will prepare the Church for revising down the number of charges, buildings and ministries required across Scotland and note the intention to produce realistic predictions on the number of ministries that are needed and can be afforded in order to structure the local Church for mission and growth.
9. Note that, due to the disruption cause by COVID-19, determination of the future use or disposal of 121 George Street was put on hold and instruct the Trustees to engage with the Presbytery of Edinburgh, as part of the Presbytery's Radical Plan, to determine whether the relocation of the Church Offices to an existing Church building within the Presbytery of Edinburgh might be feasible and to include their findings in a report and recommendations to be brought to the General Assembly in 2021.
10. Instruct the Trustees to examine the implications and changes that would be required to unify the work of the Church under a single Forum and bring a report to the General Assembly in 2021 on what they believe will be the most effective and efficient structure for the delivery of work which has to be managed and delivered from the Church's national base.
11. Delegate to the Assembly Trustees the authority to nominate members to the Boards of (i) The Esdaile Trust and (ii) The Society for the Benefit of Sons and Daughter of the Clergy of the Church of Scotland, and approve the appointment of Rev Brian Hilsley (Aberlady with Gullane) and Mrs Sandra Carter (Mayfield Salisbury) to the Board of the Society for the Benefit of Sons and Daughters of the Clergy.
12. Grant authority to the Assembly Trustees, in consultation with the Nomination Committee, to appoint a Trustee to fill a mid-term vacancy, such appointment to be approved by the next General Assembly.

## FAITH IMPACT FORUM

2. Instruct the Faith Impact Forum to enable and support congregations and Presbyteries as they seek to engage with local, national and international issues, with particular focus on identifying and using multiple methods of connection, including face to face and virtual.

3. Urge the whole church to continue our long-term support of Christian Aid in addressing the development and humanitarian needs of some of the poorest people across the world.
4. Acknowledge the generosity of the world church, especially the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan and the Evangelical Church of Westphalia, for their financial and practical assistance during the peak of Covid-19 infections, and thank them for their kindness and love.
5. Give thanks for the inspirational ministry of many connecting with those in our society who are suffering in the Covid-19 pandemic, and urge the Scottish government to review the role of spiritual care in medical settings and to offer more consistent opportunities for Covid-19 compliant PPE-clad visits for families whose loved ones are in end-of-life care situations.
6. Instruct the Faith Impact Forum to work with others to develop a strategy for the Church to transition both locally and nationally to net zero carbon emissions by 2030, reporting an outline strategy to the General Assembly of 2021.
7. Instruct the Forum to urge the Scottish and UK governments to do all they can to tackle the issue of homelessness, not least by continuing the practice (evident during the Covid-19 crisis) of providing safe places to live for all homeless people once the crisis has past.
8. Instruct the Forum to report to the General Assembly of 2021 on the ethical, scientific and theological arguments for and against urgent disinvestment from oil and gas companies.
9. Urge the Scottish Government to introduce policies and spending priorities in line with proposals for a Just and Green Recovery in response to the economic, social and environmental impact of Covid-19.
10. Reaffirm that racism is a sin, and declare that Black Lives Matter; instruct the Faith Impact Forum, in partnership with the Faith Nurture Forum, Assembly Trustees, and General Trustees to report to a future Assembly on the issue of racial justice and the legacy of slavery and the Church of Scotland and to consult widely with people of colour in the Church of Scotland and with Black Majority churches in Scotland.
11. Note that elections to the Scottish Parliament are due to be held on 6 May 2021 and encourage congregations to consider holding hustings or community election meetings, in person or online, and commit the Church of Scotland to pray for candidates, political representatives, and national leaders.
14. Declare that the Faith Impact Forum has and may exercise all the functions and powers held formerly by the World Mission Council and its Middle East Committee under the Constitution of the Scots Memorial, Jerusalem (St. Andrew's Church and Hospice) Trust, including all the functions and powers of that Council and Committee under the Constitution of the Scots Memorial, Jerusalem (St. Andrew's Church and Hospice) Trust and also that the Convener and Head of the Faith Impact Forum are the successors in office of the Convener and Secretary of the World Mission Council and as such are trustees *ex officio*s under the said Constitution.

## GENERAL TRUSTEES

2. Welcome the report on the 'Well-Equipped Spaces in the Right Places' consultation and its findings, and in the light of the consultation process affirm that:
  - (a) The Church urgently needs a 'well equipped places in the right places' plan which will rationalise its buildings by reducing the overall number while supporting church planting, and ensuring that those buildings which are kept are made welcoming and less of an administrative burden to local congregations so that they can focus on worship and mission.

(b) For many congregations, the current model of managing, maintaining and developing the estate is no longer appropriate and that a variety of models need to be offered.

(c) The 'Well-Equipped Spaces in the Right Places' plan should be based on the principles set out in the report, namely:

- i. Buildings and land are simply means by which the mission of the Church can be achieved.
- ii. Presbyteries have the key role to play in encouraging, supporting and supervising congregations and in strategic planning, and to be the link between the Congregation and the General Trustees.
- iii. Kirk Sessions and Congregational Boards should continue to have the principal role of managing property assets at a local level with the recognition that not all congregations are able to fulfil all of the tasks.
- iv. While the Church values the land and buildings that it has inherited, these have to be suitable to achieve the Church's primary purpose of worship and mission. The Church's charitable purpose is not the conservation of buildings.
- v. Working together between congregations and between Presbyteries should be encouraged.
- vi. The Church should by default operate with an ecumenical mindset.

(d) Better Presbytery Planning is key to a strategic approach to the future, in which land and buildings are an integrated part of the process.

(e) There should be minimum standards for church buildings (well-equipped spaces) and guidelines on location of church buildings (in the right places) and these should be developed to be brought forward to the next General Assembly.

(f) Presbyteries should develop and provide a clear framework of support for congregations, to prepare and enable them to work through the process of change that will be required to implement "Well-Equipped Spaces in the Right Places".

3. Urge the General Trustees to encourage architectural quality of both the sanctuary and church exterior within the 'Well-Equipped Spaces in the Right Places' plan and report their progress to the next General Assembly.
4. Note the General Trustees' response to the outcome of the 'Well-Equipped Spaces in the Right Places' Consultation and support the first phase of the work being undertaken towards a Presbytery Planning Toolkit for land and buildings:
  - i. Developing minimum standards for church buildings;
  - ii. Preparing guidelines on location;
  - iii. Developing legislation and operational procedures for buildings that are surplus to the Church's requirements;
  - iv. Introducing new procedures for approving work at buildings and approving applications for financial assistance;and to bring forward proposals on these, where appropriate, to a future General Assembly.
5. Note the intention of the Trustees to carry out a review of the existing Parliamentary and Assembly legislation under which they operate and to report on the result of this review to the 2021 General Assembly.