

FAITH ACTION PROGRAMME LEADERSHIP TEAM MAY 2025

Proposed Deliverance

The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.

Faith Action Leadership Team Report

2. Welcome and endorse the film of a Vivid Vision for the Church of Scotland and its associated resources and commend their use to congregations and Presbyteries for developing vision and mission for their own context (*Section 1*).
3. Thank all those who have served, and are serving, the Church through the Assistant Minister Scheme and encourage Presbyteries to identify creative opportunities for local deployment, noting that there are many charges which could progress to vacancy were local circumstances ready (*Section 3*).
4. Instruct the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team, Presbyteries and congregations to act on the key findings of the Ministerial Wellbeing Study (*Section 2*).
5. Instruct FAPLT to set up a working group to reflect on the support offered by the Church towards Ministers and to bring a revision of the Income Protection and Ill Health Act to the General Assembly of 2026 (*Section 5.3.6*).
6. Adopt the 'Competency Framework for Inducted Ministers of Word and Sacrament', as the basis for a Capability and Competence Process, for which the details of the process will be considered by the General Assembly of 2026 (*Section 9 and Appendix I*).
7. Appoint the Reverend Michael Goss as a Trustee of the Church of Scotland Housing and Loan Fund (*Section 10*).

Public Life & Social Justice

8. 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 (*Section 11*).
9. 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 (*Section 12*).
10. 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 (*Section 13*).

People & Training

11. Pass the Admission and Readmission of Ministers Act set out in Appendix III (*Section 18 and Appendix III*).
12. Note the progress on the development of the Apprenticeship Route (*Section 19*).
13. 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*).
14. Approve that the £200 annual ministerial development grant for Ministers in their first five years is retained to allow a Minister to spend as required and agree that those in their first five years can apply to Presbytery for approval of a two-week Study and Reflection allocation to be taken within each calendar year (*Section 22.12.1*).
15. Instruct Presbyteries to develop a process of support for the Study and Reflection scheme, including if necessary the provision of pulpit supply for the Minister's congregation (*Section 22.12.4*).
16. Note the progress of the Church of Scotland Learning Platform and encourage congregations to use the resources provided (*Section 23*).

Mission Support

17. 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 (*Section 25*).
18. Welcome and endorse Church of Scotland Learning materials for Intergenerational ministry and Future Focus, enabling these ongoing priorities to be resourced within congregations and Presbyteries (*Section 26*).
19. Give thanks for the support of the Church of Scotland HIV Programme over the last 22 years and encourage congregations to continue to engage with Partner Churches as they support people living with HIV (*Section 28*).
20. Encourage congregations to make use of the online resources, as they become available, in order to engage fully with the God Welcomes All hymnary supplement in the life of their worship (*Section 29*).
21. Give thanks for all those who have been raised from poverty and injustice through the work of Christian Aid over eight decades, and for all those who have been supporters in the Church of Scotland; encourage congregations to continue to support the work of Christian Aid with international partners; and to use Christian Aid resources to participate in the 80th anniversary activities (*Section 30*).

22. Encourage the Church to remember and pray for the Church and people of South Sudan as they live with the effects of conflict, coping with climate changes, and seeking a just and peaceful transition to new political leadership; and welcome a new leadership in the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan (*Section 37.3*).
23. Give thanks for the solidarity and witness of Presbyterian and Ecumenical partners in Korea in speaking out for justice and truth in a time of crisis for the Republic of Korea; and encourage congregations to learn about and pray for the church in Korea (*Section 37.5*).
24. Give thanks for the witness of the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL) and the Middle East Council of Churches in pursuing an inclusive society for all in Syria and in Lebanon, and encourage all in the Church of Scotland to consider ways in which we might offer solidarity in faith, prayer, and mutual support (*Section 37.6*).

Presbytery Mission Planning Implementation Group

25. Pass an Act on Call, Election and Appointment of Ministers of Word and Sacrament as set out in Appendix VI (*Section 38 and Appendix VI*).
26. Pass an Act amending the Church Courts Act (Act VI 2023) as set out in Appendix VIII (*Section 38 and Appendix VIII*).
27. Pass an Act amending the Parish Ministry Act (Act II 2018) as set out in Appendix IX (*Section 38 and Appendix IX*).
28. Approve the allocation of the total number of planned ministry posts among the Presbyteries as contained in Appendix XI for 2026 (*Section 40 and Appendix XI*).
29. Repeal the New Charge Development Act (Act 13, 2000) (*Section 41*).
30. Repeal the Voluntary Additional Payments Regulation (Regulation 4, 2005) (*Section 41*).
31. Repeal the Church Extension Regulation (Regulation 5, 2000) (*Section 41*).

Faith Action Programme Report

1. VIVID VISION

1.1 We are at a particularly challenging time in the life of the church. Presbytery reform and the implementation of Presbytery Mission Plans are changing what is expected of Ministers and how much Ministers are being asked to do, causing many to question who they are being asked to be. It is overwhelming for some. Our heart in the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team (FAPLT) is to come alongside those who are struggling in ministry. Those whose primary focus is often offering such support and comfort to others. We have a genuine heart to minister to our Ministers and so bring renewed hope to them about worshipping and working towards a better future for their churches and communities.

1.2 Part of the fruit of this was hosting a National Ministers' Day Conference in Murrayfield, Edinburgh, at the end of February. An encouraging and envisioning day for all who attended. We had not organised anything of this nature and scale before and did not receive agreement to begin organising until early January 2025. Budgets were very tight, and so the resources to tailor the event to differing ministries were limited. Hence the reason for this being a conference for Parish Ministers. Our hope would be to organise similar day conferences for those serving in other ministry roles within our church. This will be budget dependant moving forward.

1.3 Our hope is that by investing in Ministers in this way, many others will benefit through them. To help ensure this, we used the day to launch the film of our Vivid Vision for the Church. This short film paints a picture of the hopeful future we see for our Church. There are accompanying resources to help you consider what this might look like in your community and your Church.

[Faith Action Programme Leadership Team launch Vivid Vision video | The Church of Scotland](#)

We would love to hear how you see this vision developing and what you hope for in your context:

faithaction@churchofscotland.org.uk

2. MINISTERIAL WELLBEING SURVEY

2.1 Background

2.1.1 The General Assembly of 2023 instructed the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team to commission or otherwise conduct a comprehensive independent survey of ministerial well-being with the aim of deepening understanding of the causes of work-related ministerial stress and developing strategies to reduce it.^[i]

2.2 Context

2.2.1 Because this was the first time such a survey had been undertaken by the Church of Scotland, these responses provide a baseline, but cannot yet be the basis for any significant substantive conclusions. This will belong to future studies.

2.2.2 A response rate of 63% was achieved (314 responses) which is an excellent return for such surveys, especially given it was completed in the wake of Presbytery Reform and during Presbytery Mission Plan implementation, unions, and readjustments.

2.3 Key findings^[iii]

The following outlines the key findings from the report and the priorities for action:

2.3.1 Sense of Call: 80% of Ministers of a charge reported that their sense of call was as strong as when they were first ordained. Whilst this is very positive and comforting to note we need to recognise that 20% of the respondents had a reduced sense of call.

2.3.2 Mental Wellbeing: Almost two-thirds (62%) of those who responded were categorised as having average wellbeing based on the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scales (WEMWBS) measurement (14% met the threshold for mild depression and 16% for clinical depression) with only 9% of the sample categorised as having high wellbeing.

2.3.3 Support for Ministers: Family and friends were reported as being the main source of support for most Ministers. 69% of Kirk Sessions were seen as being only a moderately or not beneficial source of support to a Minister.

2.3.4 Other named factors that can also significantly affect a Minister's wellbeing included good quality, well-maintained manse, appropriate IT equipment funded by the congregation not the Minister, and Kirk Session attitude towards expenditure on these items. Whilst it was noted that the main source of support was family and friends, the importance of support for Manse families is equally important. Support for Manse families is available, but this fact seems not to be widely known. Manse families are encouraged to access [Ascend](#) when feeling the need for support.

2.3.5 Presbyteries provide varying levels of support to Ministers and those in related posts. It is essential that Presbyteries establish what is appropriate for their local circumstances.

2.3.6 As a result of discussing the outcome of the survey, the subject of a Sabbatical Scheme for Ministers of Word and Sacrament has once again been raised. Such a scheme would provide Ministers with a supported period of uninterrupted Sabbatical Leave, free from parish or Presbytery responsibilities. This would allow Ministers to consider their future direction, give focus for mental and physical rest and re-invigoration^[iii] and should be a period of time that allows the individual to reconnect with God, to renew their soul for the next phase of leadership.

2.3.7 Demands of the role: in general, Ministers rated the role of ministry as being emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually demanding. This is healthy. However, many indicated that they are not appropriately trained to cope with the administrative and staff management role they are expected to undertake.

2.3.8 Independent time and space: a third of Ministers in charges do not take a whole day off per week and only 62% reported taking their full annual leave allowance.

2.3.9 Development: Only 35% of Parish Ministers felt that they had time to spend on development, and only 42% said they had sufficient funds for development.

2.3.9 Financial Wellbeing: Only 52% of Ministers in charges claimed their full expenses. 58% of Ministers of a charge say they can save regularly. 29% of all responding Ministers expected to need assistance from the Church with housing for retirement.

2.4 Outcomes

2.4.1 National Church

2.4.1.1 This is the first scheme of this nature to be undertaken across the Church of Scotland. It is recommended that the Survey is completed on an ongoing basis, every two years, to provide longitudinal data on the improvements to the health and wellbeing of Ministers across the Church.

2.4.1.2 FAPLT should compare all results against both the general population and comparable roles to determine any significant differences. Where any are identified, FAPLT should investigate significant factors, possible recommendations and any required actions.

2.4.1.3 It is recommended that access to Ascend should be on the homepage of the Church of Scotland Website, which would also allow manse families to easily access the information for their support.

2.4.1.4 FAPLT should explore proposals for a national Sabbatical Scheme and bring a report to the 2026 General Assembly.

2.4.2 Presbyteries & Congregations

2.4.2.1 An assessment of the priority placed on support for those in ministry needs to be clarified and implemented at Presbytery level, particularly in response to previous General Assembly deliverances regarding the support of those in the first five years of ministry.

2.4.2.2 Presbyteries and congregations should be encouraging their Ministers to take time off, to make space for themselves on a weekly basis, along with adequate holiday time, retreat, and Study Leave.

2.4.2.3 Ministers need to be encouraged and supported to take their full entitlement to Study Leave.

2.4.2.4 All Session Clerks, regardless of the length of time they have been in post, should be encouraged to participate in the training available via Church of Scotland Learning.

2.4.2.5 Ministers need to be encouraged to claim the full expenses to which they are entitled.

3. THE ASSISTANT MINISTER SCHEME

3.1 At the General Assembly of 2021, the Assembly suspended all Presbytery Plans and sisted all Parish Minister vacancies, pending the implementation of the new Presbytery Mission Plan Act with a proposed implementation date of the new ministry allocations by 1st January 2026.

3.2 As a consequence, the Assembly instructed the then Faith Nurture Forum, in consultation with the Assembly Trustees, to provide appropriate financial and pastoral support to the Graduate Candidates and those involved in the Familiarisation Programme, who might be adversely affected by this Assembly decision. This instruction led to the Assistant Minister Scheme being established by FAPLT and a new Assistant Minister fixed term contract of employment

and terms and conditions being developed and put in place. The terms and conditions mirrored those of MDS Associate Ministers, where the salary matches the parish Minister stipend scale.

3.3 As this was a new and temporary bridging scheme, the job title, duties, geographical range and length of contract varied depending on the local deployment and gifts and skills of those taking up the contracts. These ranged from specific projects across a number of congregations, to more locum style ministry duties but always with a focus of ensuring the ministry to be meaningful, fulfilling and serving our Church. Each role required a job description, signed off by Presbytery and FAPLT and, in some occasions, the post holder would move to a new job description after a period of time, directed by the needs of the Presbytery.

3.4 To date, FAPLT have issued over 70 Assistant Minister contracts, for those who chose to take up the offer of these roles. Some chose not to take up this offer and pursued other paths of ministry.

3.5 FAPLT have remained in communication with those on the scheme via online check-in sessions, every two months, encouraging questions and feedback as a means of support. The take up of these has been good and fruitful. Faith Action staff have also been available to answer individual queries and offer and follow up on one to one pastoral support where requested. Presbyteries have been encouraged to move ahead with adjustments and parish Minister vacancies, where they are able to, which has resulted in new vacancies being added online, almost weekly. Each of these communications have been with the intention to support this bridging scheme to a time where Ministers, presbyteries and congregations can move ahead and fulfil their mission and ministries.

3.6 The commitment of these Ministers and our congregations through this national journey and period of transition has been noticeably felt and appreciated in each case. New Parish Minister vacancies were initially slow to become available for applications but for some time now they have incrementally increased offering all our Ministers, those on the scheme and those in parishes discerning a new call, the opportunity to follow God's call to serve the Church.

3.7 In May 2024, those on the scheme and Presbyteries were advised by FAPLT that the scheme was very likely to end at the end of September 2025, ahead of the 1st January 2026 deadline for Presbytery Mission Plans to be in place, and that FAPLT would continue to review the scheme and this decision up until this time. All but one Presbytery Mission Plan has been in place since April 2024, resulting in new vacancies being advertised and congregations calling their new Minister. We have been delighted and encouraged to see this progress.

3.8 In February 2025, FAPLT convened to review the scheme and decided that the Assistant Minister fixed term employment contracts will end on the 30th September 2025.

3.9 FAPLT has sought throughout this time to approach this process with care for those impacted, both Assistant Ministers and congregations, but we are aware that not everyone has felt this. For some, the ending of this scheme will present considerable challenge. At time of writing, conversations with Presbytery Clerks are focusing on local support and opportunities as well as anything else the national can be doing in the next season, including support with CV writing and interview skills.

3.10 At time of writing, there are four members of the cohort of Assistant Ministers who do not yet have a charge and who require a certificate of sponsorship and engagement as a Minister, as a condition for that visa. FAPLT is monitoring carefully what is happening for those in this situation.

3.11 The scheme could never be, nor was it intended to be, a permanent or long-term arrangement. It was intended to support those who were affected by the suspension of Presbytery Mission Plans and the sisting of vacancies. That time has now passed and so it is time to close the scheme, and revert to the situation which existed prior to the General Assembly passing the Presbytery Mission Plan Act in May 2021.

3.12 FAPLT thanks all those who served, and are serving, under this scheme for their commitment and contribution.

4. MINISTRIES SUPPORT

4.1 The Pastoral Support Team

4.2 While primary pastoral support for those serving in the National Recognised Ministries of the Church lies within each Presbytery structure, FAPLT provides further dedicated and skilled support. The Support Team 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.

4.3 The Team can be contacted via pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk

4.4 The Pre-Retirement Conference allows those who are two or three years out from retirement and their spouses to receive appropriate advice on how to approach retirement. In the autumn an online seminar aimed primarily for those in ministry around 10 to 15 years away from state retirement age will help encourage people to think ahead and plan for retirement.

5. INCOME PROTECTION AND ILL HEALTH ACT REVIEW

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The General Assembly of 2024 instructed the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team (FAPLT) (in consultation with the Assembly Trustees) to review the Income Protection and Ill Health Act (Act VI 2019) in light of its operation in practice over the past five years.

5.1.2 A survey was sent to Ministers, Session Clerks and Presbytery Clerks who had actively engaged with the Act since the General Assembly of 2019. Views were also sought from church office staff who have worked with the Act.

5.1.3 FAPLT are grateful to all those who responded to our request for feedback. Ministers, and their loved ones, are involved with the Ill Health Act process at the most uncertain and vulnerable time of their life. Making major decisions about vocation and having to consider consequential decisions related to finance and housing can be challenging. Additionally, this happens often as a consequence of medical investigations, complex treatments and diagnoses. Sensitive matters were being commented upon in the survey and responses were received in confidence by the Ministries Support Team. All responses were anonymized before being shared further within FAPLT.

5.2 Survey Response Themes

In the light of the responses the following themes emerged:

5.2.1 At a congregational level:

5.2.1.1 It was seen as important for Presbyteries to appoint Interim Moderators quickly.

Over time it is not uncommon for frustration and anger to build as the process unfolds. Confidentiality is paramount for the individuals who are medically absent and therefore congregations face the strain of the unknown. Even so, where privacy and confidentiality allow, appropriate updates from Presbytery would enable congregations to feel less 'in the dark'.

5.2.1.2 It was also suggested that a shorter time before a decision on return to ministry was reached would be helpful for Ministers and congregations; it would provide a focus to help Ministers plan for their future and particularly in the light of ongoing Presbytery Mission Planning would allow increased clarity for congregations.

5.2.2 At a Presbytery level:

5.2.2.1 The Act is not easy to understand but was generous and flexible to ministers. Support offered from the Ministries Support team is high quality and well received.

5.2.2.2 It is helpful to have clear dates in the Act, and to have an emphasis on working together and pastoral support.

5.2.2.3 The process relies on Ministers engaging with it.

5.2.2.4 The lack of certainty about when a Minister might return, can present challenges when arranging Interim Moderators, Locums and congregational support.

5.2.2.5 It takes six months of absence before the Act is triggered and some considered that to be too long. Clearer understanding of possible opportunities to allow part time working with a reduced stipend may be helpful in some cases.

5.2.3 Comments from Ministers included the following:

5.2.3.1 Ministers generally expressed gratitude. It must be noted some expressed frustration at the care offered by Presbyteries, and by the Support Team.

5.2.3.2 Many acknowledged that the financial support offered – up to 18 months full stipend – was generous. Some recipients of Income Protection noted there is a large drop in income from full stipend to 1/3rd stipend.

5.2.3.3 Frustration was expressed by some at the lack of clarity around occupational health provisions, what makes for reasonable workplace adaptations and their eligibility for the Access to Work scheme. A sense of unjustness when the process asks that updated Fit Notes be provided when Income Protection payments are being made rather than, as was the case before 2014, a process where retirement on the grounds of ill health was allowed, with full pension benefits.

5.3 Reflections and Actions

5.3.1 Ministers have little or no control over timing of investigation or management of their clinical problems. This means that the time from first being unable to work until their situation is clear can exceed the timescales within the Act. Whilst every effort was made to respond to individual circumstances, the tension between pastoral considerations and facilitation of the Act created an unsatisfactory outcome for all involved.

5.3.2 The potential length of time a Minister can receive a full stipend is exceptional when compared to almost any other professional equivalent. By way of contrast, some local congregations expressed concern for the length of time to deal with the uncertainty of when (or if) their Minister would return.

5.3.3 One of the themes in the feedback was 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. Even with its objectively generous terms, there has been a frequent and powerful subjective sense of how the Kirk should extend or exceed the limits of the Act. Reflecting upon this feedback, and indeed much more broadly about the range of scenarios the support team are involved with, it appears that this issue cannot be resolved simply by legislating or tweaking new terms to the Act. Rather, a deeper and more reflective conversation about the expectations that Ministers have towards the Church seems necessary considering the widespread unhappiness, which is openly discussed within Church. It is now time to review this Act having had five years of its implementation and clear responses suggesting we can do better.

5.3.4 It is right also to 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. The rearrangement of Presbyteries gives us opportunities to facilitate this.

5.3.5 Comments on the service given by the Income Protection Provider ranged from 'great' to 'very poor'. The gathering of feedback coincided with a difficult transition in 2023/24 for the national support team due to staff changes. One of the challenges in facilitating this Act is holding the tension between an internal Church process and an external insurance provider with individuals reporting different service provision. The Church spends considerable time working both with individuals and the provider to ensure that people experience the best possible service at a time of difficulty. If this should not occur, the Church is able to engage with the provider undertaking a lessons learnt approach with future cases.

5.3.6 The Act will be kept under review and consideration will be given to helpful alterations to the Act with a revision brought to the General Assembly of 2026.

5.3.7 Internally, the Ministries Support Team have responded to the feedback and will continue to do so pending any review of the Act. We have initiated some changes to how the Act is communicated to Ministers and their families. We have created a new Frequently Asked Questions sheet, which will continue to be adapted as new scenarios and issues create new learning. We have also redesigned our Flow Chart so that it is more personalised to the individual.

5.3.8 The Support Team are committed to ensuring that each person:

- understands the Act and its implications for them and their family
- is able to explore all possible support options available; including Ascend provisions and resources available to them
- is able to explore bespoke adaptations which could potentially allow them to continue their Ministry.

6.1 Developing Support Services

6.1.1 Integrated Support Allowance

The Support Allowance of £250 per calendar year is available to fulltime stipendiary Ministers, Probationers, those who subsequently went on to become Assistant Ministers, those in Familiarisation, and Ordained Deacons in Deacon-specific MDS posts to be used for personal or group pastoral supervision, coaching, (either from existing Ascend provision or external providers), or spiritual accompaniment. This is all subject to agreed invoicing arrangements and appropriate qualifications/credentials for each support provider. Individuals have freedom to choose whatever support provision they consider will be most beneficial for them. Access to counselling remains in addition to the Support Allowance, as does the ability to request hardship and support grants. 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.

6.2 Partnership with Place for Hope – Living Peace

The Living Peace Partnership with Place for Hope moves into its third year. 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.

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>

7. DIFFERENT CHURCH, DIFFERENT SOCIETY, DIFFERENT DIACONATE

7.1 FAPLT reported to last year's General Assembly on the proposal from the Diaconate Council to use endowment funds to create a part time Development Worker post, to research and shape proposals for the future of the Diaconate. In the end it was more cost effective to commission a research proposal than to employ someone, and the end result was more speedily available. Brendan Research consulted with various stakeholders, and their report was handed over to the Executive Committee of the Diaconate in December 2024. This research, carrying the title, "*Different Church, Different Society, Different Diaconate?*" reviews the place of the Diaconate within the Church and has relevance for the whole Church. It will be discussed by the Diaconate and further discussions and proposals will be formed over the coming year.

8. MINISTRY TO THE DEAF

8.1 Following the passing of the new Ministries for Deaf Congregations Act at the General Assembly of 2023 and in line with the national planning and adjustment exercise undertaken by all congregations, the ministries for the Deaf have now entered into Local Mission Church arrangements with supervising congregations. The moves are as follows:

- Presbytery of Glasgow: John Ross Memorial joined Queen's Park Govanhill
- Presbytery of the North East and Northern Isles: St John's Church for Deaf People joined Aberdeen: Devana
- Presbytery of the South West: Ayrshire Mission for the Deaf joined St Marnock's (Kilmarnock)
- The Edinburgh and West Lothian congregation (Albany Deaf Church) remains as a Presbytery Mission Initiative with Edinburgh: New Town.

8.2 Recruitment to the vacancies in these congregations for ministry leadership continues to be a challenge, despite a UK wide recruitment campaign. At present only one congregation to the Deaf has a full-time Minister of Word and Sacrament. This coming year will require a review of the national Church of Scotland provision across these congregations and what options exist for resourcing this specialist ministry.

9. COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK AND CAPABILITY PROCESS

9.1 The question of a Capability Process for inducted Ministers of Word and Sacrament has been raised at General Assembly on a number of occasions in recent years. FAPLT wish to acknowledge the delay in responding, and offers its apologies to the General Assembly.

9.2 Now is the time to move ahead with proposals, and the accompanying framework of competency, based on the Formation Framework presented to the 2019 General Assembly, is offered as the framework for what the Church of Scotland might expect from a fully competent Minister, while recognising that some Ministers will have strengths in some areas and not others. This can be found at *Appendix I*.

9.3 The eight areas – Faith, Vocation, and Spirituality; Character, Ethics and Development; Leadership and Relationship; Worship, Sacraments, and Preaching; Pastoral Care; Mission; Discipleship; and Church Management offer a useful framework, and it is recognised that there are areas where there will be significant overlap – confidentiality and prayer can apply across all areas, for instance. The number of entries in each area is not necessarily indicative of importance or priority.

9.4 The Framework is designed to integrate with the Professional Code of Conduct, as well as the set of Terms and Responsibilities agreed at last year's General Assembly, and the Church's ordination vows. Both documents are contained in the Ministers' Handbook, available on the Church's website at <https://bit.ly/4bPTTaA>; they are of a piece and together offer the vision of what the Church expects of its Ministers.

9.5 These are markers for the inducted Minister of Word and Sacrament; it is recognised that further work is needed to offer a similar framework for Ordained Local Ministers, while recognising the specifics of that form of ministry and associated resource implications. The framework will require a process for implementation, as well as a set of guidelines, and both the process and guidelines will be brought to the General Assembly of 2026.

10. CHURCH OF SCOTLAND HOUSING AND LOAN FUND

10.1 FAPLT is grateful to have received monies from the Housing and Loan Fund, for two purposes, and reference is made later in the Report (*Section 21*), about the support for those in training for Full Time Word and Sacrament (FTWAS) ministry, and for Assistant Ministers. FAPLT wish to acknowledge the support of the Housing and Loan Fund towards removal costs on retirement for Parish Ministers. This is much appreciated by FAPLT, and also by those Ministers who are supported at this particular point of transition out of Parish Ministry into what lies ahead for them.

10.2 FAPLT is named in the constitution of the above Fund, and is invited to nominate members to serve as Trustees of the Fund. The Reverend Scott McCarthy has intimated his resignation, and FAPLT places on record its appreciation of his contribution to work of the Fund. FAPLT now brings the name of the Reverend Michael Goss to the General Assembly to serve as a Trustee.

Public Life and Social Justice Programme Group Report

11. ...WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE OF YOU BUT TO DO JUSTICE, AND TO LOVE KINDNESS, AND TO WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD?

11.1 Justice-seeking is a calling for the whole Church, for every Christian. We want to explore how the Church of Scotland is *doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly with God* in all its work.

11.2 The mandate to do justice is as clear as ever, especially as we face new challenges and crises. If we follow Jesus, then love of neighbour and concern for mercy is a duty for all of us. The Church of Scotland is part of a tradition which can clearly encourage calls and actions for work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. As a national committee, we recognise our limited resources and overstretched people, but feel there is an opportunity if we can identify priorities which can empower the whole Church and lead to meaningful change.

11.3 In the work of justice-seeking, the Church of Scotland often works with partners, particularly other Christian groups, and increasingly also with other faith organisations and expert secular groups. When we work with other groups it is even more important that we are clear and consistent about our own values and culture.

11.4 With our world and our Church facing new challenges and crises, what does it mean for us as a Church to follow these words of Micah (*Chapter 6, verse 8*)? What are the constant and consistent principles which we should be following and promoting in our work of doing justice, loving mercy and walking humbly with our God? At a time of limited resources and overstretched people, what are the priorities and how do we encourage one another in our common quest for justice, peace and the integrity of creation? How do we ensure that the gospel imperative for justice is for the whole of our Church, reaching beyond the work of Public Life and Social Justice?

11.5 We have been inspired by the Methodist Church in Britain's project *A Justice-seeking Church*.^[iv] This work, which itself was inspired by the Church of Scotland's own *Speak Out* (2015-2020) and *Imagining Scotland's Future* (2012-2014) projects, and the work of the Poverty Truth Network, has helped to equip the Methodist Church with a new framework for the principles, priorities and practices of justice which it is now sharing across the denomination. This includes adopting a justice-based lens to all of the work of the Methodist Church, from finance and procurement to ministry and mission. We propose to look closely at *A Justice-seeking Church* and see if there are things we can adapt and adopt for our context. As we do so we will review *Imagining Scotland's Future and Speak Out*, and will seek to work with congregations, Presbyteries and other committees and church-related organisations. We want to equip and inspire everyone to play their part in living out what it means to be a justice seeking Church and actively pursue opportunities to engage with younger generations, who are so passionate about justice. Where there is continued scope for partnership, especially with other Churches, we will hope to build on this too.

11.6 We hope this reflection and work will be of direct usefulness and relevance to ministry and mission in the Church of Scotland. Our hope is that the Church has confidence in its role in serving local communities, in how we care for people struggling against poverty and marginalisation, and especially people for whom the rest of society too often ignores: prisoners, racial and religious minorities, victims and survivors of violence and oppression, disabled people, people who are dependent on alcohol or drugs. Our commitment is that we continue to speak out against injustice, and we work towards a more fair and just society.

12 FOSSIL FUEL NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY INITIATIVE

12.1 The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative (FFNPTI) is a global effort to foster international cooperation to accelerate the transition to renewable energy, end the development of new coal, oil and gas resources, and equitably phase out existing production of fossil fuels. It started in 2015, the year of the Paris climate conference (COP21), with the [Suva Declaration On Climate Change](#) from the Pacific Islands Development Forum in Suva, Fiji. This called for: “an international moratorium on the development and expansion of fossil fuel extracting industries, particularly the construction of new coal mines, as an urgent step towards decarbonising the global economy.” It is significant that the initiative emerged from the global south, from countries that have most to lose from climate change. In 2017, the Least Developed Countries (LDC) group made a [joint closing statement](#) at COP23, chaired by Fiji and held in Bonn, in which they stressed the need for: “an increase in ambition by all countries to put us on track to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius by strengthening our national contributions, managing a phase-out of fossil fuels, promoting renewable energy and implementing the most ambitious climate action.” The initiative addresses climate justice in a report submitted to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Conference in Samoa. The report noted that three countries (the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada) have historically accounted for over 60% of emissions from the Commonwealth countries. However, they represent just six per cent of these countries’ populations.

12.2 The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative is based on three principles.

- A just transition to clean energy for everyone
- Preventing the expansion of oil, gas and coal by ending all new exploration and production
- Fair Phase Out: Equitably phase out existing fossil fuel production in line with the 1.5°C goal.

12.3 These are important objectives, particularly given current developments. The COP process has now been through 28 annual conferences with COP 29 held in Baku, Azerbaijan in November 2024. Progress has been far slower than foreseen at the Paris conference (COP21) in 2015 and since then greenhouse gas emissions have continued to rise. Fossil fuel companies are investing in new oil and gas fields, generating billions of dollars in profit annually, and progressing to strengthen government policies to reduce ‘Nationally Determined Contributions’ has been patchy. The policy directions of the current United States administration present a further challenge, including the withdrawal from the Paris agreement and the commitment to maximise domestic production of oil and gas.

12.4 As of November 2024, the list of supporters is as follows:

Supporters	Number	Notes
Nation states	14	Principally island nations including Fiji, Samoa, Tuvalu, etc.
Cities/regions	120	From all continents including Kolkata (India), Lima (Peru), Sydney (Australia), Toronto (Canada), Los Angeles (USA), Greater London Authority (UK), Paris (France).
Organisations and businesses	3782	Includes World Council of Churches, World Health Organisation, European Parliament. Faith groups in UK include Church of England, United Reformed Church, Quakers, Christian Aid, CAFOD, SCIAF. Iona Community, Justice and Peace Scotland, Islamic Relief.
Individuals	985,000	Includes 101 Nobel laureates, 3000 scientists.

Source: <https://fossilfuel treaty.org/about-treaty>

12.5 The Church of Scotland has, at the General Assembly and elsewhere, made commitments to respond to climate change and promote climate justice. This includes the 2022 Theological Forum report to the General Assembly: *The Earth is the Lord’s: A Theological Account of Creation Care*, the worship and witness of many congregations and church-affiliated women and men, as well as practical work to move towards net zero emissions, its support for Eco Congregation Scotland and the decision of the Church of Scotland Investors Trust in 2021 to divest from fossil fuel companies. The Church is a member of Stop Climate Chaos Scotland and together have challenged the Scottish Government to take more decisive action to reduce emissions in Scotland. In part these actions have been motivated by stories from partner churches around the world on the impact of climate change, for example in Bangladesh, Malawi and India, and remains an important part of the work of Christian Aid in development and poverty relief. In the current challenging circumstances, the initiative makes a valuable political contribution towards climate justice. It is consistent with the deliverances of the General Assembly and offers the opportunity to renew and refresh the Church’s message to congregations and to its partners. We are therefore seeking the General Assembly’s agreement to support the Initiative.

12.6 Further details can be found at <https://fossilfuel treaty.org/>

13. LEGACIES OF SLAVERY AND THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

13.1 In 2023 the General Assembly received the report *The Church of Scotland and the Legacies of Slavery*.^[vi] Work to take forward the 2023 deliverances and the report's recommendations has been undertaken by the Racial Justice Working Group, a project group of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group. Since the start of 2024, the Racial Justice Working Group has been working in collaboration with the Public Life and Social Justice Programme Group and the Theological Forum towards a draft statement of acknowledgement and apology. It is intended that the text of this statement will be presented to the 2026 General Assembly. We plan opportunities over the coming year for Presbyteries to have sufficient time to discuss and reflect on the purpose of the apology and the reasons why this legacy is still relevant and important.

13.2 The 2023 report detailed the Church's historic ties to the 18th and 19th-century enslavement of Africans. Commissioned at the 2020 General Assembly amid the Black Lives Matter movement, the report reflected heightened awareness of racism not seen in the UK on such a scale since the 1993 murder of Stephen Lawrence and the subsequent public inquiry, which highlighted the factor of institutional racism in the failures of the police investigation. After the killing of George Floyd, Black Lives Matter spurred a public international reckoning. In Scotland, attention turned to the nation's connections to the transatlantic slave trade and the role of Scots in the Caribbean during the colonial period.

13.3 The legacy of African enslavement continues to fuel systemic racism, and discussions of its impact on modern inequalities and spirituality gained significant prominence during the Covid-19 pandemic. Since then, public focus on racism has waned, and so it is even more important to affirm the Church's commitment to reflection and lament. Lament requires confronting discomfort and courageously seeking healing. We therefore seek the support of the 2025 General Assembly to reaffirm its commitment to a long-term process of acknowledgment, apology, and local engagement to uncover the Church's full legacy so that the Church can *do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God*.

13.4 Legacy, particularly for the Church, encompasses the spiritual, moral, and cultural inheritance, which is part of our tradition, passed down from our forebears. It includes the teachings, values, and faith individuals leave behind, shaping future lives. While often celebrated for its role in the abolitionist movement, the Church of Scotland has also faced a complex history regarding slavery. The 2023 report built on prior research, revealing not only the wealth tied to slavery evident in church buildings but also the involvement of Church affiliates in profiting from, supporting, and morally justifying chattel slavery. This included Scots who defended slavery both in Scotland and abroad, particularly in the Caribbean, where many sought to amass fortunes. Since the report, additional examples have been uncovered, expanding the Church's understanding of its connections to slavery in Africa, the Caribbean, Central and South America, and the United States.

13.5 In the Spring of 2024 representatives of the Church of Scotland were part of an ecumenical pilgrimage to Jamaica.^[vii] The Churches' Reparation Action Forum (CRAF), a Jamaican ecumenical body, led the pilgrimage. CRAF bridges the Jamaican Government's work on reparations with Church leaders and has developed a seven-point Reparations Plan to address the enduring trauma of enslavement in the Caribbean and diaspora. The plan highlights key elements for holistic healing: Apology, Addressing Psychological Trauma, Reimagining Education, Promoting Wealth Creation and Property Ownership, Honouring Ancestors with Spatial Markers, and Tackling Agriculture and Climate Change.

13.6 The United Church of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, which inherited assets from denominations linked to colonialism, uses this plan to address the lasting impact of slavery on their own denomination and to explore how they might lead and model a journey of repair amongst Jamaica's Churches and between them and Churches in the UK.

13.7 The Church of Scotland is on a historical threshold as it prepares for a statement of acknowledgement and apology. The deliverance received by the 2023 General Assembly instructed the Church of Scotland to continue to take steps on a path towards repentance and reconciliation. The key to ensuring that the path towards apology is meaningful and impactful involves the incorporation of two guiding principles: -

13.7.1 The first is that the work undertaken listens to and pays attention to those from Black African and Caribbean backgrounds who have been working tirelessly in the Church and beyond to recognise the continuing impact of this legacy.

13.7.2 The second principle is to listen to the whole Church. The 2022 Theological Forum paper on *Apologising for Historic Wrongs*^[viii] provided essential guidance on what it means to issue a collective apology for historic wrongs. It emphasised that such an apology requires the same acknowledgment of harm and empathy as a personal one. As the Church prepares its collective apology, it is worth revisiting this report's reminder that apologies are not solely about accepting blame; they may express solidarity with victims, past and present, and reaffirm a commitment to challenging the norms that enabled such harm.

13.8 In that vein, conversations and reflections in Presbyteries have taken place with the aim of holding open, honest and sometimes difficult reflections on what can be learned from the Church of Scotland's history, both positive and negative, and the nuance of what lies in between. The vision is for the whole Church, at all levels to feel represented when a statement of acknowledgment and apology is prepared for a future General Assembly. Before this can happen, everyone needs an opportunity to hear the information that has inspired this apology, learning from our ecumenical and Caribbean partners in order to piece together a vision for what spiritual healing might look like.

13.9 In order to begin facilitating the means for congregations to learn more about this legacy in their local context (see section d) of the 2023 Deliverance), a pilot project is being developed in collaboration with the University of Highlands and Islands and local primary schools in Aberlour. This pilot is due to commence in June-July 2025 with the hope that this might provide a model as well as inspiration for other congregations to do something similar. We intend to review this work and the other 2023 report recommendations to develop a new plan of action for presentation at next year's General Assembly.

13.10 One internal change to the oversight of this work that we are making is over the next year is to establish a Legacies of Slavery short life working group which will have the task of completing dialogue, preparing an acknowledgement and apology statement, and the related actions outlined above. This will allow a dedicated group the time, energy and focus to drive this work forward and provide clearer lines of accountability for the wider Church. It will also allow more space on the agenda of the Racial Justice Working Group to undertake other core work related to its remit.

14 MIGRANTS, REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

14.1 The 2024 General Assembly agreed the following deliverance: -

Urge political leaders and media institutions to avoid the use of dehumanising and hostile language when describing migrants, refugees and asylum seekers; and instruct the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team to work with partners in challenging this rhetoric through advocacy, encounter and practical initiatives.

14.2 During the year we have supported several significant activities which have advanced this deliverance. During Refugee Festival Scotland (17– 23 June 2024) we provided congregations with resources to help engage in meaningful conversations about migration and sanctuary in the lead up to the general election. Using the City of Sanctuary resource [Speak Up for Sanctuary](#) and our own [Stand Up for Sanctuary](#) worship materials, we offered church members advice in initiating productive dialogues with election candidates and members of their communities.

14.3 In August, following the shocking far-right rioting and violence seen across the UK, the Church of Scotland supported Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees to collaborate with Interfaith Scotland and Faith in Community Scotland to [publicly condemn these actions](#). Glasgow Presbytery also came together with interfaith partners to demonstrate solidarity. Additionally, the Public Life and Social Justice Programme Group have begun seeking to understand ways to counter the far-right's misuse of Christian imagery and symbols, recognising the need to address this concerning trend.

14.4 In December the Convener of the Public Life and Social Justice Programme Group spoke out against divisive attempts to remove free bus travel for asylum seekers from the Scottish budget. In contrast to the previously civil and respectful conversation on this issue, the language of a Holyrood motion sought to pit the needs of vulnerable people seeking asylum against those of pensioners set to lose their winter fuel payments. This rhetoric escalated inflammatory divisions in Scottish politics. We issued a [joint statement](#) with Justice and Peace Scotland (part of the Catholic Church in Scotland), urging MSPs to reject this false dichotomy. The statement was widely cited during the Scottish Parliament debate, including by Finance Minister Shona Robison, and played a key role in empowering MSPs to condemn such divisive politics.

14.5 By agreeing and then working to implement actions supporting this deliverance, the Church of Scotland has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to promoting justice, compassion, and solidarity for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.

14.6 For more information see the Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees website <https://www.sfar.org.uk/>

15 INTEGRITY – THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN TASK GROUP

15.1 Since 2022 Integrity^[viii] have been focusing on offering training on recognising and preventing violence against women for the wider Church, and revising and refining what types of training can be provided. We do so in the climate of rising misogyny fuelled by online influencers and social media. In the Faith Action Leadership Team report to the 2024 General Assembly commissioners heard concerns that the societal issues of misogyny, toxic masculinity and the rise of influencers such as Andrew Tate are becoming even more prevalent in our schools and young persons' groups. This is reflective of wider societal issues around misogyny promoted by alt-right^[ix] groups.

15.2 Whilst we acknowledge that women can also be perpetrators of abuse, we know that overwhelmingly victims of domestic abuse are women and girls. The statistics back this up, as in 2023/24 Police Scotland recorded 63,867 incidents of domestic abuse. Of those incidents recorded, 81% involve a male perpetrator and female victim. Where age was known, 35% of incidents featured a male perpetrator under the age of 35. We recognise what when children witness domestic abuse the effects are long lasting.

15.3 Gender-based violence is an issue for the whole of society, however women historically have been over-represented in our training sessions. Conscious of the need to draw men into the conversation around prevention, in 2023 Integrity delivered male-only training to groups within the Church of Scotland. These training sessions were judged to be a useful start to a much-needed conversation and enlightening for the participants who attended. There is still more however we can do as a Church to empower those in ministry and those involved in safeguarding to recognise the signs of coercion and control and be confident in their ability to respond to a disclosure.

15.4 To achieve this, over the last year Integrity have been exploring our current training resources and have established a new partnership with Restored^[x], a Christian domestic abuse charity which largely focuses on female victim/survivors of domestic abuse. This has allowed the group to explore further the spiritual elements of domestic abuse and how our own church environments, structures, and theological beliefs can be weaponised by some perpetrators of domestic abuse.

16 PUBLIC ISSUES POLICY REVIEW

16.1 The General Assembly has agreed Deliverances on national public issues for many decades. The list and range of public policy positions is not organised or published, and requests for “the view” of the Church often relies on institutional memory. This way of doing things has been challenging for the Public Life and Social Justice Programme Group members, none of whom have had experience of sitting on the predecessor bodies the Church and Society

Council or the Faith Impact Forum. Over the last year we have received policy and media questions about public issues where the General Assembly has said nothing for nearly 40 years. The Programme Group have been reluctant to present potentially obsolete positions as a current opinion of the Church of Scotland.

16.2 The Public Life and Social Justice Programme Group intends to work on a process whereby a collated and agreed list of public issues Deliverances can be published and shared; older deliverances which are still felt to be relevant and a key priority for current work and witness will be reaffirmed by their inclusion. Where a Deliverance from a General Assembly from several years previously is no longer felt to be appropriate, it may be proposed that it is not included on a list and so might be deemed to have expired.

16.3 We recognise there is a need to share such a process for the General Assembly to approve, and we expect to bring a proposal, following consultation with other relevant committees, to the General Assembly of 2026.

17 INTERFAITH RELATIONS AND ACTIVITY

17.1 2025 marks a number of important anniversaries. For reflections and conversations with other faith communities, the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and the 30th anniversary of the Bosnian genocide will be poignant.

17.2 Auschwitz has come to represent a moment of reckoning in human history, out of which the concept of universal human rights has sprung along with a resounding commitment to ensuring something like this never happens again. The subsequent genocides since 1945 has put this commitment under strain and with the ever-dwindling number of survivors to bear witness to the world what happened in Auschwitz, it feels increasingly imperative to refocus on what each of us can do to challenge hatred and improve understanding and empathy between all groups.

17.3 For Churches, and individual Christians there is a particular responsibility to consistently examine Christian forms of anti-Judaism, and Islamophobias. We must be vigilant and wary of actions performed in the name of 'Christian nations' or under the guise of defending 'Scottish/British Christian values.' We saw elements of this during the riots which took place in England and Northern Ireland and, while we can be thankful that riots did not take place in Scotland in the same way, that does not mean we are immune. There are those who are ready to blame Muslims for the fact that many of our Churches are closing and use so-called Christian identity as something divisive and to inspire the de-humanising of others.

17.4 In light of the increasingly polarised world the interfaith strategy for the Church of Scotland is being revised to ensure the Church of Scotland has a comprehensive and integrative approach to:

- Improving understanding and empathy of other faith communities in Scotland
- Providing opportunities for interfaith collaboration
- Challenging hate in all forms

17.5 Amid growing socio-political polarisation, there are signs of unity. Muslim and Jewish leaders in the UK have come together to acknowledge the impact of the war in Gaza, Lebanon, and Israel on their communities and reaffirm their relationships. Their discussions led to the Drumlanrig Accord, agreed in January 2025 and signed on 11th February in the presence of HM King Charles. The Church of Scotland welcomes this achievement, recognising how it represents a strong commitment to open dialogue and the honest exploration of differences and will be a supportive partner in all that comes from this accord. The accord can be found here: [Microsoft Word – Muslim-Jewish Reconciliation Accords v14 9Feb25.docx](#).

17.6 A Summary of Public Life and Social Justice activity as a result of the Deliverance of the 2024 General Assembly in relation to the Report of the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team can be found at *Appendix II*.

People and Training Programme Group Report

18. ADMISSIONS LEGISLATION

18.1 We paused accepting applications from ordained Ministers outwith the Church of Scotland in Spring 2024 as the number of Ministers seeking charges outnumbered available charges. During this time, we honoured those who were currently being assessed and ensured those who had been previously accepted were able to come to Scotland to fulfil their Familiarisation placements. We have taken this opportunity to undertake a review of the Admissions and Readmissions process and bring a new Act to the General Assembly. We anticipate resuming the Admissions process in the summer of 2026, providing that the pace of implementation of the Presbytery Mission Planning process continues as at present.

18.2 A period of consultation was undertaken with a number of key groups including meeting with those who had entered through the Familiarisation route and Supervisors of Familiarisation placements, Equality Diversity and Inclusion, Ecumenical Relations and the then Convenors of Legal Questions and the Committee on Chaplains to the HM Forces.

18.3 It was found that there was a need to extend our present provision of certification. All those entering the Admission process are presently assessed for parish ministry with the expectation that unless there are exceptional circumstances, they will undertake a 12-month, full-time, assessed Familiarisation period. This meant that those in other areas of ministry e.g. chaplaincy or theology lecturers, cannot find a way to serve as ordained Ministers within the Church of Scotland. Further, we heard that for some Presbyteries seeking to undertake new and developing projects through Seeds of Growth funding, we need a way to ensure that those bringing expertise from other denominations to this area could also apply for status as a Church of Scotland ordained Minister.

- 18.4** The Temporary certificate, allowing someone to come serve in Scotland on a temporary three-year basis was no longer applicable given the shape and nature of Presbytery Mission Planning, and so we are proposing that this is removed.
- 18.5** The Restricted Certificate which is only applicable to the International Presbytery is being renamed to reflect this and will be called the International Presbytery Certificate.
- 18.6** We also heard of the challenges faced by those entering the Church of Scotland from outwith as they adapt to life and ministry within Scotland. Pastoral support and appropriate additional training will help with this process at both a national and Presbytery level. The Church remains indebted to the many Supervisors and their congregations who supported those through their Familiarisation period with practical provision and spiritual support.
- 18.7** It should be noted that serving Chaplains to the HM Forces are prohibited from changing denomination during their service, and therefore applications cannot be accepted from individuals until they have left HM Forces.
- 18.8** As a result, we wish to update our Certificates of Eligibility:
- 18.8.1** We retain the Standard Certificate which allows those ordained Ministers from the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) denominations who are Reformed in theology and Presbyterian in governance to apply for admission to the Church of Scotland. Further, we include applicants from the Church of England and the Scottish Episcopal Church in response to the Columba Declaration and the Saint Andrew Declaration.
- 18.8.2** A new Non-Parish Ministry Certificate will allow those who work in non-parish appointments like hospital, hospice or university chaplaincies to claim status as a Church of Scotland Minister. This allows us to assess the calling of those applicants specifically in their areas of deployment, without the need to undertake a 12-month, full-time Familiarisation placement.
- 18.9** It is important all entering the Church of Scotland through the Admissions process are appropriately trained and upskilled to undertake their wider Presbytery responsibilities. Therefore, the Act introduces elements of compulsory training to be undertaken between the period of assessment and the issue of the Certificate of Eligibility. These are courses in Safeguarding, Church Law and Scottish Church History.
- 18.10** We are also aware that as Church of Scotland Ministers they will be required to fulfil the responsibilities of their ordinations vows which includes undertaking their due part in the courts of the Church. This will inevitably require them to be aware of the responsibilities of an Interim Moderator and the moderating of a Kirk Session. Training in the area will be a compulsory element of preparation before receiving their certificate of eligibility.
- 18.11** Presently those coming to take up a Familiarisation placement have to do so within three years of their point of acceptance. With the introduction of the Presbytery Mission Plan, and with the need to monitor on an annual basis the budgets of the national Church, the new Act introduces the capacity for FAPLT to set each year the number of places available for Familiarisation, with Candidates being given a start date by the Church. This will also allow FAPLT to provide the essential programme of training and support for those entering the Church of Scotland.
- 18.12** The new Act is attached in *Appendix III*.

19. THE APPRENTICESHIP ROUTE

19.1 Why a new route?

19.1.1 As approved at the General Assembly of 2024, work began on the Apprenticeship Route (AR). This is a new pathway for people to explore a more general sense of Call to fulltime service within the Church of Scotland. At the Assembly of 2024 the Assembly Trustees were instructed to work with FAPLT to make provision in the 2025 budget for funding for the AR. The AR will enable people to consider if God's call is specifically to leadership and ministry. It will also widen access to our training routes to those coming from a broader diversity of demographic and socio-economic backgrounds and will be designed to enable younger people who may not have the academic foundation that our traditional pathways require. This seeks to complement our present provision and not replace it.

19.2 The 'What?' of the new route

The AR will have four elements:

19.2.1 Discernment

Apprentices will be invited to explore God's call on their lives as part of a small learning community of people. Each person will be supported by experienced and trained mentors.

19.2.2 Formation

Since the publication of the Ministers of the Gospel report in 2000, focus on formation within training has developed significantly. The Formation Framework agreed by the General Assembly of 2019 outlines the eight key areas of formation for our Ministers of Word and Sacrament. Whilst Apprentices will not focus on all of these areas, the route will give a high priority to ensuring the Christ-centred shaping of the whole person, encouraging a constant reflection on the story of Jesus, to allowing healthy devotional habits to form.

19.2.3 On-the-Job

It is expected that about 70% of the Apprentice's time will be spent engaging with a range of ministry experiences, working day-to-day in congregations and communities. With one primary placement, there will also be opportunities to explore their Calling through shorter secondments to chaplaincies and other contexts. This will be guided by a reflective practice process, to bring their practice and developing theology together.

19.2.4 Classroom

Time will be dedicated to more formal learning, with the equivalent of a day a week for biblical and theological enquiry. We are presently exploring how best this might be delivered through our academic providers.

19.3 The 'Who?' of the new route

19.3.1 This route will be open primarily to people between the ages of 18 and 40. Our traditional routes have an average entry age of 39 for FTWAS and much older for the Readership and OLM. While not excluding those outwith this age range, this will allow us to focus on a more general sense of Call to Christian ministry and assess the potential of an individual in much broader terms than we presently undertake for our nationally recognised ministries. Seeking the 'raw' material within an individual is not without its risks and will require us to develop new and creative selection processes for this route.

19.3.2 We will be looking for the following five 'C's^[xi] within the assessment and selection process:

- Christian Commitment
- Character
- Calling
- Chemistry
- Competence

19.4 The 'Where?' of the new route

19.4.1 A pilot scheme for 2025-2027 involving up to 12 AR Apprentices has been launched and will commence in September 2025. These Apprentices will be placed in one of three possible Hubs^[xii], located in major population bases to maximise initial engagement. There will be an experienced, trained mentoring team in each Hub.

19.4.2 Key to the selection of these Hub areas are the following:

- The ready availability of Ministers and those already trained as Mentors, Supervisors, Formation Partners etc.^[xiii]
- The ready availability of a wide range of church expressions, ministry experiences, chaplaincies and community engagements through which Apprentices might 'taste and see'. A clear missional focus. In an age when the denomination has shrunk so significantly and when, for the first time, the majority of Scots define themselves as non-religious, the need to raise up leaders who have a 'heart for mission' is obvious and to that end, the Apprenticeship Hubs will offer strong missional experience.

19.5 The 'What next?' of the new route

19.5.1 For some people, the AR might prove to be an end in itself. They will have grown in terms of their Christian journey, sharpened their leadership skills and have a clearer sense of who they are and to where God is next calling them. They will have worked in congregations, contributing to their life and witness, and will take that experience to the wider community.

19.5.2 For many others, it will be a launch pad to the specific ministries of the Church of Scotland. This may be a local congregational role or an MDS role, for which they will be better theologically and practically prepared, or it may be one of our national recognised ministries. Either way, Apprentices will require to undertake traditional processes of application and assessment to progress.

20. THOSE CURRENTLY IN TRAINING

20.1 A table of those currently in training is provided at *Appendix IV*.

21. HOUSING GRANTS

21.1 We are grateful to have received monies from the Housing and Loan Fund to enable us to assist those in training for FTWAS ministry. The aim of the grant is to enable Candidates and Probationers to retain their own house as they train for ministry. For this season only, this grant is also being extended to those on Assistant Minister contracts. The monies received were on condition that these did not replace any funding given by FAPLT but would always be additional to it.

21.2 After consultation with the Law Department, we developed a process of means testing to allow Candidates and Probationers to access this grant. As this is a charitable fund, we cannot give grants without applicants showing an evidential base of need.

21.3 We therefore developed a system of application, where applicants were asked for details of their household income, which would be balanced against their housing cost including rent, mortgage and Council Tax. We have asked applicants to self-declare their income, and there will be a random testing of applicants where a small number will be asked to produce the necessary paperwork for their claim.

21.4 We used information regarding the Minimum Income Standard produced by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and with that, those exceeding that Minimum Income Standard based on their particular circumstances were ruled to be ineligible for this grant. Thereafter the net household income was assessed against three broad bands of monthly payments of £150, £300 or £500 per month towards housing costs, with those in most need being given the most.

21.5 The Housing and Loan Fund monies were also used to cover the third-party tax and national insurance costs for Candidates, and the national insurance costs for Probationers and Assistant Ministers, associated with these housing grants.

21.6 We continue to report regularly to the Housing and Loan Fund on the uptake of the fund and remain grateful for this essential level of support that is being given to those training for FTWAS ministry.

22. CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

22.1 We continue to develop the services of ASCEND, reviewing how and in what ways these are offered.

22.2 We are aware of the changing demands particularly on those who serve within the parish context. With increased parishes, the union and linkages of congregations and the emergence of new ministry teams, there is a need both to encourage and to provide additional support and learning.

22.3 Work continues in establishing a programme of First Five Year support, bringing FAPLT into partnership with the Meikle Trust who largely funded a retreat for 50 of our FTWAS ministers. The four days together allowed peer group relationships to be reaffirmed, and provided reflective space, fellowship, and times of worship for those who are leading our congregations in times of exceptional challenge. Together with an annual leadership programme it is hoped that those in ministry will continue to lead creatively and missionally, whilst flourishing as Ministers of the gospel.

22.4 Specific thought is now being given to what will be required by those undertaking the new Initial Ministerial Education (IME) BD/MDIV course. The length of training will be reduced, but that will increase the need for continuing support and development for each newly ordained Minister.

22.5 It is therefore proposed that for those undertaking this new programme there be an element of compulsory continuing professional development during the first five-year period. It is hoped that with a positive habit established, that the present provision of study and retreat leave will be voluntarily taken up by ministers throughout the length of their ministry.

22.6 Consideration has also been given to the deliverance received at last year's General Assembly regarding the establishing of Study Leave for those in the first five years of ministry.

22.7 The following deliverance was received by the General Assembly of 2024:

Instruct the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team to consider introducing, in relation to ministers in their First Five Years, an annual two week allocation for study leave and investigate whether the present financial allocation for the Continuing Ministerial Development Fund can be increased from £200 to £275 for ministers in their First Five Years; strongly encourage all ministers in their First Five Years to utilise the resources available, including the Continuing Ministerial Development Fund, and urge all congregations with ministers in their First Five Years to encourage their minister to take up what is on offer.

22.8 At present, only 35% of Ministers in their first five years fully utilise the support currently available. Those that do have a flexibility of how they use this money, be it retreat, software, books. This is a higher degree of flexibility than Study Leave provision.

22.9 Ministers in their first five years do not currently get a two-week allocation of study time.

22.10 Those in their first five years of ministry could join the present Study Leave scheme. However, it is especially important to encourage those in this category to access regularly both the funding and any period of leave, establishing good habits at the beginning of their ministry.

22.11 It was felt that the 2024 deliverance pointed to the need to combine the national support with Presbytery and congregational understanding and support.

22.12 Therefore, the following is proposed:

- the £200 annual grant for Ministers in their first five years is retained to allow a Minister to spend as required, and not according to the narrower criteria of the Study Leave scheme.
- those in their first five years be given a two-week Study and Reflection allocation per annum. It would not be accumulative to ensure that the time is taken within each calendar year, to build a practice of taking time for prayer, reflection and review.
- the period would be approved by Presbyteries. This would help bind the support of the Presbytery to the new Minister.
- local congregations cover the pulpit supply, and that should there be a good economic reason why they can't afford to do this, Presbytery arrange cover to allow the Study and Reflection period to be accessed.

23. CHURCH OF SCOTLAND LEARNING

23.1 Following the launch of this platform in August 2023, the provision continues to expand. In addition, collaborative relationships are being established with Presbyteries, with an encouragement to share mutual learnings and resources. New modules continue to be developed, which include partnerships with Stewardship and Future Focus.

23.2 An overview of Church of Scotland Learning can be accessed here:

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/church-of-scotland-learning>

Mission Support Programme Group

24. MISSION SUPPORT PROGRAMME GROUP

24.1 The Mission Support Programme Group (MSPG) and Staff Team have worked closely with one another and other relevant programme groups to examine how the Church moves forward in a number of key areas including Priority Areas, New Worshipping Communities, Intergenerational Ministry, Ministry to the Under 40's and Digital Mission and Ministry.

25. CHURCH PLANTING

25.1 Why, and why now?

25.1.1 FAPLT believe it is time for the Church of Scotland to plant churches. We have been through a significant period of decline (or, to view it through a lens of God's work amongst us, pruning). We have been cut back, but we believe that God means for us to grow again into the shape of Church He means for the Kirk at this time. Our FAPLT Vivid Vision, as an aspiration for where we'll be in two years from now, contains these words:

25.1.2 *Some of the growing Churches are smaller and rural, others are in towns or cities, whilst yet others are new expressions developing in radically different ways. They are clearly being shaped by their context. It doesn't look like a master plan by the national Church has been rolled out. Instead, it feels much more organic. Or perhaps better put, birthed, guided and prompted by the life-giving Holy Spirit who constantly surprises us!*

25.1.3 *New worshipping communities of different kinds are emerging all across Scotland, developing their work, witness and worship very differently. Whilst they feel embryonic there is excitement. Online Church looks like it has become a focus, both through national initiatives and local congregational connection.*

25.1.4 Before going further, it will be helpful to explain what we mean when we use the terms New Worshipping Communities and Church Plants, and the difference between the two.

25.2 New Worshipping Communities

25.2.1 New Worshipping Communities are new expressions of gatherings in worship that any local church can develop with their existing resources and with support from Seeds for Growth available – with their people, in their parish, and across parishes where there is partnership and permission. It needs no legislative or other changes. It can and is being done now.

25.3 Church Plants

25.3.1 Church plants envisage more of a giving away from what is established to what is new, with the goal that the new becomes a sustainable church community of its own, with the potential to plant again. To that end, through the Presbytery Mission Initiative Act, a Presbytery, and a local 'sending church' (where possible), commit resources to establishing a church plant with Seeds for Growth support, which might grow into a local church with distinct legal identity as an *addition* to the existing Presbytery Plan.

25.3.2 Some of the growth that we trust God will bring will be in our existing congregations. However, to believe in growing the Church, we must surely believe in growing the new alongside renewing the old. That is envisaged in our FAPLT Vivid Vision. The General Assembly has repeatedly affirmed a goal of 100 new worshipping communities. Although those can happen under the leadership and resource of existing congregations, that is not the only way that people come to faith in Jesus and communities experience transformation.

25.3.3 Colleagues in other denominations are demonstrating how investing in planting new churches brings many more people and communities into a living faith in Jesus. To say, "They're doing it so we don't have to," we contend is to unnecessarily limit what the Spirit of God can do in and through the Church of Scotland in these coming years. This is not about 'do new things or the Church of Scotland will die.' It is about 'do new things alongside what we have, because the people of Scotland know little of Jesus' work – and we want to be involved in enabling an infinitely fuller life in Jesus.'

25.3.4 We are taking time to listen to church planters and policy makers and are being honed as a result. We want to give a route for the people God will call to church planting; something that has enough flexibility to give a variety of options for how things begin, as led by the Spirit of God, and a variety of options for where that could end up; something that has enough boundaries, clarity, support and resourcing to truly empower and equip and remunerate church planters, while also bringing accountability, direction and clear goals to their work.

25.3.5 If God is about to raise up many church planters, we are seeking to give them an open door and a supported path in the Church of Scotland.

25.4 Who is going to plant churches?

25.4.1 Our proposals envisage a variety of people hearing that call and getting on board. It could be a Minister, a Deacon, a Reader. It could be someone neither ordained nor set apart. It could be one person; it could be a team of part-time people.

25.4.2 We are at a fascinating time of opportunity in the Church in Scotland. In March, the Send event gathered thousands of young adults following Jesus and rallying them to a call to reach this nation. The summer Magnitude event continues to gather young people from across the nation, including in our Church of Scotland village, where FAPLT staff and committee members are meeting the emerging leaders of the future and can communicate a vision for church planting.

25.4.3 There is no reason that the Church of Scotland cannot call people, young and old, to join in with the season of planting new churches that God may be leading us towards. There is every reason to believe that the emerging generation of Christian leaders are ready to join in with God in 'doing the new thing.'

25.4.4 One of our members with great church planting experience suggested that if we want 100 new worshipping communities (and why not actually say, 100 new church plants) – then we'd need to pray for 200-250 leaders to emerge who will go on that journey.

25.4.5 That could include the already trained and ordained. It could also include any of the thousands upon thousands of members of the Church of Scotland. It could include any of the thousands of young people hearing a call to mission in Scotland during 2025. There are so many people who could hear the call that if we set it up with openness and clarity, 200-250 new leaders are possible.

25.5 So, we believe it is time to pray for that

25.5.1 Coupled with that is a plea that as the Church of Scotland we begin to confidently articulate that call; to hear from our pulpits, 'Is God calling you to church planting?'; to explore that route with people in discernment; to clearly communicate the call in our national and Presbytery communications; for the Church of Scotland to hear the call, and to resource those who respond.

26. INTERGENERATIONAL CHURCH

26.1 **The Faith Action Programme Leadership Team identified the need to explore the following question: *How can churches be supported to develop missional activities and attitudes that will lead to younger generations being brought into the heart of church life and leadership?***

26.2 In initial discussions, the group identified two distinct yet related aspects of church life which stem from the above question.

26.2.1. **How do we reach those who are not currently involved in the life of the Church?**

26.2.2. **How do we engage with those who are currently part of the Church and support them to be part of church life and leadership?**

26.3 It is apparent that at local level, the Church is engaged in a wide range of activities which reach out to those under the age of forty. These include toddler groups, youth clubs, Messy Church, school chaplaincy, young people involved in leading worship and outreach activities within local communities. Much of the focus of these activities is on children, young people and parents, with very few activities specifically for those in their twenties and thirties. While the group acknowledge that there is merit in these activities, the focus on reach and numerical growth must develop into opportunities for spiritual engagement and growth.

26.4 The group considered the work previously undertaken by the Intergenerational Church Working Group. This highlighted the benefits of an Intergenerational Church Culture being developed across the Church at all levels. It emphasised a clear shift in focus from numerical growth to spiritual growth, from doing things for Under 40s to church families being together across generations and all discipling one other.

26.5 Much of what happens within churches is age segregated. While there may be times within worship where the whole church family is together, children and young people often leave to attend their own activities while adults continue with the remainder of the worship service. This means that, as children and young people grow up, they are constantly having to build new relationships and communities. While there are relationships developed between children, young people and adults, most of these relationships are one directional, with adults passing on information, knowledge or wisdom to younger people. There is little consideration given to the knowledge and experiences that all ages bring to worship.

26.6 While there is benefit to age segregated activities, the group identified that developing an intergenerational culture within the Church, particularly at a local level, would deepen relationships between all generations, see spiritual growth of congregations and empower people of all ages to be involved in Church life and leadership.

26.7 Being an Intergenerational Church is about intentionally providing opportunities for people of all generations to be involved in all core activities of the church: worship, mission, learning, serving and decision-making. When people of all generations are meaningfully involved in these activities, they disciple each other, journeying together in faith as they worship with their whole lives. It is not simply about having all-age worship services.

26.8 Developing an Intergenerational church culture includes

26.8.1. planned opportunities for hospitality. This allows for people from across the generations to consciously spend time getting to know one another and, therefore, building relationships.

26.8.2. These warm relationships should develop everyone's sense of belonging.

26.8.3. it is about everyone knowing that they have a place and they can be fully involved in what happens within church, which is more than just being welcome

26.8.4. An intergenerational church cultivates a culture of learning and questioning. This requires humility to ensure everyone can come ready to learn and ready to sense how God is working in their lives.

26.8.5. This culture of questioning is particularly important in a post Christendom society, where many have little or no understanding of Christian faith and the teachings of the Bible.

26.8.6. In a truly Intergenerational Church, everyone feels they are able to ask questions and have opportunities to explore answers together as they grow together

26.9 While Presbyteries and the national church have a role in supporting congregations with becoming an intergenerational, it becomes real at the local level. Materials have been developed for Church of Scotland Learning which will support this development.

26.10 Relationships are at the heart of what it means to be an intergenerational church, and these are best developed in the local context.

26.11 Seeking to become an Intergenerational Church does not provide us with a 'silver bullet' to church growth and may not even answer the question that the group were initially tasked with answering. It is a long-term culture shift which will require change and commitment at all levels of the church. While local churches explore what it means to be a truly intergenerational, there remains the need to plan missional activities which specifically reach younger

generations. This may involve many of the activities for children and families which were outlined at the outset but also some that specifically focus on those in their twenties and thirties. It is the intention of FAPLT to develop a strategy for youth and young adult mission and ministry in the coming year.

26.12 The group believe that developing an Intergenerational Church culture will see congregations experience both spiritual and numerical growth as people journey together with Jesus, learning and growing together. This is by no means easy and will require significant change in culture and organisation. However, it is hoped that by investing in this culture, we will see younger generations at the heart of church life and leadership.

27 PRIORITY AREAS

27.1 The 2024 General Assembly agreed the following deliverance:

Instruct the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team to encourage Presbyteries to engage with Priority Areas to explore ways in which the Church of Scotland's priority for the poorest and most marginalised in society can continue to be delivered in areas where major adjustments have taken place to Priority Area parishes (Section 4).

27.2 The Priority Areas and Mission Support teams have developed strong relationships with Presbytery Mission staff, fostering fruitful collaboration. We are grateful for the engagement of Presbytery staff with the Priority Areas review, giving Presbyteries their voice as key stakeholders in the shaping of the Priority Areas work. In light of the Priority Areas review we have been encouraged by the growing sense of partnership with Presbyteries and look forward to further collaboration.

27.3 PRIORITY AREAS REVIEW

27.4 Priority Areas work had not been reviewed since the development of the '2017-2022 Priority Areas Action Plan.' Significant changes have occurred between 2017 and 2024, including budget reductions and personnel changes, making it an appropriate time for a comprehensive review of this vital area of work. (Appendix V).

27.5 The dedication of the Priority Areas staff team over many years and the Church of Scotland's commitment to communities facing the highest levels of deprivation are clear. The Priority Areas work has been described as a flagship initiative of the Church, consistently supported by General Assemblies, which reaffirm the church's dedication to those struggling with poverty, emphasizing the biblical mandate to care for the poor and vulnerable. This flagship work unites the denomination, transcending theological and social differences.

27.6 The review reaffirmed our desire to remain a denomination that supports, encourages, learns from, and stands alongside our most deprived parishes and ministries, remaining committed to this biblical mandate which is at the heart of our worship of God.

27.7 The conclusions and key recommendations of the review were:

27.7.1 Expand the national staff team's remit to support missional work in all areas of deprivation, not just those on designated lists. A re-evaluation of the terminology used to refer to the team may be required at some point to reflect this broader focus.

27.7.2 Support for those working in areas with high levels of deprivation could be more strategic, focusing resources on areas with significant missional potential rather than maintaining a worshipping presence without evaluating missional activity, capacity, or impact. Explore alternative support methods, such as a "SIMD solidarity^[xiv]" fund.

27.7.3 Track the number of church closures in areas of high deprivation to ensure they are not disproportionately higher than in wealthier areas.

27.7.4 While double-weighting for Priority Area parishes is considered helpful, the fulfilment of it relies heavily on appointing MDS colleagues noting, at times, recruitment challenges.

27.7.5 Review the Priority Area and Supplementary List designations with 2026 SIMD data and updated parish boundaries. Additionally, identify areas of poverty that are not captured by these lists and consider the creation of a deprivation scale for each parish.

28. THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND HIV PROGRAMME

28.1 The Church of Scotland HIV and AIDS Project was launched by the General Assembly of 2002. In 2003 a personal appeal to every one of its 600,000 members was issued, such was the need at the time to break the silence around HIV and AIDS and respond to the desperate need and cries of our Partners overseas and here in Scotland.

28.2 Throughout its 22-year existence, it developed and moved alongside the changing face of the pandemic and the needs of our partners. There have been many highlights throughout this time, including the Souper Sunday Initiative, the support from the Guild Projects and the amazing Heart & Soul Swing Band who educated people and raised funds via donation at every concert. Of greatest importance was the regular giving from people over 22 years. We could not have envisaged this continued support for people living with or affected by HIV and are grateful for all that has been achieved.

28.3 In 2025, the Church of Scotland HIV Programme has, like many other stand-alone programmes, been absorbed into the larger Faith Action Programme. Support will now be given in response to requests, and donations received from congregations and individuals earmarked for HIV work.

29 GOD WELCOMES ALL

29.1 The 2024 General Assembly agreed the following deliverance:

Encourage congregations to make use of the online resources, as they become available, in order to engage fully with the God Welcomes All hymnary supplement in the life of their worship.

29.2 Following the successful launch of the *God Welcomes All* (GWA) hymnary supplement in May 2024, digital resources are currently in production for the GWA website which will complement the existing CH4 website. This site will have information for each song and indexes that are integrated across both hymnbooks, allowing a full search of themes and biblical references. The proposed backing track and lyric video resources are postponed on the advice of the publisher due to a delay in copyright permissions. The viability of producing these resources will be considered when more information is available from copyright holders. We encourage congregations to use these resources when this work is finalised.

30 CHRISTIAN AID

30.1 Christian Aid grew out of the compassion shown by the Rev Douglas Lister, a Church of Scotland minister who was serving as a Forces Chaplain in Luneburg, Germany at the end of the second world war. His work for justice for some of the poorest and most vulnerable grew into the organisation we know as Christian Aid. Some eight decades later, the work continues still supported by churches in Britain and Ireland. The theme for their 80th anniversary is 'the Unstoppable Power of Hope'.

30.2 As the relief and development agency of our Church, Christian Aid accompanies the poorest and most vulnerable in our world, supporting people with the necessary tools to lift themselves out of poverty. As a Church, we refuse to accept that poverty is inevitable. Part of the unstoppable power of hope is working tirelessly for justice for every child of God, no matter where they are born, embedding fair trade, calling for debt cancellation, pushing for tax justice, living out gender justice, and caring for creation.

30.3 (Martin Luther once said, "Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree."). In this 80th year of Christian Aid, we give thanks for all its work, and for our partnership at national and local levels. Congregations are being encouraged to plant a tree of hope to mark what has been achieved over the last 80 years and to use the Christian Aid materials to rededicate ourselves to the task of striving for a world where all God's children have opportunity to thrive. Woodlands Trust will provide up to six trees free to share with schools and your local community.

30.4 Hope needs to be active: together with Christian Aid, let's mark this 80th anniversary, showcasing the unstoppable power of hope that our partners around the world embody.

31. REVIEW IMPACT OF CASS REPORT

31.1 The 2024 General Assembly agreed the following deliverance:

Instruct the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team and other relevant parties, recognising the pace of societal change at this time, acknowledging the significance of the recently released Cass Report, and informed by the work done by the Theological Forum on Transgender identities, to consider the implications of the Cass Report to the work of the Church, particularly amongst young people, and report to a future General Assembly.

31.2 A briefing paper on the Cass Review was produced and used to enable informed discussion in both the Public Life and Social Justice and Mission Support Programme Groups. There was also comment and background provided by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group. The implications of the review to the work of the church are limited, for its deliberations and recommendations apply only to England (healthcare is a devolved issue), and were restricted to medical interventions, in which the Church is not involved. Nonetheless, we recognise that the Cass Review has brought a greater public focus to the topic of gender identity in Scotland. We would concur with the Theological Forum's report of 2024 that any ministry with people, especially young people, exploring their gender identity or self-identifying as transgender, should be undertaken from an individual-centred pastoral approach, and the guidance document '[Diverse Gender Identities and Pastoral Care](#)' continues to be a powerful tool to enable that.

32. READERS AND LOCAL WORSHIP LEADERS REVIEW

32.1 The 2024 General Assembly agreed the following deliverance: -

Instruct the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team to consult with Presbyteries, Readers and local worship leaders about the use of local worship leaders and Readers across the church, and to report to the General Assembly in 2025 with recommendations on how these roles should be shaped to best support the emerging shape of the Church of Scotland and its worshipping communities and in the interim encourage Presbyteries to promote the use of Readers already set apart and willing to serve (Section 3.8).

32.2 Due to insufficient staff capacity following the departure of the co-lead of this project from the organisation, we have been unable to undertake this work in time for the 2025 General Assembly. It is scheduled for the coming year.

33. NEW WORSHIPPING COMMUNITIES

33.1 With the development of new worshipping communities (NWC), which are expressions of church geared toward those who currently do not engage with church, we have been attempting to measure our progress. Our baseline research from the 2021 Congregational Returns, along with extensive follow-up, revealed 78 congregations with one or more NWCs, involving over 12,000 people, over 8,000 of whom had no other church connection. Sixty-five percent of those involved were under the age of 45.

33.2 This was encouraging news, but the returns from 2022 and 2023 do indicate that many of these initiatives have since paused or stopped. There is still great potential, however, as nearly a quarter were verified as still active in the 2023 Returns. Additionally, around a third of congregations that reported a NWC in 2021 did not submit their Congregational Statistics in 2023, highlighting a valuable opportunity to fill this data gap. This year, we will, once again, conduct a more detailed follow-up to gain clearer insights into the local context, helping the wider church learn and grow.

34. SANCTUARY FIRST

34.1 Nearly three years after Sanctuary First became a SCIO, separate from but connected with the Church of Scotland, we have taken time to refine the Church's relationship with Sanctuary First.

34.2 A number of meetings were held during 2024, initially catalysed by a funding challenge for Sanctuary First. It was mutually agreed that a greater separation would benefit both parties.

Going forward, both Sanctuary First and the Church of Scotland will be free to develop their own digital strategy, and then look to engage well with one another where we find common ground.

34.3 Sanctuary First will be able to grow and develop its financial and ecumenical partnerships, sensing for itself the leading of the Spirit, using the wide and varied ministerial and pastoral talent from across the wider church and without a designated minister.

34.4 The Church of Scotland will look to encourage this and will be able to embed the national digital ministry strategy, aiming to enable the Church for digital ministry developed by the Digital Ministries Advisor.

35. DIGITAL STRATEGY

35.1 The national digital strategy has been a key priority, aiming to empower and equip the Church for effective digital ministry. The strategy focuses on fostering a revitalised and dynamic Church of Scotland, creating a fruitful digital presence in every community to fulfil its mission for Christ. A summary of the strategic aims of the digital strategy for 2025 are:

- 1: Embed the digital ministry (DM) strategy across all relevant areas of Church life
- 2: Inspire Jesus-centred digital ministries thereby developing a revitalised missional (outward-facing) and equipping (inward-facing) DM presence with fresh and relevant resources
- 3: Resource the Church for the work of DM for worship, displaying the Five Marks of Mission with contextually and culturally relevant digital mission, ministry resources, content, and training
- 4: Pioneer and nurture a flourishing, ecumenical creative community
- 5: Develop a National Creative Well for DM and worship creation
- 6: Nurture, prepare, train, and equip Ministers, OLMs, the Diaconate, Readers, worship leaders, and all members for digital ministry

36. GAELIC COMMITTEE

36.1 The Church's 2022-2025 Gaelic Development Plan, prepared in response to a deliverance of the 2021 General Assembly, is available on request from Faith Action. Entering its final year, the Gaelic Committee is pleased to report substantial progress in relation to objectives (i), (ii) and (iv) of the Plan, in the development of innovative resources for children and young people, through the medium of Gaelic for use at home, in church, by community groups and in many schools. In particular, 1,500 copies of *Innis Stòiridh às a Bhioball* (Tell a Story from the Bible) have been produced and widely distributed; six animated videos using Lego have been produced and work is ongoing on an innovative, interactive project of international potential called *Molaidh Mi È* (I Will Praise Him). Two other projects, "*Ag aithris*" (Telling) and "*Na Sgeulachdan*" (The Stories) are in development. The planning of training courses for lay people wishing to lead Gaelic worship (objective (iii)) is also underway. The Committee would welcome an extension to the period of the Plan so that this fruitful cluster of intergenerationally inclusive developments can be continued and expanded but, with an eye to the future, has also started work on a wider follow-on five-year plan.

37. INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

37.1 Scholarships

37.1.1 Education has been a key element in the historical engagement of the Church of Scotland internationally. Opportunities for education have been transformational for individuals within the churches with which the Church of Scotland is partnered, as well as with the churches themselves. Today, such scholarship opportunities are much reduced, mainly as a result of the significantly increased fees charged by universities in Scotland, but some remain. Edinburgh University partners with the Church in the Desmond Tutu Scholarship, with the University covering the tuition fees and the Church providing accommodation and an allowance. Some partners come as visiting scholars to undertake some specific research for a short period, getting access to a University library, and the Church providing accommodation. These relationships remain important in helping to build the capacity of the Church around the world through education.

37.2 AFRICA

37.2.1 *Visit of Moderator to Malawi – Church of Central Africa Presbyterian 100th anniversary & Kenya.*

37.2.2 In August 2024, the Moderator, Rt Rev Dr Shaw Paterson visited Partners in Kenya and Malawi. In Malawi, the Moderator attended the centenary celebrations of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), and took the thanks of the 2024 General Assembly for the one hundred years of faithful witness and service in the CCAP. One highlight was a day with the church in Thondwe, a village in Zomba Presbytery, where he saw life at the very local level and how the twinning with Innerleithen, Traquair and Walkerburn has impacted both congregations in Thondwe and Scotland. Gary Brough, Mission Partner in Malawi, reports on challenges with ongoing fuel crises, and irregular rains threatening food production. National elections in September 2025 will take place against the background of cuts in American aid.

37.2.3 In Kenya, the Moderatorial group was hosted by the Presbyterian Church of East Africa and met with senior leaders as well as visiting a number of institutions including the Hospital and the University at Kikuyu. The Moderator preached in PCEA Emmanuel in Kibera, Africa's largest urban slum and heard there of the impact of the twinning with Barrhead Bourrock. He also visited St Paul's University Limuru, PROCURA (Programme of Christian Muslim Relations in Africa) and met with the British High Commissioner for Kenya.

37.3 SOUTH SUDAN

37.3.1 The government in South Sudan delayed the elections expected at the end of 2024, pushing them back for two years. The Presbyterian Church of South Sudan (PCOSS), through the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC), issued a pastoral message, highlighting the lack of political will which led to a lack of implementation of the key provisions of the agreement (known as the [R-ARCSS](#) process) which brought the civil war to an end in 2018. In general, while there was frustration with the delay, it was not a real surprise as the needed preparation had not been done and the necessary infrastructure for an election was not in place.

37.3.2 Within the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan, two leadership groups emerged and created factions in the church after the 2020 General Assembly; through the efforts of mediators from the All Africa Council of Churches, there has been facilitated dialogue through 2024, and the delayed General Assembly is now due to take place in March 2025. It is hoped this will see a reunification of the church leadership and a united church going forward. The Churches in South Sudan remain in a position of respect within the society and have an influence in helping the people navigate their lives in unpredictable times. They appreciate the prayers of partners for an end to drought and floods, for unity in the churches, for peaceful and fair elections, and for peace where all people may flourish.

37.4 EUROPE

37.4.1 *Mediterranean Hope*

37.4.2 The 2024 General Assembly gave thanks for Mediterranean Hope's ten years of active mission in welcoming and supporting refugees and migrants who come to Italy, and commended their continued efforts to identify and develop models of best practice. Fiona Kendall, Church of Scotland Mission Partner in Italy, has worked with Mediterranean Hope since 2017.

37.4.2 A Vocabulary Resource of 27 words considered significant in the life of Mediterranean Hope has been published, using words to describe their work and using the opportunity to reflect on new possible meanings. Mediterranean Hope imagines this resource as a tool that can be used in a variety of groups in communities and churches as a stimulus to find one's own words. The material is available – in Italian and English – in a format ready for printing, on their website: <https://www.mediterraneanhope.com/2023/03/24/materiali-utili/>

37.5 ASIA

37.5.1 *Korea*

37.5.1.1 The 2024 General Assembly gave thanks for a century of faithful witness and service in the National Council of Churches of Korea (NCCK) and committed to continuing accompaniment for the campaign for peace and reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula. In early December 2024, Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol declared martial law. The Korean Churches strongly condemned this action, categorizing it as a grave violation of constitutional values, an act that undermined democracy and human rights, and a tyrannical abuse of power. Under Parliamentary pressure, the President rescinded the law the following day. On the following Sunday, National Council of Churches of Korea (NCCK) member denominations held worship services across the country, praying for the restoration of democracy and constitutional order in South Korea. This was followed by a national prayer meeting led by the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK). We are asked to pray for the democratic institutions in South Korea; for their stability and for the continuation of democracy.

37.6 MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

37.6.1 *Lebanon/Syria*

37.6.1.1 The National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL), our partner Church, reported that a political era in the history of the Syrian people came to an end in early December 2024. This era was one that profoundly divided Syrians. Some saw the mere existence of a state—any state—as a guarantor of security for its citizens, while others viewed the Assad regime as an instrument of injustice, a hindrance to the freedom they longed for. Sylvia Haddad, from the Middle East Council of Churches in Beirut, welcomed the end of the fighting, "with feelings of relief shared by the whole country as the war has stopped... We are earnestly praying that peace will last and allow people to rebuild their lives, houses and towns."

37.6.1.2 With the change of government taking effect, the Churches in Syria and Lebanon encouraged a new beginning for all Syrians as they aspired to build a country where all citizens – regardless of religion, denomination, or faith – could enjoy safety and security. Christians in Syria have consistently been advocates of peace and reconciliation, a

stance which has sustained their presence for over 1,400 years alongside their Muslim compatriots. Power has never been their primary concern; rather, they have focused on their role and presence as agents of goodwill, serving as “salt and light”.

37.6.1.3 The Synod appealed to all their international partners and friends to advocate for Syria’s future, one where there will be safety, security, inclusion, and freedom for Christians to practice their faith without oppression or persecution, and free from the interference of external forces. They concluded, “This is a time to stand in solidarity with the future of Christians in (the) Syria we all aspire to see. The path ahead will undoubtedly be challenging, but it cannot be navigated without our partnership in faith, prayer, and mutual support.”

37.6.1.4 The 2024 General Assembly called on the Church to pray for peace in Lebanon when Israel was bombing large swathes of the country in its attacks on Hezbollah. The Moderator wrote a prayer for the situation, and included an email from the Revd Joseph Kassab, General Secretary of the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL), who wrote: *“these are dark days. The number of casualties and injured people in one day surpassed all expectations. More people are being displaced inside the country ... from every background and religion. Continue to pray for those innocent people who did nothing other than being in a particular place. We are afraid that Lebanon will turn into a second Gaza. We are prepared for the aftermath. The destruction is enormous and the needs are larger than the capacity of an already bankrupt government. God have mercy.”*

37.6.1.5 The needs in Lebanon are huge. International support and assistance for rebuilding the country will be essential. We can continue to pray for peace, and to explore ways in which we can offer tangible support for the rebuilding of churches and communities.

Presbytery Mission Planning Implementation Group

38. CALL, ELECTION, AND APPOINTMENT OF MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

38.1 The question of call, and whether the Vacancy Act (Act 8, 2003) is fit for purpose has been raised at successive General Assemblies. The Faith Nurture Forum first invited comments on the operation of this Act in its Report to the General Assembly of 2022. Consideration was given thereafter as to whether what was needed was a replacement Act, or whether a series of changes to the existing Act would be an adequate response. Given that the existing Act has been amended in almost every year since it was first passed by a General Assembly, a replacement Act is the preferred option. A further consultation took place with Presbytery Clerks in the latter part of 2023, and the new Act being presented in this Report was discussed with Presbytery Clerks in November 2024. FAPLT now presents a replacement Act, with the title of the Act for Call, Election and Appointment of Ministers of Word and Sacrament. This replacement Act can be found at *Appendix VI*. The Act affirms the critical part which the Presbytery plays in the process, in declaring a vacancy; in giving permission to call; in the role of the Advisory Committee, which is renamed as the Advisor Panel; and the judicious use of the Presbytery’s Vacancy Procedure Committee. The cumbersome processes involved in confirming the names on the Electoral Register as those entitled to vote in the election of a Minister are not present in the replacement Act, and confirmation of the names will take place as part of the Kirk Session’s annual attestation of the Communion Roll as provided for in the proposed Communion Rolls and Adherents’ Rolls Act. This latter Act is being brought to this Assembly by the Legal Questions Committee.

38.2 The challenge facing those who worked on the Act from within FAPLT and the Legal Questions Committee was how to ensure the essential parts of the process were enshrined in the new Act; Presbytery’s role as the Court of the Church; the Nominating Committee as the body representing the congregation in the process of call and presentation of a nominee; the place of the congregational vote, while offering a shorter Act which would be easier for Presbytery, Kirk Session, Nominating Committee, and Interim Moderator to operate. A table of changes is also attached as *Appendix VII*.

38.3 There are two further areas of Church Law which require amendment should the General Assembly pass this Act on Call, Election, and Appointment of Ministers of Word and Sacrament. It is already the case that on occasion a member of one Presbytery may serve as Interim Moderator in a charge in a different Presbytery. This amendment to the Church Courts Act (Act 6, 2023) explicitly affirms this as a possibility, where it has proved difficult to find an Interim Moderator from within the membership of the Presbytery of first instance. An amending Act is attached at *Appendix VIII*.

38.4 The second change is a consequential amendment resulting from the new provision in this Act on Call, Election, and Appointment of Ministers of Word and Sacrament to require ministers to normally give three months’ notice when seeking to demit charge or status, or to be translated. This requirement to give notice is introduced in response to frequent questions as to how much notice a minister is required to give, as well as allowing Presbyteries to deal with such requests in an orderly manner and to support congregations through this process. This amendment has been added to the Parish Ministry Act, and the opportunity has also been taken to move to this Act the provisions which previously appeared in the Vacancy Procedure Act on demission of status. An amending Act is attached at *Appendix IX*.

39. PRESBYTERY MISSION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION GROUP

39.1 The role of the Presbytery Mission Planning Implementation Group (PMPIG) has evolved since the General Assembly of 2021 passed the Presbytery Mission Plan Act, and even more so since the General Assembly of 2024 agreed the Overture in the name of the Presbytery of the Lothians and Borders. When the Presbytery Mission Plan Act (the Act) was agreed by the General Assembly of 2021, there were 43 Presbyteries; now there are thirteen which are subject to the provisions of the Act.

39.2 The Overture agreed at last year's General Assembly moved away from annual approval of Presbytery Mission Plans, or, indeed, the previously required approval of any change to a Presbytery's Mission Plan. This change to the Act agreed to a five-yearly approval of Presbytery Mission Plans and gave greater freedoms to Presbyteries in implementing those plans, without the need for every alteration to be approved by PMPIG.

39.3 This has meant that the role of PMPIG since the General Assembly of 2024 has been one of supporting and advising Presbyteries on a whole range of matters, offering insights, lessons, and wisdom garnered from many different conversations and situations.

39.4 Members of PMPIG have been allocated particular Presbyteries, so that relationships might be developed, and a deeper understanding of each Presbytery's particular context applied which reflects the different circumstances, and timescale. Some Presbyteries are unchanged following Presbytery Reform, while others are having to respond to the challenge of as many as five or more Presbyteries coming together to shape a new entity with its own culture. The complex and challenging task faced by the newly created Presbyteries has been significant and of a different order to that faced by Presbyteries whose boundaries were largely unchanged, as different approaches and cultures have been unpacked, shared, and learned about.

39.5 The work of commenting on bases of adjustment continues, and it is fair to say that the task of implementation is as challenging and time consuming, if not more so, than the labour that was involved in compiling Presbytery Mission Plans.

39.6 There remains one outstanding Presbytery Mission Plan (PMP) to be agreed, for the Presbytery of Lewis. The provisions for the involvement of the Presbytery Mission Plan Review Panel, as outlined in the Schedule to the Presbytery Mission Plan Act (Act 8, 2021) were made use of here, with the support of the Office of the General Assembly. A group of three, nominated by the Office of the General Assembly, visited Lewis and engaged with local parties. A report compiled by that group of visitors that was issued to PMPIG and to the Presbytery of Lewis in December 2024. Conversations continue about the precise detail of the PMP for the Presbytery of Lewis.

39.7 *Secondary Principles*

39.7.1 Presbyteries have evolved, and in refining and shaping their Mission Plans, have applied the secondary principles in varying ways. It is worth referencing two of the secondary principles (*see Appendix X for the complete list*) – the ecumenical dimension, and the financial. Some Presbyteries have fully embraced the ecumenical dimension of Presbytery Mission Planning, while others, in taking decisions to categorise certain buildings for release, did not engage or consult with congregations of other Christian denominations who might have hoped to continue shared use of these spaces. Presbyteries are asked to bear the secondary principles in mind as they shape bases of adjustment and reflect on changes, and also on annual evaluation and development. Amendments to the Presbytery Mission Plan Act to include these secondary principles more explicitly will be presented to the General Assembly in a separate Joint Report.

39.8 *Ministries Numbers*

39.8.1 The Act requires that a proposed total number of ministry posts is presented annually to the General Assembly, outlining the disposition of 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.

39.8.2 There are ongoing discussions within the Assembly Trustees about sustainability of ministries, and about the future financing of ministry. It is also worth noting that when the Act was agreed at the General Assembly of 2021, plans had to be submitted outlining the vision for ministry to be implemented at the end of 2025. The Church is almost at that point; it is also worth repeating that PMPs are five-year rolling plans, and while decisions should be for the medium to long term, the dynamic nature of mission planning should not preclude changes to a Presbytery's Mission Plan. While work goes on about future models of funding for ministry, the figures presented to previous General Assemblies will similarly apply for 2026 with any amendments coming to subsequent General Assemblies. These allocations can be found at *Appendix XI*.

39.8.3 The concept of weightings, first considered following the General Assembly's passing of the Appraisal and Adjustment Act in 2003, has stood the Church in good stead for the most part. The Church has recognised that criteria used for allocating and deploying ministries in the larger towns and cities of Scotland are not helpful in the more rural parts of the country, far less in the islands, and the concept of weightings, to recognise the differing challenges posed by the geography of Scotland has meant a more equitable allocation of ministries in areas of sparse population. The most remote parts of Scotland, using the concept of weightings, were subject to a threefold increase in ministry, recognising the challenges in pastoral care, and extra time involved in, for example, hospital visiting, navigating ferry timetables. The General Assembly of 2022 instructed Presbyteries to ensure that, in the period up to the General Assembly of 2025, where a weighting of resources is allocated to part or parts of the area of a Presbytery, the allocation of ministry in the Presbytery Mission Plan is demonstrably distributed so as to fulfil the spirit and purpose of the weighting; and instructed the then Faith Nurture Forum to take this principle into account in approving Presbytery Mission Plans.

39.8.4 The numbers shown at *Appendix XI* represent the aggregate of weightings previously reported to the General Assembly and allocated across the 13 Presbyteries affected.

39.8.5 The FAPLT Report to the 2024 General Assembly hoped to report to this year's General Assembly with initial findings based on the data arising from the 2022 Scottish Census. At time of writing, this has not proved possible. Alongside possible changes to Tenure, and early indications from the Assembly Trustees of a new approach to funding ministries, it was felt advisable to hold back on more detailed work. FAPLT will report to a future General Assembly about any changes in the modelling of ministries numbers, in consultation with the Assembly Trustees.

39.8.6 In order to reduce the uncertainty and anxiety for existing Probationers, ministry students, potential ministry candidates and those in Familiarisation and reviewable tenure, the General Assembly of 2022 instructed the Faith Nurture Forum, or successor, to report to future General Assemblies with full ministries numbers, covering the following areas:

- Ministers of Full Time Word and Sacrament currently in charges,
- number of MDS staff counted towards the 600 fulltime ministries target figure by end of 2025,
- number of Ministers in reviewable charges,
- number of Ministers in Familiarisation,
- Number of ministers expected to retire in the year.

39.8.7 These figures can be found at *Appendix XII*. With more vacancies reaching the stage of being advertised, and the vacancy numbers on the Church website settling at around 30 each month, with a good proportion of vacancies being filled, and others coming through, FAPLT seeks to be discharged from this instruction and the current data set will be the last to be reported on in this format.

39.9 Protocol on Presbyteries being allowed to recruit into charges above the Presbytery's ministries allocation

39.9.1 FAPLT has also agreed a protocol with the Assembly Trustees to allow those Presbyteries which are close to, or who have exceeded, their ministry allocation, special dispensation to recruit into posts or charges which the Presbytery deems necessary for the implementation of a Presbytery Mission Plan. This was done in recognition that not all charges in any given Presbytery will be staffed, and that there is sufficient flex in the system to allow for such recruitment. To date two such dispensations have been agreed, for Kelvin West in the Presbytery of Glasgow, and for Burnfoot in the Presbytery of the Lothians and Borders. Perth Presbytery in terms of its consolidated plan has exceeded its ministries allocation. Any Presbytery which is nearing its allocation and wishes to recruit in excess of its ministries allocation is invited to contact FAPLT to explore possibilities and, if needed, to submit a formal request.

39.10 Words of Thanks

39.10.1 PMPIG appreciates the hard work that goes into Presbytery Mission Planning. A helpful meeting, with representatives of the General Trustees in attendance, took place in May 2024, and a similar online gathering took place in March of this year. FAPLT is hoping to meet regularly with Presbytery Clerks and Planning Conveners in 2025/2026, say every three to four months. In conversation with members of congregations across the country, FAPLT acknowledges the pain and grief experienced by many – those whose buildings have been closed; those congregations which have been dissolved; and those whose buildings have become part of a different entity, with many congregations moving into new unions or linkages. PMPIG has sought to recognise the creative, dynamic nature of mission as well as the importance of pragmatism and pastoral concern, always following the Holy Spirit.

39.11 Team Ministry

39.11.1 We intend to be in contact with those charges developing Team Ministries to explore what the challenges have been, and what the learning points are. As the work of Ministerial Education develops, so too will the training and support requirements develop for these areas where ministers and congregations are committed to working together more closely.

39.11.2 PMPIG will work closely with others to discern what the training needs are for those serving in Team Ministries, both as outlined in the PMP Act, as well as the longer standing teams of Minister and MDS. PMPIG will work with the People and Training Programme Group in shaping training (1) to support those exploring the challenges of team ministries, (2) to better equip Nominating Committees working with team ministries, and (3) to address the challenge in working with some partially formed teams which have sitting Ministers, as opposed to teams starting from scratch.

39.12 Revised Frequently Asked Questions and Guidance in Compiling Presbytery Mission Plans

39.12.1 Recognising the changed role of PMPIG, and acknowledging that current guidance in the main dates back to June 2021, there is now an updated set of Frequently Asked Questions and changes to guidance on the Mission Planning section of the Church of Scotland website. This will reflect current activity and the current legislation as well as being a resource for Presbyteries, recognising that Presbytery Mission Planning Conveners are changing, and that the shift from compiling PMPs to implementing them brings additional challenges.

39.12.2 At time of writing in early March, there are some 50 bases of adjustment which have been the subject of conversation with Presbyteries which will result in a vacancy, over and above those vacancies already on the Church of Scotland website. Some of these are being held back because manses are not ready; because manses are being acquired; and others still have the finer details of the basis of adjustment to be confirmed, or, in the case of a Basis of Union, some are still to be ratified by the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR). Some Bases of Adjustment and recruitment into vacancies are being held up because of the challenges presented in identifying an Interim Moderator who is able to steer a congregation through the process of establishing a Nominating Committee and advertising for a minister. PMPIG is keen to support Presbyteries as far as possible in implementing bases of adjustment and allowing recruitment into vacant charges.

40. FINANCIAL INFORMATION AND ALLOWANCES

40.1 Information re stipend levels and other allowances can be found at *Appendix XIII*.

41. REPEAL OF REDUNDANT LEGISLATION

41.1 There are various pieces of redundant legislation, and in looking at other pieces of legislation, it is appropriate to ask the General Assembly to repeal one Act, and two Regulations, which are no longer relevant. The General Assembly agreed at a previous Assembly not to seek to establish any new congregations using the New Charge Development process, and accordingly FAPLT asks the Assembly to repeal the New Charge Development Act (Act 13, 2000)

41.2 In similar vein, Regulation 4, 2005, on Voluntary Additional Payments, no longer makes sense. Regulation 5, 2000, should also be repealed as there are longer any Church Extension Charges extant to whom this Regulation might apply.

In the name of the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team

TOMMY MACNEIL, Convener

KAY CATHCART, Head of Ministries and Mission

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

EMMA JACKSON, Vice Convener, Convener, Public Life and Social Justice Programme Group

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

JONATHAN FLEMING, Vice Convener, Convener, Mission Support Programme Group

KAREN KATRINA CAMPBELL, Vice Convener, Convener, Presbytery Mission Planning Implementation Group

Addendum

The Rev Dr Karen Katrina Campbell has served as Vice-Convener of the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team for one year, and as Convener of the Presbytery Mission Plan Implementation Group (PMPIC) since August 2021.

A minister with wide experience, and as someone who has been extremely involved in the life of her Presbytery, she has been deeply committed to the work of PMPIC. She has engaged in deputation work both online and in-person, and has sought to be in relationship with the existing and emerging Presbyteries as they have wrestled with the challenges of compiling, and implementing, Presbytery Mission Plans. She has brought a robust approach often asking searching and clarifying questions of different parties, always seeking to help the different parties reflect on mission and the art of the possible rather than settling for the comfortable. FAPLT thanks Dr Campbell for her service in this role.

TOMMY MACNEIL, Convener

KAY CATHCART, Head of Ministries and Mission

Appendix I**COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK AND CAPABILITY PROCESS**

Competency Framework for Full Time Ministers of Word and Sacrament

Sources

1. Formation Framework
2. Terms and Responsibilities
3. Ordination Vows

1. Faith, Vocation, and Spirituality	On first appointment	After five years (and including all that is expected on first appointment)
	Ready for, and open to, exercising a ministry of leadership and vision as an ordained minister in the Church of Scotland. ^{1,2,3}	Able to reflect on the nature of their call as a dynamic concept and how the call to their charge is to be sustained and refreshed; able to discern and articulate whether they are still in the place where God wants them to be ^{1,2,3}
		Able to demonstrate sophisticated skills as a reflective practitioner, and the capacity to apply these skills to energise a creative and theologically informed practice ^{1,2}
	Lead, shape and enable the worship of the whole people of God ^{1,2,3}	
	Someone who is sustained in the joys and pains of ministry by a life of prayer and a vibrant spirituality that informs every aspect of ministry and life ^{1,2,3}	Someone whose prayer life is shaped by the understanding of the responsibilities of public ministry and corporate worship in the best traditions of the Church of Scotland ^{1,2,3} Someone whose spirituality permeates their perceptions of, and interactions with, others in and outside the Church ^{1,2,3}
	Someone who displays an integrity of faith and life, with Christ like values and attitudes, and knows the importance of taking time off ^{1,2,3}	Able to balance ministry's joys and pains with the fostering of right relationships with family, friends, and congregation ^{1,2,3} Able to evidence sacrificial commitment to their ministry role ^{1,2,3} Aware of his or her own strengths and limitations following the lived experience of practicing ministry ^{1,2,3}
	Able to take a lead role in working with partners, representing the Church appropriately in public life, including where possible working with other faith leaders ^{1,2} Able to demonstrate an understanding of the history of, diversity in, and contemporary challenges facing the Church of Scotland ^{1,2}	Someone who can represent the Church effectively in partnerships with churches of differing denominations and other faith communities ^{1,2,3}
	Someone who exercises appropriate accountability consistent with a position of responsibility ^{1,2,3} Someone who knows and understands the legal and administrative responsibilities of those in leadership ^{1,2,3}	

2. Character, Ethics and Development	On first appointment	After five years (and including all that is expected on first appointment)
	Able to demonstrate preparation and openness to learning ³	Someone committed to continuing development in ministry, who has taken up opportunities for self-development, well-being, and study, to equip themselves for ministry in the context in which they find themselves. ^{1,2,3} Able to demonstrate and show learnings from such opportunities for self-development, well-being, and study ^{1,2,3}
	Able to evidence maturity, integrity, and resilience in ministry practice, encouraging and enabling colleagues to balance the appropriate care of self with the care of others ^{1,2,3}	
	Someone who is aware of potential conflicts of interest, and is appropriate in managing boundaries ^{1,2,3}	Aware of their own limitations and willing to seek support or refer to appropriate other parties ^{1,2}
	Someone who personifies an integration and integrity of authority and obedience, leadership and service ^{1,2}	
	Someone who is committed to engage with others, to reflect with insight on their style of leadership, its strengths and weaknesses in context, and to demonstrate appropriate development ^{1,2}	Someone whose practice of ministry is continually informed by reflection and experience ^{1,2,3}

3. Leadership and Relationship	On first appointment	After five years (and including all that is expected on first appointment)
	Someone who is able to lead teams collaboratively in a variety of settings ^{1,2,3}	A committed participant in the wider life of the Church regionally and nationally, responsive to God's call, as gift and blessing, to be lived out within the discipline and accountability of the Church ^{1,2,3}
	Someone who has a willingness to deal constructively with personal and inter-personal conflict, and with conflict between individuals and groups ^{1,2,3}	Someone who consistently chairs and manages diverse meetings with grace, courtesy, and respect ^{1,2,3}
	Able to supervise and mentor others in a limited range of roles and responsibilities ^{1,2}	Someone who is able to effectively supervise others in diverse roles adopting a contextually appropriate supervision style ^{1,2,3}
	Someone with a real desire to recognise with thankfulness the gifts of others, a readiness to receive from those gifts, and to co-operate with others for the good of the Church's mission and ministry. ^{1,2}	Someone who is skilled at working with volunteers and managing meetings effectively ^{1,2,3}
	Someone who shows skill and sensitivity in enabling the formation and flourishing of community life in the presence of diversity ^{1,2,3}	
	Someone who is able to exercise leadership and build relationships, working in and outside the Church. ^{1,2,3}	Someone with experience in building and developing strategic relationships in the Church and wider community ^{1,2,3}

	Someone who can facilitate change creatively and sensitively, exercising leadership with an entrepreneurial and forward-looking approach ^{1,2,3}	
	Someone who is able to lead communities in reflecting on the use and abuse of power/role, and is alert to how power is exercised ^{1,2,3}	
	Someone who uses authority appropriately in ways that release, equip, enable and empower others, including colleagues, to fulfil their calling to mission and ministry within a Christian community ^{1,2,3}	

4. Worship, Sacraments, Preaching	On first appointment	After five years (and including all that is expected on first appointment)
	Someone who is able to preach, in the power of the Holy Spirit, a message: which is rooted in the Christian gospel, which is an incisive reading of the biblical text, which is shaped by the context of the congregation, which is structured around a coherent core, and which serves to deepen the faith of the listener, in the strength of the Holy Spirit ^{1,2,3}	
	Able to lead worship competently in a variety of settings ^{1,2,3}	Someone who is unafraid to create and advocate new or different forms of worship as appropriate ^{1,2,3}
	Someone who is open to, and comfortable with different traditions, styles, and expressions of liturgy, spirituality and worship ^{1,2,3}	
	Someone committed to the appropriate inclusion of the various components of liturgy, particularly in the sacraments ^{1,2,3}	
	Someone who is committed to preparing and planning ahead, and who has a collaborative approach to curating worship ^{1,2,3}	Someone who models grace and courtesy to those involved in the leadership of worship ^{1,2,3}
	Someone who makes appropriate use and acknowledgement of third-party resources ^{1,2}	
	Able to demonstrate an appropriate understanding of the nature of marriage, consistent with the law and practice of the Church of Scotland and the civil law: the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977 ^{1,2,3}	

5. Pastoral Care	On first appointment	After five years (and including all that is expected on first appointment)
	Able to nurture, enable and supervise others in the conduct of pastoral relationships ^{1,2,3}	Demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of issues of power in pastoral relationships and exercises influence with sensitivity, discernment and within ethical boundaries ^{1,2,3}
	Demonstrates good practice in a wide range of pastoral relationships ^{1,2,3}	Able to demonstrate loving care and good practice in all pastoral relationships ^{1,2,3}
	Conducts funerals in good order, dignity and sensitivity, responding sensitively to the family's wishes, and consistent with good order and practice in the Church of Scotland ^{1,2,3}	
	Makes time to walk in love alongside people, rejoicing and grieving with others through listening deeply and offering prayerful support ^{1,2,3}	Able to demonstrate wisdom in knowing their limits and boundaries ^{1,2,3} Able to recognise when more specialist help is needed ^{1,2,3}
	Reliably deals with issues of safeguarding and confidentiality ^{1,2}	Able to demonstrate wide awareness of Safeguarding law and practice in the Church and to promote and safeguard the interests and wellbeing of those to whom they minister ^{1,2,3}

6. Mission	On first appointment	After five years (and including all that is expected on first appointment)
	Demonstrates that they have the formational capacity, knowledge, leadership skills and theological understanding to immediately undertake and lead mission in a team, both within a parish context, by starting on a 'fresh expression of church' and in engagement for social justice ^{1,2,3}	Evidence of having lead mission, and having begun church plants and/or fresh expressions.
	Demonstrates that they have a rounded comprehension of mission, and the applications and practice of mission, in word and deed, in parish renewal, pioneer ministry, and church planting ^{1,2,3}	Demonstrates advanced knowledge of mission theology, understanding and context and the applications and practice of mission in context ^{1,2}
	Passionate about, and active in, sharing the love of God for the world ^{1,2,3}	Alive to the significance of contexts and cultures in shaping mission and being creative in discovering missional opportunities ^{1,2,3}
	Demonstrates acceptance of the necessity of missional engagement and the formation of Christian Community, including creating new worshipping communities ^{1,2,3}	
	Being available and responsive to demands from the wider parish ^{1,2,3}	
	Reliable and effective in representing the Church in ecumenical, community, and wider settings ^{1,2,3}	

7. Discipleship	On first appointment	After five years (and including all that is expected on first appointment)
	Committed to Christian education and skilled at leading others in discipleship ^{1,2}	Open to learning discipleship from others and able to demonstrate that this has been the case ^{1,2,3}
	Understands how children and adults learn, and the implications for nurturing others in their discipleship and faith development ^{1,2}	
	Skilled at nurturing others on their faith development, including those with little or no previous knowledge of the Christian faith, through teaching and preaching, including preparation for baptism and membership ^{1,2,3}	Sustained by their own rhythm of prayer, Bible Reading, and other aspects of their devotional life, to model discipleship and lead other disciples, so that they might model and encourage life-long patterns in others with integrity ^{1,2,3}
	Committed to learning in community, and to the discernment and development of gifts in others ^{1,2,3}	
	Understands the importance of the Church's engagement with schools and education, for the common good, as well as for the mission and ministry of the Church ^{1,2,3}	
8. Church Management	On first appointment	After five years (and including all that is expected on first appointment)
	Able to demonstrate the formational capacity, knowledge, leadership skills and theological understanding to immediately survive and thrive within a parish and to actively participate in the courts and Committees of the Church ^{1,2}	Able to exercise leadership roles in the Church at regional or national level ^{1,2,3}
	Has a sound knowledge of Church Law, polity, and good governance, and exercises sound judgement in their application ^{1,2,3}	Demonstrates awareness of relevant legislation and shows sound judgement in applying it to the life of the Church and using it to shape policies and procedures ^{1,2,3}
	Has a solid knowledge of the place of the Courts of the Church and differing roles of members of those courts ^{1,2,3} Understands the legal and administrative responsibilities of those in public ministry ^{1,2} Knows and understands the legal responsibilities of those in leadership roles and positions of responsibility at congregational level ^{1,2} Aware of the interface between Church Law; Civil Law; and Charity Law ^{1,2}	Has an in-depth knowledge of what is appropriate behaviour and able to carefully manage boundaries so as to avoid conflicts of interest ^{1,2,3}
	Pursues avenues of renewal and reform ^{1,2,3}	
	Has an appreciation and understanding of the need for an efficient yet purposeful and person-centred approach to management ^{1,2,3}	

Appendix II**PUBLIC LIFE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

Summary of activity as a result of the Deliverance of the 2024 General Assembly in relation to the Report of the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team.

Deliverance	Comment
7. Instruct the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team and other relevant parties, recognising the pace of societal change at this time, acknowledging the significance of the recently released Cass Report, and informed by the work done by the Theological Forum on Transgender Identities, to consider the implications of the Cass Report to the work of the Church, particularly amongst young people, and report to a future General Assembly.	Consideration has been given to the fulfilment of this deliverance by the Mission Support Programme Group, the Public Life & Social Justice Programme Group, and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group. The report of this work is included at <i>Section 31</i> of the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team report.
12. Call for the introduction of a Minimum Income Guarantee.	Since the General Assembly we have continued to support awareness of this campaign as members of the Poverty Alliance. This included the Moderator and Convener of the Public Life and Social Justice Programme Group supporting a joint faith leader's statement on the Minimum Income Guarantee during Challenge Poverty Week 2024.
19. Call on the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team to publicly and explicitly call on the UK Government to call for an immediate and permanent Ceasefire in Gaza, to cease granting export licences for the sale of armaments to Israel and to reinstate UNRWA funding immediately.	The agreement of this deliverance last year was widely publicised by the Communications Department. A formal letter was sent to the UK Government as soon as practicable, and a response was subsequently received. The letter and reply are available to read on the Church website. Representatives of the Church met with a Minister in the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development office in November to share further the position of the General Assembly.
21. Urge political leaders and media institutions to avoid the use of dehumanising and hostile language when describing migrants, refugees and asylum seekers; and instruct the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team to work with partners in challenging this rhetoric through advocacy, encounter and practical initiatives.	We have continued to take forward this work over the last year, particularly in response to the violent riots which took place following the Southport attacks. More information can be found at <i>Section 13</i> of the Report of the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team.
25. Invite congregations and Presbyteries to use and share resources prepared for the upcoming UK Parliament general election by the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office, especially the Voter Champion initiative to promote voter registration and awareness, and guidance on how to organise an election hustings.	The congregational resources around hustings, voter registration and political engagement at election time were promoted and shared in the period running up to the UK election. Since the election we have been developing a new initiative called Constituency Action Network with the Joint Public Issues Team, to facilitate ongoing relationships with elected representatives.
26. As the UK General Election will take place during the Scottish School Holidays, encourage those who will be on holiday to register for a postal vote.	We ensured that in our publicity and communication about election resources, this point about the clash of dates with the school break was prominent.

Appendix III**ADMISSION AND READMISSION OF MINISTERS ACT****XIII ADMISSION AND READMISSION OF MINISTERS ACT (ACT [] 2025)***Edinburgh, [] May 2025, Session []*

The General Assembly hereby enact and ordain as follows:

PART A – DEFINITIONS AND INTERPRETATION**Definitions**

1. In this Act the following definitions apply:
 - (a) “Admission” means the process of making an application for a Certificate from a person who has not previously held a post in ministry in the Church of Scotland.
 - (b) “Admissions Candidate” means a person who has been accepted at an Admissions Conference.
 - (c) “Admissions Conference” means a conference of trained Assessors to which FAPLT delegates authority to assess suitability of applicants for a Standard Certificate.
 - (d) “Admissions Panel” means a panel of trained Assessors to which FAPLT delegates authority to assess suitability for a Non Parish Ministry Certificate.
 - (e) “Certificate” means one of the Certificates referred to in section 3 below.
 - (f) “Familiarisation Placement” means a placement as described in section 13 below.
 - (g) “FAPLT” means the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team, being the Standing Committee of the General Assembly responsible for recruitment, selection and training for ministry.
 - (h) “Ordinand” means a person who has completed all requirements for training for Ministry in their own denomination and who is eligible for ordination in that denomination but who has not yet been ordained there.
 - (i) “Readmission” means the process of making an application to be readmitted to ministry in the Church of Scotland from a person who has previously held a post in ministry in the Church of Scotland.
 - (j) “Readmissions Panel” means a panel of trained Assessors to which FAPLT delegates authority to assess suitability for Readmission.
 - (k) “UK State Pension Age” means the age at which a person, had they been a UK citizen, would reach UK State Pension Age as determined at the relevant time by the UK Government’s calculations.^[xv]
2. Wherever a matter referred to in this Act is within the discretion of FAPLT, that decision may be delegated, whether to staff or suitably qualified persons, as FAPLT sees fit.

Part B – ADMISSION**Types of Certificates of Eligibility available**

3. The types of Certificate of Eligibility which may be issued by FAPLT are:
 - (a) a “Standard Certificate of Eligibility”: This:
 - (i) Entitles the holder to apply for charges and appointments in ministry in the Church of Scotland for which Category O registration is required for a period of two years after its issue.
 - (ii) Grants the status of Minister of the Church of Scotland, to take effect at the point of admission to membership of Presbytery, which, in the case of an Ordinand, shall involve ordination.
 - (b) an “International Presbytery Certificate of Eligibility”: This entitles the holder to be introduced to a specified charge within the Presbytery of International Charges, while retaining status as a minister in their denomination of origin, and that on the basis of the holder being introduced to the charge for an initial period of three years only. The following shall also apply to the holder of such a Certificate:
 - (i) The post must commence within six months of the date on which the International Presbytery Certificate of Eligibility is granted.
 - (ii) At the request of the Kirk Session and with the concurrence of the Presbytery of International Charges and FAPLT, the initial period of three years may be extended for one further period of not more than three years.
 - (iii) The holder shall sign the Formula upon being introduced to the post and shall thereafter be granted membership of Presbytery.
 - (iv) Any contract which the holder enters into in the Presbytery of International Charges shall have a condition that it is an essential requirement for the person to hold an International Presbytery Certificate of Eligibility and without it the contract shall cease.
 - (v) In addition, the provisions of sections 13 & 14 shall apply to the Presbytery of International Charges when an International Presbytery Certificate of Eligibility is issued.
 - (c) a “Non Parish Ministry Certificate of Eligibility”: This entitles the holder to be granted category E registration in the Register of Ministry should they apply for such a Certificate while holding a specialised post in the Church of Scotland which is not in parish ministry, ie for which Category O registration is not required, such as certain chaplaincies, academic (theology) lecturers and Presbytery-sponsored ministers funded through the Seeds for Growth Fund. Further details can be obtained from FAPLT.
 - (i) The person shall be granted the status of Minister of the Church of Scotland, to take effect at the point of admission to membership of Presbytery.
 - (ii) Category E registration shall be granted only while the person holds the post in question. If the person ceases to hold the post then sections 21 and 22 of this Act apply.
4. In this Act the types of Certificate may be individually referred to as “a Standard Certificate”, “an International Presbytery Certificate” and “a Non Parish Ministry Certificate”.

Preliminary Conditions applying to all Certificates

Who can apply – denomination

5. (1) FAPLT will accept applications from ordained ministers and Ordinands from the following denominations:
 - (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.

Who can apply: age

6. (1) In the case of a Standard Certificate, an application will not be considered from any person who in all normal circumstances could not complete the requirements for a Standard Certificate before 31 December in the year which is ten years before the calendar year in which that person will reach the age which would be their UK State Pension Age.
- (2) In the case of an International Presbytery Certificate, an application will not be considered from any person who in all normal circumstances could not complete the requirements for an International Presbytery Certificate before 31 December in the year which is three years before the calendar year in which that person will reach the age which would be their UK State Pension Age.
- (3) There is no age requirement for a Non Parish Ministry Certificate.

Visa fees and travel costs

7. All visa fees and travel costs involved in the Admission process for any Certificate shall be the responsibility of the applicant. If the necessary visa to visit Scotland or to work in the Church of Scotland cannot be obtained at any time, as required, the application may not proceed further.

Pre assessment of eligibility

8. (1) A person applying for any Certificate shall submit to FAPLT a Pre Assessment Form together with their current curriculum vitae and academic transcripts of subjects studied in their theological degree, to enable FAPLT to assess their suitability and equivalency of academic qualification.
- (2) In addition:
 - (a) a person who has been ordained in their own denomination shall supply their Ordination Certificate to enable assessment of whether or not their ordination is recognised by the Church of Scotland for the purpose of Admission, and
 - (b) a person who is an Ordinand in their own denomination shall supply information to verify the completion of their academic training, their Church completed placements/probation and their current eligibility for ordination in their own denomination.
- (3) Further, the person shall supply evidence of being in good standing with their own denomination, from the central offices of their denomination.
- (4) The person shall thereafter be advised by FAPLT whether or not they are eligible to proceed to the next stage of application, depending on the type of certificate they are applying for. FAPLT's decision on this is final and there is no right of appeal.

Ordinands

9. An Ordinand may only apply for a Standard Certificate.

Applications for Standard Certificates

Application Form

10. (1) A person who is advised by FAPLT that they are eligible to do so in terms of the Preliminary Conditions set out at sections 5 to 9 above may complete the Application Form prescribed by FAPLT, including any self-declaration(s). The completed Form shall be sent to FAPLT along with the required accompanying documentation and payment of the appropriate fee(s), all by the date determined and supplied by FAPLT.
- (2) The Application Form shall give full particulars as to the person's age, present Church connection, educational curriculum, ministerial career and other employment, Calling and theology, together with a statement indicating the reasons for the person's wish to be admitted to ministry in the Church of Scotland. The person will also require to satisfy FAPLT of competency in preaching and the leading of worship in the English language (by supplying notes and recordings) and in missional initiative. The Application Form shall be accompanied by all the documents (originals, extracts or copies) necessary in the opinion of FAPLT to substantiate the facts set forth, and shall include the names of three referees.
- (3) If English is not the person's first language, he or she shall also complete such evaluation(s) as FAPLT may require as to their linguistic proficiency.
- (4) A person completing the Application Form shall also require to exhibit a criminal record check, in terms satisfactory to both FAPT and the Safeguarding Service. In addition, if a person has lived outwith the UK for 12 months or more (whether continuous or in total), in the ten years before their application, they will require to exhibit a criminal record certificate from the government or an appropriate government/police agency of any such countries (excluding the UK) where they have lived while aged 18 or over, in terms satisfactory to both FAPLT and the Safeguarding Service.

- (5) The person shall thereafter be advised by FAPLT whether or not their application can proceed to the next stage under section 9. FAPLT's decision on this is final and there is no right of appeal.

Recruitment process

11. (1) A person applying for a Standard Certificate shall enter into an annual recruitment process, proceeding through various stages of assessment, including Admissions Conference(s), according to a procedure and timetable determined by FAPLT. FAPLT will annually set and publicise that procedure, including a date by which Application Forms must be received, and no Application Forms shall be accepted for that annual recruitment process after the date specified. FAPLT shall also determine from time to time in its sole discretion the maximum number of Standard Certificates which will be available for issue in each annual recruitment process and shall notify this information to all persons applying. Subject as aftermentioned in this Act, a person who is not successful in obtaining a Standard Certificate in any particular annual recruitment process may reapply in future rounds of recruitment (provided that at such time they still meet the Preliminary Conditions set out in sections 5 to 9 above).
- (2) FAPLT will supply an outline of the annual recruitment process upon request. Also upon request, FAPLT will supply feedback to a person who is not successful in their application for a Standard Certificate.

Occupational Health Assessment

12. A person who is successful in the recruitment process for a Standard Certificate shall undergo an Occupational Health assessment in the form prescribed by FAPLT and may only proceed to the next stage, a Familiarisation Placement, if that assessment is, in the opinion of FAPLT, satisfactory. FAPLT's decision shall be final and not subject to appeal or review. If the assessment is satisfactory, the person shall be known as an Admissions Candidate. If the assessment is not satisfactory, the person may not proceed to be recruited in that round of recruitment but the person may apply again in future annual rounds of recruitment, starting at the point of completing an Application Form (provided that at such time they meet the Preliminary Conditions set out in sections 5 to 9 above).

Familiarisation Placement/Probationary placement

13. (1) Following a satisfactory Occupational Health assessment in terms of section 10(1) above, and provided that updated Safeguarding checks are satisfactory, the Admissions Candidate will enter a Familiarisation Placement assigned by FAPLT, or in the case of an Admissions Candidate who is an Ordinand, shall enter into a fifteen-month full-time Probationary placement undertaken according to the provisions of section 17 to 22 of the Selection and Training for Full-Time Ministry Act (Act X 2004).
- (2) An Admissions Candidate must commence their Familiarisation Placement on a cohort date specified by FAPLT, failing which their status as an Admissions Candidate shall cease. Such a person may apply again in future annual rounds of recruitment, starting at the point of completing an Application Form (section 10), provided always that at such time they still meet the Preliminary Conditions set out in section 5 to 9 above.
- (3) If a matter which would constitute a material breach of the Terms and Conditions document referred to in section 13(5), had that been signed, comes to the attention of FAPLT in the period between acceptance as an Admissions Candidate and commencement of the Familiarisation Placement, FAPLT may advise the Admissions Candidate that their status as an Admissions Candidate has been terminated. Such a person shall not be entitled to reapply for Admission. There shall be no right of appeal against such a decision.
- (4) During a Familiarisation Placement, the Admissions Candidate will work under the supervision of a Supervisor. The Familiarisation Placement shall last for a period of twelve months, subject always to sections 13(12) & 13(13) below. A proportion of minimum stipend will be payable during the Familiarisation Placement, but the Admissions Candidate will be responsible for locating and funding their own accommodation during this time.
- (5) At the start of the Familiarisation Placement the Admissions Candidate shall enter into a Terms and Conditions document in the form prescribed by FAPLT.
- (6) The Supervisor for the Familiarisation Placement will be chosen by FAPLT. The Supervisor shall undertake such training for the role as may from time to time be specified by FAPLT. The Supervisor shall be responsible for supervising the Familiarisation Placement according to the guidelines and standards established by FAPLT.
- (7) During the Familiarisation Placement the Admissions Candidate shall undertake such courses and/or training as may be prescribed by FAPLT in Scottish Church History, Church Law, Safeguarding, Church of Scotland Liturgy, Church of Scotland Structures and Moderating a Kirk Session/Interim Moderator training.
- (8) During the Familiarisation Placement an Admissions Candidate may be invited by the Presbytery within which lies the charge or appointment where his or her Familiarisation Placement is proceeding, to become a corresponding member of that Presbytery.
- (9) After six months, FAPLT shall undertake an interim review of the Admissions Candidate according to the Terms and Conditions document.
- (10) After nine months FAPLT shall undertake a final review of the Admissions Candidate according to the Terms and Conditions document. At that point a decision shall be made as to sustain, extend or not sustain the Familiarisation Placement.
- (11) If the Familiarisation Placement is sustained and provided the Admissions Candidate has completed the necessary courses and/or training in terms of section 13(7), the Admissions Candidate may commence applying for charges or appointments. At the completion of the full Familiarisation Placement, the candidate shall be entitled to receive a Standard Certificate.
- (12) It shall be competent for FAPLT to refuse to sustain a Familiarisation Placement, or, in the event of a material breach of the Terms and Conditions document which was entered into between the Admissions Candidate and FAPLT in terms of section 13(5) to terminate a Familiarisation Placement. There shall be no appeal against such a decision but a written explanation shall be provided. Such a person shall not be entitled to reapply for Admission. There shall be no right of appeal against such a decision.

- (13) Exceptionally a Familiarisation Placement may be extended at the instigation of FAPLT, on a month by month basis, for a maximum period of up to three months to allow the Admissions Candidate to be inducted to a charge or take up an appointment.
- (14) Exceptionally, where in the opinion of FAPLT there is sufficient evidence of rooted and recent experience of ministry in the Church of Scotland, FAPLT may decide that an Admissions Candidate need not complete a Familiarisation Placement and FAPLT may instead immediately grant to that person a Standard Certificate subject to a mentoring arrangement, such mentoring arrangement to be put in place by the relevant Presbytery.

Applications for International Presbytery Certificates

14. Once FAPLT is satisfied that the Preliminary Conditions set out at sections 5 to 9 above have been met, the responsibility for recruitment, in terms of deciding whether or not to issue an International Presbytery Certificate, shall pass to the Presbytery of International Charges.
15. The Presbytery of International Charges shall ensure as follows:
 - (1) That the following conditions are satisfied before an International Presbytery Certificate is issued and before allowing a recruit to be introduced to a charge in the International Presbytery:
 - (a) That the applicant is interviewed in person and the Presbytery is satisfied that the applicant is suitable for introduction to the charge;
 - (b) That the applicant is theologically suitable to be ministering in the Church of Scotland;
 - (c) That all necessary Safeguarding checks and confirmations are obtained as to the applicant's suitability for Regulated Work, as defined in the Safeguarding Act (Act [] 2025) and as that term can practicably be understood in the country where the applicant would be introduced to a charge, such checks to be undertaken in both the country where the applicant would be introduced to a charge and in the applicant's home nation, all in accordance with advice obtained from the Safeguarding Service;
 - (2) That the following conditions are satisfied within three months after a recruit is introduced to a charge:
 - (a) In consultation with the Principal Clerk's office, that the recruit is given sufficient training on the law of the Church as it applies to ministry in the Presbytery of International Charges;
 - (b) In consultation with the Stewardship & Finance department, that the recruit is given sufficient training on matters of finance in the Church;
 - (c) In consultation with the Safeguarding Service, that the recruit undertakes appropriate training on Safeguarding rules and procedures to enable the recruit to work safely in the charge;
 - (d) In consultation with the Law Department, that the recruit is sufficiently briefed on matters of Church property law to enable the recruit competently to manage property matters arising in the charge; and
 - (3) That appropriate oversight over the recruit is exercised by the Presbytery.
16. A person holding an International Presbytery Certificate is only entitled to exercise the type of ministry set out at section 3(b) above; to exercise any other ministry they must apply for transfer to a Standard Certificate, in which case the age limit at section 5(1) applies.

Transfer from International Presbytery Certificate to Standard Certificate

17. The person will require to undergo further assessment:
 - (i) A qualifying period of three years' service in an International Presbytery Certificate will be required before an application to transfer will be considered.
 - (ii) The application will require to outline the person's specific experience within the service of the Church of Scotland, such as membership of Presbytery, locumships, interim moderatorships etc.
 - (iii) An assessment will be undertaken through Admissions Conference(s).
 - (iv) A recommendation will be sought from the Admissions Conference regarding future training needs, including the length of any Familiarisation Placement.
 - (v) At least one reference shall be provided from a person with knowledge of the person's current post.
 - (vi) The person's service in the Presbytery of International Charges shall be taken into account in determining what Familiarisation Placement might be required.

Applications for Non Parish Ministry Certificates

Application Form

18. (1) A person who is advised by FAPLT that they are eligible to do so in terms of the Preliminary Conditions set out at sections 5 to 9 above may complete the Application Form prescribed by FAPLT, including any self-declaration(s). The completed Form shall be sent to FAPLT along with the required accompanying documentation and payment of the appropriate fee(s), all by the date determined and supplied by FAPLT.
- (2) The Application Form shall give full particulars as to the person's present Church connection, educational curriculum, ministerial career and other employment, Calling and theology, together with a statement indicating the reasons for the person's wish to be admitted to ministry in the Church of Scotland. The person will also require to satisfy FAPLT of competency in preaching and the leading of worship in the English language (by supplying notes and recordings) and in missional initiative. The Application Form shall be accompanied by all the documents (originals and extracts or copies) necessary in the opinion of FAPLT to substantiate the facts set forth, and shall include the names of three referees.
- (4) If English is not the person's first language, he or she shall also complete such evaluation(s) as FAPLT may require as to their linguistic proficiency.
- (5) A person completing the Application Form shall also require to exhibit a criminal record check, in terms satisfactory to both FAPT and the Safeguarding Service. In addition, if a person has lived outwith the UK for 12 months or more (whether continuous or in total), in the ten years before their application, they will require to

exhibit a criminal record certificate from the government or an appropriate government/police agency of any such countries (excluding the UK) where they have lived while aged 18 or over, in terms satisfactory to both FAPLT and the Safeguarding Service.

- (6) The person shall thereafter be advised by FAPLT whether or not their application can proceed to the next stage under section 19. FAPLT's decision on this is final and there is no right of appeal.

Further process

19. (1) A person who is advised by FAPLT under section 18 that their application may proceed shall be assessed by an Admissions Panel for suitability for a Non Parish Ministry Certificate.
- (2) A person who is accepted by an Admissions Panel as suitable for a Non Parish Ministry Certificate shall require to satisfy the following conditions before any such Certificate may be issued:
- (i) they must undergo the training specified at section 13(7) above; and
 - (ii) they may be required to undergo an Occupational Health assessment in the same terms as section 12 above. They shall not be required to undergo a Familiarisation or Probationary Placement.
- (3) If not already in post, the holder of a Non Parish Ministry Certificate must commence their post within 12 months of the grant of their Certificate.
20. A person who is not accepted by an Admissions Panel as suitable for a Non Parish Ministry Certificate shall be entitled to apply again in future for such a Certificate, starting at the point of completing an Application Form (section 18), provided always that at such time they still meet the Preliminary Conditions specified in section 5 to 9 above.
21. A person holding a Non Parish Ministry Certificate is only entitled to exercise the types of ministry set out at section 3(c) above; to exercise any other ministry they must apply for transfer to a Standard Certificate, in which case the age limit at section 5(1) applies.

Transfer from Non Parish Ministry Certificate to Standard Certificate

22. The person will require to undergo further assessment:
- (i) A qualifying period of three years' service in a Non Parish Ministry Certificate will be required before an application to transfer will be considered.
 - (ii) The application will require to outline the person's specific experience within the service of the Church of Scotland, such as membership of Presbytery, locumships, interim moderatorships etc.
 - (iii) An assessment will be undertaken through Admissions Conference(s).
 - (iv) A recommendation will be sought from the Admissions Conference regarding future training needs, including the length of any Familiarisation Placement.

PART C – READMISSION

Application for Readmission

23. (1) A person wishing to be readmitted to ministry in the Church of Scotland shall complete the application form prescribed by FAPLT, including any self-declaration(s) and shall send it to FAPLT along with the required accompanying documentation, their current curriculum vitae, their ordination certificates for the Church of Scotland and for their current denomination (if any), and proof of status in their current denomination (if any), all by the date determined and supplied by FAPLT.
- (2) The application shall give full particulars as to the person's age, present Church connection, educational curriculum, ministerial career and other employment, together with a statement indicating the reasons for the person having demitted status in the Church of Scotland and the reasons for their wish to be readmitted to ministry in the Church of Scotland. The application shall be accompanied by all the documents (originals, extracts or copies) necessary in the opinion of FAPLT to substantiate the facts set forth, and shall include the names of three referees.
- (3) All visa fees and travel costs involved in the Readmission process shall be the responsibility of the applicant. If the necessary visa to visit Scotland or to work in the Church of Scotland cannot be obtained at any time, as required, the application may not proceed further.
- (4) A person making application shall require to exhibit a criminal record check, in terms satisfactory to both FAPLT and the Safeguarding Service. In addition, if a person has lived outwith the UK for 12 months or more (whether continuous or in total), in the ten years before their application, they will require to exhibit a criminal record certificate from the government or an appropriate government/police agency of any such countries (excluding the UK) where they have lived while aged 18 or over, in terms satisfactory to both FAPLT and the Safeguarding Service.
- (5) The person shall thereafter be advised by FAPLT whether or not their application can proceed to a Readmissions Panel under section 24. FAPLT's decision on this is final and there is no right of appeal.

Readmissions Panel

24. (1) Following application under section 23, a person who is accepted by FAPLT to proceed to a Readmissions Panel arranged by FAPLT shall be known as a Readmissions Applicant.
- (2) A Readmissions Panel shall normally be held in person in Scotland, but FAPLT reserves the right to hold a Readmissions Panel online should circumstances make this necessary or desirable.
- (3) The Readmissions Panel shall take place on a date supplied to the Readmissions Applicant and shall assess the Readmissions Applicant's Call, doctrine and gifts/character and beliefs, vocation, motivation, general suitability, together with their reasons for having demitted status in the Church of Scotland and the reasons for their wish to be readmitted. The Readmissions Panel shall make a decision as to whether or not the Readmissions Applicant may be readmitted to ministry in the Church of Scotland.

- (4) All Readmissions Applicants who attend a Readmissions Panel shall receive notification of the decision taken by the Readmissions Panel in terms of sub-section 24(3) and feedback on the reasons for the decision.
- (5) If the decision of the Readmissions Panel is that the Readmissions Applicant is to be readmitted to ministry in the Church of Scotland, the Panel may additionally determine as follows:
 - (a) that the Readmissions Applicant will require to undergo a Familiarisation Placement and that the granting of a Standard Certificate will be subject to satisfactory completion of that Placement, in which case section 13 shall apply amended as appropriate, or
 - (b) that the Readmissions Applicant will be granted a Standard Certificate subject to a mentoring arrangement to be put in place by the relevant Presbytery;
 and declaring that both such decisions will be subject to an Occupational Health assessment in terms of section 27 below.
- (6) A Readmissions Applicant who is not accepted at a Readmissions Panel must wait a minimum period of one year, as notified to that person by FAPLT, before they may again participate in a Readmissions Panel.

Opportunities to be accepted by a Readmissions Panel

25. (1) A person applying under this Act shall have three opportunities in total to be accepted by a Readmissions Panel. Each time the person is not accepted shall count as one "non-accept" decision. Once a total of three "non-accept" decisions have occurred, no further entry into the Readmission process, at any stage, will be possible for that person. A person will however have rights of appeal as set out in section 26 below.
- (2) Following a "non-accept" decision at any stage, a person must wait for the period specified by FAPLT, being a minimum period of one year, before making application for Readmission again.
- (3) After a "non-accept" decision at a Readmissions Panel, a person who chooses to re-enter the Readmission process shall start again at section 23, ie at application stage.

Appeals

26. (1) A Readmissions Applicant shall have the right to appeal to the Ministries Appeal Panel following a third "non-accept" decision at Readmissions Panel. For the avoidance of doubt, no appeal shall be possible after a first or second "non-accept" decision.
- (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 Readmissions Panel was intimated to the Readmissions Applicant.
- (3) At the Appeal Hearing the Readmissions Applicant shall be entitled to appear either online or in person, as determined by FAPLT, and to address the Panel. He or she may be accompanied by a companion, who shall not be entitled to speak to the Panel, but who may confer with the Readmissions 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 documents from the Readmissions Panel.
- (4) 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 Readmissions Panel there were irregularities in the process, (b) that the final decision of the Readmissions Panel was influenced by incorrect material fact, or (c) that the Readmissions Panel acted contrary to the principles of natural justice.
- (5) The outcome of an appeal shall be either to uphold the decision of the Readmissions Panel, or to annul that decision, in which case sub-sections (6) and (7) below will apply.
- (6) If the outcome of the appeal is to annul a decision of the Readmissions Panel the person shall be treated as if they had not attended that Readmissions Panel and shall be entitled to attend only one further Readmission Panel and that within one year of the appeal decision. Any further "non-accept" decision on that next attendance shall terminate that person's eligibility to enter the Readmission process under this Act and there shall be no further right of appeal.
- (7) If the outcome of the appeal is to uphold the decision of the Readmissions Panel, that shall terminate the Readmission process for that person and they may not re-enter into it at any time.

Occupational Health Assessment

27. (1) A person who is accepted by a Readmissions Panel shall undergo an Occupational Health assessment in the form prescribed by FAPLT and may only proceed to enter ministry in the Church of Scotland (subject to section 24(5)) if that assessment is, in the opinion of FAPLT, satisfactory. FAPLT's decision shall be final.
- (2) If the Occupational Health assessment is unsatisfactory, the person may choose to apply again for Readmission under this Act, provided always that the person must wait for the period prescribed by FAPLT, being a minimum period of one year. In this situation the person must consent to undergoing a further Occupational Health assessment prior to making the new application and that assessment must be satisfactory in the opinion of FAPLT in order for the application to proceed. An unsatisfactory Occupational Health assessment on that occasion shall mean that no further entry into the Readmission process is possible for that person.

Type of Certificate

28. A person who is readmitted into ministry in the Church of Scotland following acceptance at a Readmissions Panel and subject always to sections 24(5) and 27(1) above, shall be granted the type of Certificate determined by FAPLT.

Additional requirements where the person applying for Readmission has been previously judicially deprived of status

29. If a person has been previously judicially deprived of status as a Church of Scotland minister in terms of Act III 2001 or Act I 2019, both as amended, the following additional provisions shall apply in the Readmission process:
 - (1) At the application stage, the person must submit a statement as to why they were judicially deprived of status, how they have resolved the issues around their deprivation of status and why they wish to be readmitted to ministry in the Church of Scotland.

- (2) The Readmissions Panel shall be entitled to see and take account of the judicial documents relating to the deprivation of status.
- (3) FAPLT shall forward to the Presbytery of residence, or, in the case of an applicant who has not resided in Scotland for three months prior to the date of the application, to the Presbytery of Edinburgh, and also to any Presbytery within whose bounds the applicant was previously appointed as a minister, such documents as are reasonably required (which may include (a) a copy of the application in full and (b) copies of any documents obtained by FAPLT) to enable the Presbytery or Presbyteries, as the case may be, to provide the Readmissions Panel with its/their opinion of the application.
- (4) The Readmissions Panel shall then make its decision on the application in terms of section 24 and sections 25 to 28 may thereafter apply.

PART D – GENERAL PROVISIONS

Confidentiality

30. Each application and all procedure under this Act shall be taken in private by FAPLT and by Presbyteries.

Repeals and Amendments

31. (1) The Admission and Readmission of Ministers Act (Act XIII 2022) shall be repealed on the date this Act comes into force, subject to section 33 below. Any references to Act XIII 2022 in other Acts and Regulations of the General Assembly shall from that date be read as references to this Act.
- (2) The Restricted Certificates of Eligibility Regulations (Regs II 2020) shall be repealed as at the date of passing of this Act.

Commencement date and transitional arrangements

32. This Act shall come into force on [*date of passing at GA 2025*] May 2025.
33. Where a person has commenced the Admission process as at [*date on which this Act is passed at GA 2025*] May 2025, such a person shall continue to be subject to the provisions of the Admission and Readmission of Ministers Act (Act XIII 2022) until they have been granted a Certificate of Eligibility, or their application expires, whether due to refusal by FAPLT to sustain their Familiarisation Placement or otherwise. All other applications for Admission or Readmission, whether new or ongoing, and whether such applications commence before or after [*date on which this Act is passed at GA 2025*] May 2025, shall from [*date on which this Act is passed at GA 2025*] May 2025 be dealt with under the provisions of this Act. Any disputes as to what that shall mean in practice for any particular person shall be resolved by FAPLT and its decision as notified to the individual shall be final and not subject to any right of appeal.

Appendix IV**CANDIDATES, PROBATIONERS AND ADMISSIONS STATISTICS**

The tables below provide statistics relating to applicants at different stages in the Discernment and Assessment processes.

Year	2020	Jan-Dec 2021	Jan-Dec 2022	Jan-Dec 2023	Jan-Dec 2024
Enquirers	124	95	85	108	100+
Discernment Conversations	65	36	36	45	50
Applicants for Ministry (all types)	50	28	29	38	38
Entered Local Assessment	52	31	35	36	27
Chose to Withdraw (locally)	3	3	7	3	7
Readership (Applicants)	1	6	1	4	5
Readership Accepted	0	6	1	4	5

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Completed Local Assessment	37	45	20	29	24
Attended Assessment Conference	36	39	13	23	21
Full-time Ministry (Applicants)	25	26	7	17	12
Full-time Ministry Accepted	17	15	5	12	11
Ordained Local Ministry (Applicants)	9	12	6	5	8
Ordained Local Ministry Accepted	7	9	3	5	5
Deacons (Applicants)	2	1	0	1	1
Deacons Accepted	1	1	0	1	1
First Time Applicants	30	31	8	21	18
Accepted	21	21	4	16	14
Returning Applicants	6	8	5	2	3
Accepted	4	4	4	2	3

Admissions

Numbers of attendees at Admissions Conference

YEAR	ATTENDEES	ACCEPT	NON ACCEPT
2020	27	15	12
2021	27	12	15
2022	18	2	16
2023	17	5	12
2024	2	1	1

Candidates and Probationers

Candidates in training 2024-2025	Number			
	FTWAS	OLM	Diaconal	Total
Candidates in training	24	5	3	32
Candidates accepted for entry to training in but entry deferred	4	1	0	5
Candidates across all years prior to probation including deferrals	29	9	3	41

Candidates Studying at Training Provider 2024-2025	Number			
	FTWAS	OLM	Diaconal	Total
Aberdeen campus based	0	0	0	0
Aberdeen distance learning	3	2 (3)*	2	7
Edinburgh campus-based	8	0	0	8
Edinburgh distance learning	0	0	0	0
Glasgow campus based	5	0	0	5
Glasgow distance learning	0	0	0	0
Highland Theological College campus based	0	0	0	0
Highland Theological College distance learning	8	2 (3)*	1	10
St Andrews campus based	0	0	0	0

*Numbers in brackets include those who left the training process within the year

Probationers 2024-2025	Number
Number of Probationers in training	26
Number of Probationers appointed to Assistant Minister posts by Presbytery since GA 2024	16
Number of Probationers inducted into Ministry since GA 2024	8

Readers in Training 2024-2025	Number
Number of Readers in training	9
Number of Readers set apart since GA 2024	2

Appendix V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REVIEW OF PRIORITY AREAS

V. INTRODUCTION.

V.1 There has been no review of the Priority Areas work since the development of the '2017-2022 Priority Areas Action Plan.' The Prioritisation Exercise highlighted that significant changes have occurred between 2017 and 2024, including budget reductions and personnel changes, making it an appropriate time for a comprehensive review of this vital area of work.

V.2 The dedication of the Priority Areas (PA) staff team over many years and the Church of Scotland's commitment to communities facing the highest levels of deprivation are clear. The Priority Areas work has been described as a flagship initiative of the Church, consistently supported by General Assemblies, which reaffirm the Church's dedication to those struggling with poverty, emphasising the biblical mandate to care for the poor and vulnerable. This review does not seek to reconsider the Church of Scotland's theological stance but acknowledges that this flagship work unites the denomination, transcending theological and social differences.

V.3 As the Church becomes smaller and its societal influence lessens alongside a streamlined national office, it is crucial to reaffirm that our commitment to the poorest in our nation remains strong. The national staff team, despite its smaller size, represents this ongoing commitment and concern. For those living and working in areas of deprivation, knowing that they are 'seen' and 'heard' by the national office is both important and encouraging. This review begins with a reaffirmation of our desire to remain a denomination that supports, encourages, learns from and stands alongside our most deprived parishes and their ministries, remaining committed to this biblical mandate at the heart of our worship of God.

V.4 Conclusions from data and consultation with all stakeholders

Ministry in areas with high levels of deprivation is unique, and the challenges faced by ministers and workers in these contexts must not be underestimated. The support they require often differs from that in other areas of ministry. Isolation can be a significant issue, and simply being 'seen and heard' can provide great encouragement, giving individuals the courage to persist and innovate. According to feedback from the questionnaire, 'connection' is a key need, both connection with others facing similar challenges and with presbytery and national staff teams.

The following conclusions are drawn from all the data and form the basis, along with the strategic outcomes, of the Priority Areas Action Plan 2025 – 2027.

Building strong relationships with Presbytery is essential for the PA staff team. It is important to recognise that communities with high levels of deprivation face complex challenges and vulnerabilities that are not always widely understood. The national staff team should establish robust links with Presbytery to ensure the needs of Priority Area and Supplementary List parishes are recognised and addressed. Additionally, the PA team should actively support presbytery staff, including presbytery Mission Officers.

The staff should increase the frequency and depth of their engagement to maximise their effectiveness, emphasising accessibility. Stakeholders highlighted that visits and face-to-face support are the most needed and appreciated forms of assistance. When in-person engagement is not feasible, due to capacity constraints, the focus should shift to excellent communication and network building for support and shared learning.

Equipping and training: The Learning Programme remains important, providing expert advice to empower those working in areas of deprivation to address unique missional challenges. Additionally, the staff team could collaborate with People and Training to harness learning from Priority Areas and ensure resources are available to equip churches, in areas of deprivation, for mission.

Funding: the PA staff team should work with *Seeds for Growth* to ensure the success of work in areas of deprivation that have received this funding.

Networking events, like the Big Conversation, are key, particularly for congregations in presbyteries with few Priority Areas, where feelings of isolation, as expressed, are more pronounced. Additional networking and support opportunities should be explored, focusing on the strategic outcomes. Using the experience and knowledge within the PA network, the PA team is well-positioned to provide coaching-style support.

Effective communication and shared learning are crucial for the Church. The PA staff team, with the IT department, could explore using a CRM system to support missional work in areas of deprivation to foster connections, share examples, facilitate twinning opportunities for shared learning and support and benefit the wider church. (Feedback from *Seeds for Growth* highlights the value of matching congregations with similar visions or ministries for mutual support).

Other methods of supporting parishes with high levels of deprivation should be explored. Examples include: focused learning communities; twinning for short-term projects or longer-term support and mutual learning; and cross-presbytery Priority Area hubs for mutual support.

The PA team should work to keep the issue of poverty at the forefront of the Church's priorities and decisions, in collaboration with the PLSJ team. The team should also maintain accountability to those with lived experience of poverty to stay focused and up to date on the realities faced by affected communities.

Engagement in adult recruitment within the wider Faith Action should continue, to incorporate learning from the YAV programmes into planning. Any new approach should encourage placements in Priority Areas and other areas of deprivation to strengthen mission efforts and support.

The PA staff team should work closely with the wider Mission Support and Faith Action teams, drawing on their knowledge and expertise to ensure they are well-positioned to support 1. new models of church, 2. innovative ways of building community 3. approaches to addressing injustice, within areas of deprivation.

The Priority Areas staff team have made a lot of adjustments during the past year in particular. They should be applauded for their positivity, expertise and care, all of which have been highlighted during this process.

V5 Key recommendations of this review:

Expand the national staff team's remit to support missional work in all areas of deprivation, not just those on designated lists. **A re-evaluation of the terminology used to refer to the team may be required at some point to reflect this broader focus.**

Support for those working in areas with high levels of deprivation could be more strategic, focusing resources on areas with significant missional potential rather than maintaining a worshipping presence without evaluating missional activity, capacity or impact. Explore alternative support methods, such as a "SIMD solidarity" fund.

Track the number of church closures in areas of high deprivation to ensure they are not disproportionately higher than in wealthier areas.

While double-weighting for Priority Area parishes is considered helpful, it relies heavily on recruiting MDS personnel, with inconsistent quantity and quality of applicants. Regular monitoring is recommended to ensure effective use.

Review the Priority Area and Supplementary List designations with 2026 SIMD data and updated parish boundaries. Additionally, work to identify areas of poverty not captured by these lists and consideration given to the creation of a deprivation scale for each parish.

Appendix VI**CALL, ELECTION, AND APPOINTMENT OF MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT****CALL, ELECTION AND APPOINTMENT OF MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT ACT (ACT [] 2025)***Edinburgh, [] May 2025, Session []*

The General Assembly, hereby enact and ordain as follows:-

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PART	SECTION NOS	NAME
1	1	DEFINITIONS AND INTERPRETATION
2	2	VACANCY
3	3-5	PRESBYTERY COMMITTEES/PEOPLE WHO ASSIST
4	6-10	PRESBYTERY ACTIONS: RELEASE OF DEPARTING MINISTER, APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM MODERATOR AND PERMISSION TO CALL
5	11-14	LOCAL FINANCIAL BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES: VACANCY SCHEDULE, MANSE, PARISH PROFILE AND ELECTORAL REGISTER
6	15-17	THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE
7	18-21	WHO CAN BE CALLED AS THE MINISTER
8	22-28	THE NEW MINISTER
9	29-30	CONFIRMING THE NOMINATION
10	31-33	SERVICES OF ORDINATION, INDUCTION AND INTRODUCTION
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SCH 1		INTIMATION SCHEDULES
SCH 2		PROTOCOL AS TO HYBRID CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

PART 1 – DEFINITIONS AND INTERPRETATION

1.1 For the purposes of this Act the following terms shall have the meanings assigned to them below:-

- (i) "Adjustment" shall mean a form of adjustment set out in section 7, sub-sections (1) to (11) of the PMP Act;
- (ii) "Advisory Panel" means the pool of persons appointed by Presbytery to provide advice and support to congregations in a vacancy in terms of section 5 of this Act;
- (iii) An "appointment" shall mean an appointment to a post other than an inducted Minister detailed within the Approved Mission Plan and which is either counted within the allocation of ministry posts funded by the General Fund and allocated to that Presbytery by the General Assembly or is funded locally by the congregation and/or the Presbytery;
- (iv) "Approved Mission Plan" shall mean a Mission Plan formulated in terms of the PMP Act which has been initially approved by the Presbytery, FAPLT and the General Trustees and which thereafter has been annually and five-yearly evaluated and developed in accordance with the PMP Act;
- (v) "Basis of Adjustment" shall mean the written terms upon which an Adjustment is implemented;
- (vi) A "charge" shall mean 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 PMP Act;
- (vii) A "congregation" shall mean an association of persons in a parish whose names are on the Communion Roll and Adherents' Roll and who are under the pastoral oversight of a minister or ministers or a Team Ministry (or an Interim Moderator) and a Kirk Session, for Christian worship, fellowship, instruction, Mission and service;
- (viii) A "Financial Board" shall mean the body responsible for managing the finances of a congregation, being a Congregational Board, Deacons' Court, Committee of Management or Kirk Session;
- (ix) "FAPLT" shall mean the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team, a standing committee of the General Assembly;
- (x) "Permission to Call" shall mean permission to call and elect a Minister of Word and Sacrament granted by the Vacancy Procedure Committee or the Presbytery in line with the terms of the Approved Mission Plan and in terms of this Act;
- (xi) "Presbytery" shall mean the Presbytery of the bounds;
- (xii) "PMP Act" means the Presbytery Mission Plan Act (Act VIII 2021);
- (xiii) "Reviewable Charge" shall have the meaning ascribed to it in the PMP Act;
- (xiv) "Team Ministry" shall mean a Team Ministry in terms of section 7(10) of the PMP Act;
- (xv) "Team Ministry Role" shall mean a role in a Team Ministry as referred to in section 7(10) of the PMP Act;
- (xvi) "vacancy" shall mean a charge which is without an inducted minister and which has been granted Permission to Call, and shall include the situation of a prospective vacancy with Permission to Call where an Interim Moderator has been appointed under section 7(1) of this Act, as well as the situation with Permission to Call where a member of a Team Ministry has demitted or translated from his or her Role, and "vacant" shall be construed accordingly; and
- (xvii) "Vacancy Procedure Committee" shall mean a standing committee of Presbytery established in terms of section 3 of this Act.

- 1.2 While this Act lays out steps to be taken in sequential order, certain tasks can be undertaken concurrently and Kirk Sessions and Nominating Committees are encouraged to consider where this can happen.

PART 2 – VACANCY

2. Circumstances of Vacancy

This Act may apply in the following circumstances (although the following list is not exhaustive) and provided that Permission to Call has been granted:

- (a) the death of the minister of the charge;
- (b) the removal of status of the minister of the charge or the judicial suspension of the minister in terms of section 40 of the Discipline Act (Act I 2019);
- (c) the dissolution of the pastoral tie in terms of the Congregations in Unsatisfactory State Act (Act I 1988) or the Income Protection and Ill-Health Act (Act VI 2019);
- (d) the demission of the charge and/or status of the minister of the charge;
- (e) the translation of the minister of the charge to another charge;
- (f) the demission or translation of a minister from a Team Ministry Role.

In the circumstances of sub-sections 2(d), (e) or (f), the minister shall normally give at least three months' prior notice in writing to the Presbytery Clerk of the Presbytery for that minister's current charge.

PART 3 – PRESBYTERY COMMITTEES/PEOPLE WHO ASSIST

3. Vacancy Procedure Committee

- (1) Each Presbytery shall have a standing committee known as the Vacancy Procedure Committee. The Presbytery shall appoint at least three and no more than seven of its members to serve on the Vacancy Procedure Committee and shall provide information and training as required for those so appointed. The Vacancy Procedure Committee shall fulfil the Presbytery's functions specified in this Act in relation to vacant charges, including the question of granting of Permission to Call.
- (2) Where any member of the Vacancy Procedure Committee has a significant personal connection to the ministry or a former ministry of the vacant charge or of any constituent congregation thereof, he or she shall not take part in the decision-making process related to that charge/congregation.
- (3) The Vacancy Procedure Committee shall include a Convener, Depute Convener and Clerk, the latter of whom need not be a member of the Committee but may be the Presbytery Clerk.
- (4) The Vacancy Procedure Committee shall have a quorum of three.
- (5) The Convener of the Vacancy Procedure Committee may, where he or she reasonably believes a matter to be non-contentious, consult members individually, and may do so by electronic means. A meeting shall be held at the request of any member of the Committee.
- (6) Every decision made by the Vacancy Procedure Committee shall be reported to the next meeting of Presbytery, but may not be recalled by Presbytery where the decision was subject to the provisions of section 4 below and no request was made under section 4(2).
- (7) One of the tasks of the Vacancy Procedure Committee, subject to the provisions of section 4 below, shall be to determine the number of members of each congregation who shall serve on the Nominating Committee, the overall number on any Nominating Committee being an odd number up to a maximum of thirteen.

4. Request for Consideration of a Vacancy Procedure Committee decision by Presbytery

Where in this Act any decision by the Vacancy Procedure Committee is subject to the provisions of this section, the following rules shall apply:-

- (1) The Presbytery Clerk shall intimate to all members of the Presbytery by mailing, by electronic means, or at a Presbytery meeting, the course of action or permission proposed, and shall arrange for one Sunday's pulpit intimation of the same to be made to the congregation or congregations concerned, in terms of Schedule A. The intimation having been made, it shall be displayed as prominently as possible at the church building(s) for seven days.
- (2) Any four individuals, being communicant members of the congregation concerned or full members of the Presbytery, may give written notice requesting that action be taken in terms of subsection (3) below, giving reasons for the request, within seven days after the pulpit intimation.
- (3) Upon receiving notice in terms of subsection (2), the Presbytery Clerk shall sist the process or permission referred to in subsection (1), which shall then require the approval of the Presbytery.
- (4) The Moderator of the Presbytery shall in such circumstances consider whether a Specific Purpose meeting of the Presbytery should be called in order to avoid prejudicial delay in the vacancy process.
- (5) The Presbytery Clerk shall cause to have served upon the congregation or congregations an intimation in terms of Schedule B citing them to attend the meeting of Presbytery for their interest.
- (6) The consideration by Presbytery of any matter under this section shall not constitute an appeal or a Petition, and the decision of Presbytery shall be deemed to be a decision at first instance subject to the normal rights of appeal or dissent-and-complaint.

5. Advisory Panel

- (1) The Presbytery shall appoint a pool of at least three persons to be known as the Advisory Panel.
- (2) Members of the Advisory Panel shall provide advice and support to congregations in a vacancy and may do so individually or collectively, save as referred to in section 28, where the whole Advisory Panel shall act.
- (3) The Advisory Panel may comprise members of the Vacancy Procedure Committee and may contain individuals who are not members of the Presbytery. Members of the Advisory Panel shall initially be appointed for a term of two years, and may serve further terms.
- (4) Member(s) of the Advisory Panel shall meet:

- (a) before the election of the Nominating Committee, with the Kirk Session (or Kirk Sessions both separately and together) of the vacant charge, to consider together in the light of the whole circumstances of the charge (i) what kind of ministry would be best suited to their needs, and (ii) the finalising of the Profile which has been prepared in accordance with section 13;
- (b) with the Nominating Committee before it has taken any steps to fill the vacancy, to consider how it should proceed;
- (c) with the Nominating Committee at any other time by request of either the Nominating Committee or a member of the Advisory Panel.

PART 4 – PRESBYTERY ACTIONS: RELEASE OF DEPARTING MINISTER, APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM MODERATOR AND PERMISSION TO CALL

6. Release of Departing Minister

Where the circumstances pertain to subsections 2(d), (e) or (f) above, the Vacancy Procedure Committee shall

- (1) except in cases governed by subsection (2) below, decide whether to release the minister from his or her charge and, in any case involving translation to another charge or introduction to an appointment, instruct him or her to await the instructions of the Presbytery or another Presbytery;
- (2) in the case of a minister in the first five years of his or her first charge (other than a Reviewable Charge), decide whether or not there are exceptional circumstances to justify releasing him or her from his or her charge and proceeding in terms of subsection (1) above;
- (3) determine whether a vacancy has arisen or is anticipated and, as soon as possible, determine the date upon which the charge becomes actually vacant, and
- (4) inform the congregation or congregations by one Sunday's pulpit intimation as soon as convenient;

The provisions of section 4 above shall apply to the decisions of the Vacancy Procedure Committee in terms of subsections (1) and (2) above.

7. Appointment of Interim Moderator

- (1) At the same time as the Vacancy Procedure Committee makes a decision in terms of section 6 above, or where circumstances pertain to subsections 2(a), (b) or (c) above, the Vacancy Procedure Committee shall appoint an Interim Moderator for the charge in terms of the Church Courts Act (Act VI 2023) and shall make intimation thereof to the congregation subject to the provisions of section 4 above.
- (2) The person appointed as an Interim Moderator shall not be a member in the vacant charge nor a member of the Vacancy Procedure Committee. The name of the Interim Moderator shall be forwarded to FAPLT.
- (3) Subject always to section 7(4), if the Interim Moderator appointed is a ministerial member of Presbytery, she/he is thereby disqualified from becoming an applicant or accepting an invitation to be considered in the current vacancy.
- (4) A ministerial member of Presbytery who has in the past served as an Interim Moderator in the charge is not subject to the disqualification set out in section 7(3) if one of the following conditions applies:
 - (a) The person was discharged as Interim Moderator at least two years prior to time of applying for the vacancy, or
 - (b) Intimation of the request to be discharged as Interim Moderator was given to the Presbytery Clerk prior to Permission to Call being given.

8. Duties of Interim Moderator

- (1) The Interim Moderator shall preside at all meetings of the Kirk Session (or of the Kirk Sessions in the case of a linked charge), save in the case of a Team Ministry where the Interim Moderator is not appointed to the Team Ministry Role which supplies the Moderator of the Kirk Session, in which case the Interim Moderator shall only preside in relation to vacancy business. The Interim Moderator shall also preside at all congregational meetings in connection with the vacancy, or at which the minister would have presided had there been a sitting minister. In the case of a congregational meeting called by the Presbytery in connection with adjustment the Interim Moderator, having constituted the meeting, shall relinquish the chair in favour of the representative of the Presbytery, but he or she shall be at liberty to speak at such a meeting. In consultation with the Kirk Session and the Financial Court he or she shall make arrangements for pulpit supply.
- (2) The Interim Moderator appointed in a prospective vacancy may call and preside at meetings of the Kirk Session and of the congregation for the transaction of business relating to the said prospective vacancy, ahead of the actual date of demission or translation. He or she shall be associated with the Kirk Session until the date of the actual vacancy; after that date he or she shall take full charge.
- (3) It shall be the duty of the Interim Moderator to ascertain whether or not the Kirk Session (or Kirk Sessions in the case of a linking or deferred linking or deferred union) may wish to follow the procedures contained in the Ministers and Deacons in Civil Partnerships and Same Sex Marriages Act (Act I 2015), as regards making a decision on whether or not to depart (as "depart" is defined within that Act). Any such decision should be made after the Kirk Session(s) meets with the Advisory Panel.
- (4) The Interim Moderator shall act as an assessor to the Nominating Committee, being available to offer guidance and advice. If the Committee so desire he or she may act as their Convener, but in no case shall he or she have a vote.
- (5) In the event of the absence of the Interim Moderator, the Vacancy Procedure Committee shall appoint a member of the Presbytery who is not a member of the vacant congregation to fulfil any of the rights and duties of the Interim Moderator.

9. Permission to Call

When the decision to release the minister from the charge has been made and the Interim Moderator appointed, the Vacancy Procedure Committee shall consider whether to give Permission to Call, and such a decision shall be subject to the provisions of section 4 above. The Vacancy Procedure Committee must refer the question of Permission to Call to the Presbytery Committee holding appropriate delegated authority or to the Presbytery itself if:

- (a) a financial sustainability review of the charge in terms of section [X] of the PMP Act is underway (as to which the Vacancy Procedure Committee shall obtain confirmation from the Presbytery Clerk;
- (b) shortfalls exist which in the opinion of the Vacancy Procedure Committee require consideration in terms of section 10 hereunder;
- (c) the Vacancy Procedure Committee has reason to believe that the Vacancy Schedule referred to in section 11 below will not be approved;
- (d) the Manse is not currently available with vacant possession;
- (e) the Vacancy Procedure Committee has reason to believe that the Presbytery will, in terms of section 12 below, instruct work to be carried out on the Manse before a call can be sustained, and judges that the likely extent of such work warrants a delay in the granting of Permission to Call, or
- (f) the Vacancy Procedure Committee has reason to believe that the Presbytery may wish to delay or refuse the granting of Permission to Call for any reason.

Any decision to refuse Permission to Call shall be subject to appeal or dissent-and-complaint.

10. Shortfalls

- (1) As soon as possible after intimation of a vacancy or anticipated vacancy reaches the Presbytery Clerk, the Presbytery shall ascertain whether the charge has current or accumulated shortfalls in contributions to central funds, and shall determine whether and to what extent any shortfalls that exist are justified.
- (2) If the vacancy is in a charge in which the Presbytery has determined that shortfalls are to any extent unjustified, it shall not resolve to allow a call of any kind until:
 - (a) the shortfalls have been met to the extent to which the Presbytery determined that they were unjustified, or
 - (b) a scheme for the payment of the unjustified shortfall has been agreed between the congregation and the Presbytery and receives the concurrence of the Assembly Trustees, or
 - (c) a fresh assessment of the charge in terms of the PMP Act has been carried out, regardless of the status of the charge in the Approved Mission Plan; and:
 - (i) During such assessment no further steps may be taken in respect of filling the vacancy, and the Presbytery shall make final determination of what constitutes such steps, which may include suspension of the vacancy process.
 - (ii) Following such assessment and any consequent adjustment or deferred adjustment the shortfalls have been met or declared justifiable or a scheme has been agreed in terms of subsection 2(b) above; the Presbytery shall inform FAPLT and the Assembly Trustees of its decisions in terms of this section; and the Presbytery shall remove the suspension of vacancy process referred to in subsection 2(c)(i).

PART 5 – LOCAL FINANCIAL BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES: VACANCY SCHEDULE, MANSE, PARISH PROFILE AND ELECTORAL REGISTER**11. Vacancy Schedule**

- (1) When in terms of sections 6 and 7 above the decision to release the minister from the charge has been made, the Interim Moderator has been appointed and Permission to Call has been granted, there shall be issued, by the Stewardship & Finance Department a Schedule or Schedules for completion by the responsible Financial Board(s) of the vacant congregation(s) in consultation with representatives of the Presbytery, setting forth the proposed arrangements for payment of ministerial expenses and for provision of a manse, showing the ministry requirements and details of any endowment income. The Schedule, along with an Extract Minute from each relevant Kirk Session containing a commitment fully and adequately to support the ministry, shall be forwarded to the Presbytery Clerk. For the avoidance of doubt, the Vacancy Schedule submitted to Presbytery shall include a recently completed Manse Condition Schedule following inspection of the manse of the charge.
- (2) The Schedule shall be considered by the Vacancy Procedure Committee and, if approved, transmitted to the Stewardship & Finance Department by the Presbytery Clerk. The Vacancy Procedure Committee or Presbytery must not sustain an appointment and call until the Schedule has been approved by them and by the Stewardship & Finance Department, exercising delegated powers on behalf of the Assembly Trustees, which shall intimate its decision within six weeks of receiving the Schedule from the Presbytery.
- (3) The accuracy of the Vacancy Schedule shall be kept under review by the Vacancy Procedure Committee.
- (4) The provisions of section 4 above shall apply to the decisions of the Vacancy Procedure Committee.

12. Manse

Where the Manse is vacant or becomes vacant, the Presbytery Property Committee shall inspect the Manse, consult with the Presbytery Buildings Officer and come to a view on what work, if any, must be carried out to render it suitable for a new incumbent. The views of the Property Committee shall then be communicated to the Presbytery which shall, subject to any modifications which might be agreed by that Court, instruct the Financial Board of the congregation to have the work carried out. As noted in sections 9(d) and (e), Permission to Call may be delayed if the Manse is not available with vacant possession or if that is warranted by the likely extent of work to be carried out on the Manse, and in particular, no induction date shall be fixed until the Presbytery Property Committee has again inspected the Manse and confirmed that all required work has been undertaken satisfactorily.

13. Parish Profile

Subject to the right to call having first been granted, the Kirk Session(s) shall prepare a Profile of each congregation and parish within the charge, in accordance with the template published in the Guidelines for Kirk Sessions. In the case of a linked charge, this shall take the form of a single document, with separate sections for each constituent congregation. In all cases the Profile shall contain, as an Appendix, a copy of the current Mission Action Plan on each constituent congregation produced in accordance with the Presbytery Mission Plan Act (Act VIII 2021). The draft Profile(s) shall then be submitted to the Advisory Panel, prior to its meeting with the Kirk Session(s) (section 5(4)(a)), for possible comment and revision.

14. Electoral Register

- (1) The Kirk Session shall keep each of its Communion Roll and Adherents' Roll up to date in accordance with the Communion Rolls and Adherents' Rolls Act (Act [] 2025). The persons on each of those Rolls shall together constitute the Electoral Register of the congregation/charge.
- (2) At least one week before intimation is given in terms of section 15 below that a Nominating Committee is to be appointed the Session Clerk shall send the current Electoral Register to the Presbytery Clerk and that shall constitute the Electoral Register for the purposes of subsequent sections of this Act, amended thereafter only as specified in this section 14.
- (3) If, after the Electoral Register is sent to the Presbytery Clerk in terms of subsection (2) above, any communicant is given a Certificate of Transference, or any person's name is removed from the Communion or Adherents' Roll, the Session Clerk shall delete that person's name from the Electoral Register and initial the deletion. Such a Certificate shall be granted only when application for it has been made in writing, and the said written application shall be retained until the vacancy is ended.
- (4) The Session Clerk shall only update the Electoral Register to reflect any additions to the Communion Roll or Adherents' Roll where a reinstatement and extension of Permission to Call is granted in terms of section 28 of this Act.

PART 6: THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE**15. Appointment of Nominating Committee**

- (1) Once the Electoral Register has been sent to the Presbytery Clerk in terms of section 14(2), intimation in terms of Schedule C shall be made that a meeting of the congregation is to be held to appoint a Committee of its own number for the purpose of nominating one person to the congregation to be elected as their minister.
- (2) (a) The Interim Moderator shall preside at this meeting, and the Session Clerk, or in his or her absence a person appointed by the meeting, shall act as Clerk.
- (b) The Interim Moderator shall remind the congregation of the number of members it is required to appoint to the Nominating Committee, as determined by the Vacancy Procedure Committee, and shall call for Nominations. To constitute a valid Nomination, the name of a person on the Electoral Register has to be proposed and seconded by another person whose name is on the Electoral Register, and assurance given by the proposer that the person is prepared to act on the Committee. The Clerk shall take a note of all Nominations in the order in which they are made.
- (c) For the avoidance of doubt, a member of a vacant charge shall not be eligible for nomination to serve on a Nominating Committee, if he or she is:
 - (i) a minister (including a retired minister) of the Church of Scotland,
 - (ii) a member of the diaconate of the Church of Scotland,
 - (iii) an employee of the vacant charge,
 - (iv) an employee of FAPLT who works in the vacant charge, or
 - (v) the spouse or civil partner, of an outgoing minister, or of any Team Minister, or of any former minister of the charge.
- (d) When it appears to the Interim Moderator that the Nominations are complete, they shall be read to the congregation and an opportunity given for any withdrawals. If the number of persons nominated does not exceed the maximum fixed in terms of subsection (4) below there is no need for a vote, and the Interim Moderator shall declare that these persons constitute a Nominating Committee.
- (e) If the number exceeds the maximum the election shall proceed by a system of written ballot devised by the Kirk Session to suit the size of the congregation and approved by the Vacancy Procedure Committee or the Presbytery. In either case, in the event of a tie for the last place a further vote shall be taken between or among those tying.
- (f) The Interim Moderator shall, at the same meeting or as soon thereafter as the result of any ballot has been determined, announce the names of those thus elected to serve on the Nominating Committee, and intimate to them the time and place of their first meeting; which may be immediately after the congregational meeting provided that has been intimated along with the intimation of the congregational meeting.
- (3) Where there is an agreement between the Presbytery and the congregation or congregations that the minister to be inducted shall serve in a Parish Grouping or with part of their time in a Presbytery-designated role, that agreement may specify that the Presbytery is entitled to appoint up to two non-voting representatives to serve on the Nominating Committee.
- (4) When the vacancy is in a linked charge, or when a union or linking of congregations has been agreed but not yet effected, or when there is agreement to a deferred union or a deferred linking, or where the appointment is to more than one post, the Vacancy Procedure Committee shall, subject to the provisions of section 4 above determine how the number who will act on the Nominating Committee will be allocated among the congregations involved, unless provision for this has already been made in the Basis of Union or Basis of Linking as the case may be.

- (5) The Nominating Committee shall not have power to co-opt additional members but the relevant Kirk Session shall have power when necessary to appoint a replacement for any of its appointees who ceases, by death or resignation, to be a member of the Nominating Committee, or who, by falling ill or by moving away from the area, is unable to serve as a member of it.

16. Constitution of the Nominating Committee

It shall be the duty of the Interim Moderator to summon and preside at the first meeting of the Nominating Committee, which may be held at the close of the congregational meeting at which it is appointed and at which the Committee shall appoint a Convener and a Clerk. The Clerk, who need not be a member of the Committee, shall keep regular minutes of all proceedings. The Convener shall have a deliberative vote (if he or she is not the Interim Moderator) but shall in no case have a casting vote. If the Clerk is not a member of the Committee, he or she shall have no vote. At all meetings of the Committee only those present shall be entitled to vote.

17. Task of the Nominating Committee

- (1) The Nominating Committee shall have the duty of nominating one person to the congregation to be elected as minister.
- (2) It shall proceed by a process of announcement in a monthly vacancy list, application and interview, and may also advertise, receive recommendations and pursue enquiries in other ways. The Nominating Committee shall make available to all applicants and enquirers the Profile and Appendix specified in section 13. Regardless of how such individuals may initially have been approached or identified, no individual shall be considered as a candidate for the vacancy unless he or she has first submitted a formal application.
- (3) The Nominating Committee shall make themselves aware of the roles of the other members of any Team Ministry as described in section 7(10) of the PMP Act and may meet with them for this purpose.

PART 7 – WHO CAN BE CALLED AS THE MINISTER

18. Eligibility for Election

- (1) The following categories of persons, and no others, are eligible to be nominated, elected, and called as ministers of parishes in the Church of Scotland, but always subject, where appropriate, to the provisions of the Admission and Readmission of Ministers Act (Act XIII 2022):
 - (a) A minister holding Category **O** registration, in terms of the Registration of Ministries Act (Act II 2017);
 - (b) A minister who has applied for Category **O** registration, whose application is currently under consideration, provided that before the call can be sustained or the minister in question inducted, Category **O** registration must have been granted;
 - (c) A Graduate Candidate holding an Exit Certificate or a Graduate Candidate's Certificate in terms of section 22A of the Selection and Training for Full-Time Ministry Act (Act X 2004).
 - (d) The holder of a Certificate of Eligibility or of a Temporary Certificate of Eligibility, in either case in terms of the Admission and Readmission of Ministers Act (Act XIII 2022).
- (2) Notwithstanding section (1) above, the following categories of persons shall not be eligible to apply for vacancies:
 - (a) Anyone who has served as an Interim Moderator in the current vacancy unless the conditions set out in section 7(4) apply.
 - (b) A person who is the subject of ongoing proceedings being undertaken in accordance with the Discipline Act (Act I 2019).
 - (c) A person who is not a member of, or cannot become a member of, the PVG Scheme, as defined in the Safeguarding Act (Act XVI 2018) and in addition, in the case of a minister who has lived outwith the UK for 12 months or more (whether continuous or in total) in the last ten years, who cannot exhibit appropriate Safeguarding clearance, including a criminal record check, satisfactory to the Presbytery and the Safeguarding Service, from the appropriate government/agency in the relevant jurisdiction(s).

19. Undue Influence

- (1) Ministers occupying positions within a Team Ministry in the charge, or larger area including the charge, and former holders of such positions, shall be eligible to apply and shall not by virtue of office be deemed to have exercised undue influence in securing the call.
- (2) A *locum tenens* or Assistant Minister in the vacant charge shall not by virtue of office be deemed to have exercised undue influence in securing the Call.
- (3) Any person nominated to a charge shall in accepting a Call provide an assurance that no undue influence has been used by the person appointed or by others to secure the Call.
- (4) The Presbytery has a duty to take into consideration any evidence or allegation that undue influence has been used to secure the Call.

20. Team Ministry

An Interim Moderator shall be appointed in relation to vacancy business where there is a Team Ministry and one of the ministers in the team demits from his or her Role. Where the Team Ministry Role of the minister in question included being Moderator of the Kirk session, then the Interim Moderator shall also fulfil that role.

21. Temporary Certificates of Eligibility

A minister who holds a Temporary Certificate of Eligibility shall, if inducted to a charge, be inducted for a period of three years only, extendable on one occasion only in accordance with the provisions of section 12(b) of the Admission and Readmission of Ministers Act (Act XIII 2022).

PART 8 – THE NEW MINISTER

22. Nomination

- (1) Before the candidate is asked to accept Nomination, the Interim Moderator shall ensure that the candidate is given an adequate opportunity to see the whole ecclesiastical buildings (including the Manse) pertaining to the congregation, and to meet privately with all members of staff of the charge and/or of any members of a Team Ministry. Furthermore, the candidate shall be provided with:
 - (a) a copy of the Approved Mission Plan and of any current Basis of Adjustment or Basis of Reviewable Charge;
 - (b) copies of the most recent annual report and accounts for each congregation of the charge, as approved by an independent examiner;
 - (c) copies of the most recent quinquennial inspection reports in relation to the buildings of the charge; and
 - (d) a copy of the current Action Plan for each constituent congregation in the charge.
 The candidate shall acknowledge receipt of the above documents in writing to the Interim Moderator.
- (2) Before the Nominating Committee reports the identity of the nominee to the Kirk Session and Presbytery, it shall report the process followed to the Advisory Panel (by electronic means if desired) who shall give any further advice it or they deem necessary.
- (3) Before any Nomination is intimated to the Kirk Session and Presbytery Clerk, the Clerk to the Nominating Committee shall secure the written consent thereto of the nominee.
- (4) Before reporting the Nomination to the Vacancy Procedure Committee, the Presbytery Clerk shall obtain from the nominee or Interim Moderator evidence of the eligibility of the nominee to be appointed to the charge.
 - (a) In the case of a minister being a member of Presbytery, this shall constitute a certified extract from the Register of Ministry showing that the minister has Category O registration.
 - (b) In the case of a minister not being a member of any Presbytery of the Church of Scotland, this shall constitute an Exit Certificate or Graduate Candidate's Certificate in terms of Act X 2004, or a Certificate of Eligibility or Temporary Certificate of Eligibility in terms of the Admission and Readmission of Ministers Act (Act XIII 2022).
 - (c) In addition, in the case of a minister in the first five years of his or her first charge, an extract minute shall be obtained either from the Vacancy Procedure Committee of his or her current Presbytery, or from that Presbytery, exceptionally releasing the minister.
 - (d) In the case of all ministers, this shall include evidence of membership of the PVG Scheme, as defined in the Safeguarding Act (Act XVI 2018), or of application for such membership, provided always that
 - (i) no induction shall take place until evidence of PVG Scheme membership is exhibited, and
 - (ii) where the minister has lived outwith the UK for 12 months or more (whether continuous or in total) in the last ten years, the minister shall exhibit appropriate Safeguarding clearance, including a criminal record check, satisfactory to the Presbytery and the Safeguarding Service, from the appropriate government/agency in the relevant jurisdiction(s).

23. Preaching by Nominee

- (1) The Interim Moderator, on receiving notice of the Nominating Committee's Nomination, shall arrange that the nominee conduct public worship in the vacant church or churches, normally within four Sundays of receipt of the Nomination, and that the ballot take place immediately after each such service.
- (2) The Interim Moderator shall arrange for intimation to be made on the two preceding Sundays regarding the arrangements made in connection with the preaching by the nominee and the ballot thereafter, all in terms of Schedule D.

24. Election of Minister

- (1) The Interim Moderator shall normally preside at all congregational meetings connected with the election, which shall be in all cases by ballot, and shall normally be in charge of the ballot.
- (2) The Interim Moderator may invite one or more persons (not being persons whose names are on the Electoral Register of the vacant congregation) to assist him or her in the conduct of a ballot vote.
- (3) When a deferred union or deferred linking is involved the Interim Moderator shall consult and reach agreement with the minister or Interim Moderator of the other congregation regarding the arrangements for the conduct of public worship in these congregations by the nominee as in section 23(1) above. The Interim Moderator shall in writing appoint a member of Presbytery to take full charge of the ballot vote for the other congregation. If there is a minister already inducted in another congregation in terms of a deferred union or deferred linking, he or she shall not be so appointed, nor shall he or she be in any way involved in the conduct of the election.

25. Ballot Procedure

- (1) The Kirk Session shall arrange to have available at the time of election a sufficient supply of voting-papers printed in the form of Schedule E hereto, and these shall be put into the custody of the Interim Moderator who shall preside at the election, assisted as in section 24 above. He or she shall issue on request to any person whose name is on the Electoral Register a voting-paper, noting on the Register that this has been done. Facilities shall be provided whereby the voter may mark the paper in secrecy, and a ballot-box shall be available wherein the paper is to be deposited when marked. The Interim Moderator may assist any person who asks for help in respect of completing the voting-paper, but no other person whatever shall communicate with the voter at this stage. The Interim Moderator, or the deputy appointed by him or her, shall be responsible for the safe custody of ballot-box, papers and Electoral Register.
- (2) As soon as practicable, and at latest within twenty-four hours after the close of the voting, the Interim Moderator shall constitute the Kirk Session, or the joint Kirk Sessions when more than one congregation is involved, and in the presence of a quorum of the Kirk Session(s), shall proceed with the counting of the votes, in which he or she may be assisted as provided in section 24 above. When more than one ballot-box has been

used and when the votes of more than one congregation are involved, all ballot-boxes shall be emptied and the voting-papers shall be mixed together before counting begins so that the preponderance of votes in one area or in one congregation shall not be disclosed.

- (3) A voting-paper shall only be considered as spoilt and the vote not counted where the intention of the voter is unclear, and in no other circumstances. It shall be for the Kirk Session, on the recommendation of the Interim Moderator, to determine whether the intention of the voter is clear.
- (4) If the number voting For exceeds the number voting Against the nominee shall be declared elected and the Nominating Committee shall be deemed to be discharged.
- (5) If the number voting For is equal to or less than the number voting Against, the Interim Moderator shall declare that there has been failure to elect and that the Nominating Committee is deemed to have been discharged. He or she shall proceed with the election of a fresh Nominating Committee in terms of section 15 above, without further reference to the Presbytery.
- (6) After the counting has been completed the Interim Moderator shall sign a declaration in one of the forms of Schedule F hereto, and this shall be recorded in the minute of the Kirk Session or of the Kirk Sessions. In presence of the Kirk Session the Interim Moderator shall then seal up the voting-papers along with the marked copy of the Electoral Register, and these shall be transmitted to the Presbytery Clerk in due course along with the other documents specified in section 29(1) below.
- (7) The congregational meeting connected with the election may be held in hybrid form, and in that event the terms of the Protocol agreed at the Commission of Assembly on 30 November 2023, which are appended in Schedule 2 to this Act, shall apply.

26. **Withdrawal of Nominee**

- (1) Should a nominee intimate withdrawal before he or she has preached as nominee, the Nominating Committee shall continue its task and seek to nominate another nominee.
- (2) Should a nominee intimate withdrawal after he or she has been elected, the Nominating Committee having been discharged, the Interim Moderator shall proceed with the election of a fresh Nominating Committee in terms of section 15 above, without further reference to the Presbytery.

27. **The Call**

- (1) The Interim Moderator shall, along with the intimation regarding the result of the voting, intimate the arrangements made for those on the Electoral Register of the congregation, during a period of not less than eight days prescribed within a two week window, to subscribe the Call (Schedule G). Intimation shall be in the form of Schedule H hereto.
- (2) The Call may be subscribed on behalf of an individual on the Electoral Register not present to sign in person, provided a mandate authorising such subscription is produced as in Schedule I. All such entries shall be initialised by the Interim Moderator or by the member of the Kirk Session appending them.
- (3) Those eligible to sign the Call shall be all those whose names appear on the Electoral Register. A paper of concurrence in the Call may be signed by persons associated with the congregation whose names have not been entered on the Electoral Register.

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 Presbytery shall review the matter. Thereafter the Presbytery may either (1) resolve to review the relevant aspects of the Approved Mission Plan in accordance with the PMP Act or (2) if the Presbytery is still satisfied that a minister should be appointed, resolve that the Permission to Call shall be reinstated and the Presbytery shall proceed in one of the following ways:

- 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 Presbytery shall proceed again in terms of this section of the Act and may select any option, including further extensions;
- 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 Presbytery so resolves. The process shall then be followed in terms of this Act from the point of the election of the Nominating Committee; or
- take steps to make such an appointment, proceeding as follows:-
 - (i) The Presbytery 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 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 2018) (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.

PART 9 – CONFIRMING THE NOMINATION

29. Transmission of Documents

- (1) After an election or appointment has been made the Interim Moderator shall secure from the person appointed
 - (i) a letter of acceptance of the appointment, (ii) evidence of Category **O** registration in the form of a certified extract from the Register of Ministry (or other evidence of eligibility to be called in terms of section 18(1) above, as the case may be), (iii) evidence of membership of the PVG Scheme, as defined in the Safeguarding Act (Act XVI 2018) (iv) in addition, if applicable, Safeguarding clearance as specified in section 22(4)(d)(ii) above) and (v) a letter of assurance that no undue influence has been used by the person appointed or by others to secure the Call.
- (2) The Interim Moderator shall then without delay transmit the relevant documents to the Presbytery Clerk. These are:
 - the minute of Nomination by the Nominating Committee,
 - all intimations made to the congregation thereafter,
 - the declaration of the election and appointment,
 - the voting-papers,
 - the marked copy of the Register,
 - the letter of acceptance,
 - evidence of Category **O** registration in the form of a certified extract from the Register of Ministry, (or other evidence of eligibility to be called in terms of section 18(1) above, as the case may be), and
 - evidence of membership of the PVG Scheme, as defined in the Safeguarding Act (Act XVI 2018) (and in addition if applicable Safeguarding clearance as specified in section 22(4)(d)(ii) above).

He or she shall also inform the Presbytery Clerk of the steps taken in connection with the signing of the Call, and shall arrange that, at the expiry of the period allowed for subscription, the Call shall be transmitted by the Session Clerk to the Presbytery Clerk.
- (3) After the person elected has been inducted to the charge the Presbytery Clerk shall:
 - (a) deliver to him or her the approved copy of the Vacancy Schedule referred to in section 11(2) above, and
 - (b) destroy the intimations and voting-papers lodged with him or her in terms of subsection (2) above and ensure that confidential documents and correspondence held locally are destroyed.

30. Sustaining the Call

- (1) All of the documents listed in section 29 above shall be laid before the Vacancy Procedure Committee which may resolve to sustain the Call and determine arrangements for the induction of the new minister, subject to
 - (a) a request for the release, if appropriate, of the minister from his or her current charge in terms of this Act and
 - (b) the provisions of section 4 above as to decisions of the Vacancy Procedure Committee. The Moderator of the Presbytery shall, if no ordinary meeting of the Presbytery falls before the proposed induction date, call a Specific Purpose meeting for the induction.
- (2) In the event that the matter comes before the Presbytery in terms of section 4 above, the procedure shall be as follows:–
 - (a) The Call and other relevant documents having been laid on the table the Presbytery shall hear any person whom it considers to have an interest. In particular any member of the Advisory Panel shall be entitled to be heard if he or she so desires, or the Presbytery may ask for a report from him or her. The Presbytery shall then decide whether to sustain the appointment in terms of subsection (1) above, and in doing so shall give consideration to the number of signatures on the Call. It may delay reaching a decision and return the Call to the Kirk Session to give further opportunity for it to be subscribed.
 - (b) If the Presbytery sustain an appointment and Call to a Graduate Candidate, and there be no appeal tendered in due form against its judgement, it shall appoint the day and hour and place at which the ordination and induction will take place.
 - (c) If the Presbytery sustain an appointment and Call to a minister of the Church of Scotland not being a minister of a parish, or to a minister of another denomination, and there be no ecclesiastical impediment, the Presbytery shall appoint the day and hour and place at which the induction will take place.
- (3) In the event that the Call is not sustained, the Presbytery shall determine either (1) to give more time for it to be signed in terms of section 27 above or (2) to proceed in terms of subsection (1) or (2)(b) or (2)(c) of section 28 above.
- (4) No Call shall be sustained until the following evidence has been laid before the Vacancy Procedure Committee:
 - (i) that the new minister has Category **O** registration, in the form of a certified extract from the Register of Ministry (or other evidence of eligibility to be called in terms of section 18(1) above, as the case may be),
 - (ii) that the new minister is a member of the PVG Scheme, as defined in the Safeguarding Act (Act XVI 2018) and
 - (iii) in addition, if applicable, Safeguarding clearance as specified in section 22(4)(d)(ii) above.

PART 10 – SERVICES OF ORDINATION, INDUCTION AND INTRODUCTION**31. Admission to a charge**

- (1) When the Presbytery has appointed a day for the ordination and induction of a Graduate Candidate, or for the induction of a minister already ordained, the Clerk shall arrange for an intimation in the form of Schedule K to be read to the congregation on the two Sundays preceding the day appointed.
- (2) At the time and place named in the intimation, the Presbytery having been constituted, the Moderator shall call for the return of the intimation attested as having been duly served. If the minister is being translated from another Presbytery, the relevant minute of that Presbytery or of its Vacancy Procedure Committee agreeing to translation shall also be laid on the table. Any objection, to be valid at this stage, must have been intimated to the Presbytery Clerk at the objector's earliest opportunity, must be strictly directed to life or doctrine and must be substantiated immediately to the satisfaction of the Presbytery, in which case procedure shall be sisted and the Presbytery shall take appropriate steps to deal with the situation that has arisen. Otherwise the Presbytery shall proceed with the ordination and induction, or with the induction, as hereunder.
- (3) The Presbytery shall proceed to the place of worship where public worship shall be conducted by those appointed for the purpose. The Clerk shall read a brief narrative of the cause of the vacancy and of the steps taken for the call and election of a new minister. The Moderator, having read the Preamble, shall, addressing him or her by name, put to the person to be inducted the questions prescribed. Satisfactory answers having been given, the person to be inducted shall sign the Formula. If he or she has not already been ordained, the person to be inducted shall then kneel, if able to do so, and the Moderator by prayer and the imposition of hands, in which members of the Presbytery, appointed by the Presbytery for the purpose, and other ordained persons associated with it, if invited to share in such imposition of hands, shall join, shall ordain him or her to the office of the Holy Ministry. Prayer being ended, the Moderator shall say, "I now declare you to have been ordained to the office of the Holy Ministry, and in name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, and by authority of this Presbytery, I induct you to this charge, and in token thereof we give you the right hand of fellowship". The Moderator with all other members of Presbytery present and those associated with it shall then give the right hand of fellowship. The Moderator shall then put the prescribed question to the members of the congregation. Suitable charges to the new minister and to the congregation shall then be given by the Moderator or by a minister appointed by the Presbytery for the purpose.
- (4) When an ordained minister is being inducted to a charge, the act of ordination shall not be repeated and the relevant words shall be omitted from the declaration. In other respects the procedure shall be as in subsection (3) above.
- (5) When the appointment is for a limited or potentially limited period (including to a Reviewable Charge, or where the minister holds a Temporary Certificate of Eligibility in terms of section 21 above) the service shall proceed as in subsections (3) or (4) above except that in the declaration the Moderator shall say "I induct you to this charge on the Basis of [specific Act and Section] and in terms of Minute of Presbytery of date"
- (6) After the service the Presbytery shall resume its session, when the name of the new minister shall be added to the Roll of Presbytery, and the Clerk shall be instructed to send certified intimation of the induction to the Session Clerk to be engrossed in the minutes of the first meeting of Kirk Session thereafter, and, in the case of a translation from another Presbytery or where the minister was prior to the induction subject to the supervision of another Presbytery, to the Clerk of that Presbytery. The Presbytery Clerk shall also send intimation of the induction to the national offices, to FAPLT and to the Payroll Department at the national offices.

32. Service of Introduction

- (1) When a minister has been appointed to a linked charge the Presbytery shall determine in which of the churches of the linking the induction is to take place. This shall be a service of induction to the charge, in consequence of which the person inducted shall become minister of each of the congregations embraced in the linking. The intimation regarding the induction, which shall be in terms of Schedule K, shall be read in all of the churches concerned. There shall be no other service of induction, but if the churches are far distant from one another, or for other good reason, the Presbytery may appoint a service of introduction to be held in the other church or churches.
- (2) In any case of deferred union or deferred linking the minister elected and appointed shall be inducted "to the vacant congregation of A in deferred union (or linking) with the congregation of B" and there shall be no need for any further act to establish his or her position as minister of the united congregation or of the linked congregation as the case may be. The Presbytery, however, shall in such a case arrange a service of introduction to the newly united congregation of AB or the newly linked congregation of B.
- (3) When an appointment has been made to an extra-parochial office wholly or mainly under control of the Church (healthcare chaplaincy, prison, workplace or university, full-time clerkship, professor or lecturer in an accredited institution as defined in Act X 2004 etc.) the Presbytery may deem it appropriate to arrange a service of introduction to take place in a church or chapel suitable to the occasion.
- (4) When an appointment has been made to a parochial appointment other than that of an inducted minister, the Presbytery may arrange a service of introduction to take place within the parish. If ordination is involved, suitable arrangements shall be made and intimation shall be given in terms of Schedule L.
- (5) A service of introduction not involving ordination shall follow the lines of an induction except that instead of putting the normal questions to the minister the Moderator shall ask him or her to affirm the vows taken at his or her ordination. Where the service, in terms of subsection (3) or (4) above, includes the ordination of the minister, the vows shall be put in full. In either case, in the declaration the Moderator in place of "I induct you to" shall say, "I welcome you as"
- (6) When an appointment is for a limited or potentially limited period (including an appointment in terms of section 21 above) the service shall proceed as in subsection (4) and (5) above and the Moderator in welcoming the new minister shall specify the basis of the appointment.

33. Minister's name on Communion Roll.

Upon induction, or where appropriate in the case of introduction, the minister's name shall be added to the Communion Roll of the charge.

PART 11 – MISCELLANEOUS

34. Guidelines

FAPLT shall prepare and issue Guidelines for (a) Interim Moderators and Kirk Sessions, (b) Nominating Committees, (c) Advisory Panels, and (d) compiling Parish Profiles, in order to facilitate procedures in this Act. Such Guidelines shall be kept under review and shall be updated periodically to reflect current Church law, policy and practice.

35. Intimations & notices

- (1) For the purposes of this Act intimations to congregations may be made (a) orally during an act of worship, or (b) in written intimations distributed to the whole congregation provided that the congregation's attention is specifically drawn to the presence of an intimation there in terms of this Act.
- (2) Any notices or intimations may be made or sent by electronic means.
- (3) Confirmation that all required intimations have been duly made on the correct number of Sundays shall be sent by the Session Clerk to the Presbytery Clerk before the service of induction or introduction.

36. Effective date, Repeal, Amendments and Transitional Provisions

- (1) This Act shall come into force when agreed by the General Assembly. The existing Vacancy Procedure Act (Act VIII 2003) (as amended) is repealed on the same date; all other legislation prior to this Act shall be construed in conformity with this Act.
- (2) Notwithstanding subsection (1) above, the repeal of Act VIII 2003 as amended shall not affect the operation of the said Act (or Deliverances of the General Assembly in pursuance thereof) prior to the repeal of the said Act, or anything done or suffered under the said Act or related Deliverances; and any rights or obligations acquired or incurred thereunder shall have effect as if the said Act had not been repealed.
- (3) Where a charge has been given Permission to Call on or after 1 June 2025, this Act shall apply to all process under this Act following thereafter, but where Permission to Call was granted prior to 1 June 2025, then Act VIII 2003 shall continue to apply to all process, provided that in the case of any charge where Permission to Call was granted prior to 1 June 2025 and process has not concluded as 31 December 2025, that process shall thereafter switch to be followed to conclusion under this Act and Act VIII 2003 shall no longer apply.

SCHEDULE 1: INTIMATION SCHEDULES (A TO L)

A NOTICE OF DECISION OF VACANCY PROCEDURE COMMITTEE – Section 4(1)

To be read on one Sunday

Notice is hereby given that the Vacancy Procedure Committee of the Presbytery of proposes [*proposed course of action*]. This action will proceed unless at least four persons, who are either communicant members of this congregation of X [and Y]* or full members of Presbytery, together or separately submit to the Presbytery Clerk a request for this proposal to be considered at the next meeting of the Presbytery. Any such request must set out the relevant reasons.

You should submit any such request in writing to [*name and postal address of Presbytery Clerk*] by [*date seven days after date of this intimation*].

If four valid requests are received, then [*state the proposed course of action*] will be suspended and the approval of Presbytery will be required.

A B Presbytery Clerk

**refer to other congregation(s) if a linked charge*

NB this intimation is also to be displayed as prominently as possible at the church building for seven days

B NOTICE CITING A CONGREGATION TO ATTEND – Section 4(5)

To be read on one Sunday

Notice is hereby given that in connection with the [anticipated] vacancy in this congregation of X [and Y]*, a valid request has been made for the matter of [*here insert action or permission which had been proposed*] to be considered by the Presbytery. [*The proposed course of action*] is in the meantime suspended

The Presbytery will meet to consider this matter at on the day of at o'clock. Any member of this congregation of X [and Y]* may attend that meeting and Presbytery shall hear any person whom it considers to have an interest.

A B Presbytery Clerk

**refer to other congregation(s) if a linked charge*

C ELECTION OF NOMINATING COMMITTEE – Section 15(1)

To be read on two Sundays

Notice is hereby given that a meeting of this congregation of X [and Y]* will be held in the Church [*or other arrangement may be given here*] on Sunday at the close of morning [*or other main occasion of*] worship for the purpose of appointing a Nominating Committee. The task of the Nominating Committee will be to nominate one person to this congregation of X [and Y]* to be the new minister.

At that meeting, the congregation shall be invited to elect [number of persons] people, who are on the Electoral Roll of this congregation of X [and Y]*, to serve on the Nominating Committee. If you wish to propose anyone to serve on the Committee you may do so at the meeting providing the person has indicated a willingness to serve.

C D Interim Moderator

**refer to other congregation(s) if a linked charge*

D NOTICE OF NOMINATION – Section 23(2)

To be read on two Sundays

At a meeting held at on, the Nominating Committee chose the person who they wish to propose to this congregation of X [and Y]* to be our new minister. The name of the person proposed is **

Arrangements have been made for [*give name again*], to conduct public worship in this Church on Sunday the day of at o'clock.

Immediately after that service, there will be a vote on whether or not [*Name*] should be appointed as the new minister of this congregation of X [and Y]*. Anyone whose name appears on the Electoral Register of this congregation of X [and Y]* shall be entitled to vote. No-one else shall be entitled to vote.

C D Interim Moderator

**refer to other congregation(s) if a linked charge*

*** The name and status of the person should at this point be entered in full*

E VOTING-PAPER – Section 25(1)

FOR Electing [Name]	
AGAINST Electing [Name]	

Directions to Voters – If you are in favour of electing [Name] put a cross (x) on the upper right-hand space. If you are not in favour of electing [Name] put a cross (x) in the lower right-hand space. Mark your voting-paper in this way with a cross, and put no other mark on your voting-paper or your vote may not be counted.

Note: The Directions to Voters must be printed prominently on the face of the voting-paper.

F DECLARATION OF ELECTION RESULT – Section 25(6)

I hereby declare the results of the voting for the election and appointment of a minister to the vacant charge of *..... to be as follows.

FOR Electing [Name]: [No of votes]

AGAINST Electing [Name]: [No of votes]

EITHER

(1) Therefore, [Name] has accordingly been elected and appointed as the new minister subject to the approval of Presbytery.

OR

(2) In consequence of this vote there has been a failure to elect. The Nominating Committee is deemed to have been discharged. *[Continue in terms of Schedule C if appropriate.]*

Date

C D Interim Moderator

** Here enter details*

G THE CALL – Section 27(1)**Form of Call**

We, members and adherents of the Church of Scotland and of the congregation known as *....., being without a minister, address this Call to be our minister to you, [Name]....., of whose gifts and qualities we have been assured, and we warmly invite you to accept this Call, promising that we shall devote ourselves with you to worship, witness, mission and service in this parish, and also to the furtherance of these in the world, to the glory of God and for the advancement of His Kingdom.

** Here enter details*

Paper of Concurrence

We, persons associated with the congregation of the Church of Scotland known as *..... concur in the Call addressed by that congregation to [Name]..... to be their minister.

** Here enter details*

Note: The Call and Paper of Concurrence should be dated and attested by the Interim Moderator before they are transmitted to the Clerk of the Presbytery.

H SUBSCRIBING THE CALL – Section 27(1)**To be read on at least one Sunday**

Notice is hereby given that this congregation of X [and Y]* has elected [Name] to be our new minister and a Call to the said [Name] has been prepared. This Call will lie in [Place]..... from..... theday of [Month]..... until [Date which is at least eight days later], between the hours of and During that time any person whose name is on the Electoral Register of the congregation may sign the Call in person or by means of a mandate.

If a mandate is to be used, the relevant form may be obtained from the Session Clerk.

A paper of Concurrence will also be available for signature by any person who is connected with the congregation but whose name is not on the Electoral Register of the congregation. Children are also welcome to add their names to this paper.

C D Interim Moderator

**refer to other congregation(s) if a linked charge*

I MANDATE TO SIGN CALL – Section 27(2)

I,* of **,....., being a person whose name is on the Electoral Register of the congregation, hereby authorise the Session Clerk, or other member of Session, to add my name to the Call addressed to [Name] to be our new minister.

(Signed)

* Here enter full name in block capitals

** Here enter address in full

J CITATION IN CASE OF NOMINATION BY PRESBYTERY – Section 28(c)(iii)

To be read on one Sunday

Notice is hereby given that [Name], whom the Presbytery has appointed to be minister of this congregation of X [and Y]* will conduct public worship in the Church on Sunday the day of at o'clock.

A Call addressed to the said [Name] will lie in [Place]..... from the day of between the hours of and during the day and between the hours of and in the evening, until [Date which is at least eight days later]. During that time any person whose name is on the Electoral Register of the congregation may sign the Call in person or by means of a mandate.

If a mandate is to be used, the relevant form may be obtained from the Session Clerk.

A paper of Concurrence will also be available for signature by any person who is connected with the congregation but whose name is not on the Electoral Register of the congregation. Children are also welcome to add their names to this paper.

The Presbytery will meet to deal with the appointment and Call at on the day of at o'clock. Any member of the congregation may attend that meeting.

A B Presbytery Clerk

*refer to other congregation(s) if a linked charge

K NOTICE OF INDUCTION – Section 31(1) and section 32(1)

To be read on two Sundays

Notice is hereby given that the Presbytery of has received a Call from this congregation of X [and Y]* addressed to [Name] to be the new minister. This Call has been sustained as a regular Call, and has been accepted by him/her**.

The Presbytery, having judged the said [Name] qualified for the ministry of the Gospel and*** for this charge, has resolved to proceed to his/her [ordination and]**** induction on [day of the week] the [date] day of [month] at [time] o'clock. The only circumstance in which this would not occur is if an objection occurs which may reasonably impede it.

Notice is given that if any member of this congregation of X [and Y]*, has objection to the life or doctrine of the said [Name] you should intimate your objection at the earliest opportunity to the Presbytery Clerk. If you do this, you will also need to submit to the Presbytery Clerk appropriate evidence to substantiate your objection.

The Presbytery is to meet at [time] on [date as above]. If an objection is not notified in advance but is first brought at that meeting the objector must satisfy the Presbytery that there was no earlier opportunity to bring the objection to the attention of the Presbytery Clerk.

Unless a substantiated objection is made which is then upheld, the Presbytery shall proceed to [ordination and]**** induction of the said [Name] without further delay.

By order of the Presbytery

A.....B.....Presbytery Clerk

*refer to other congregation(s) if a linked charge

** Add, where, appropriate, "and his/her translation has been agreed to by the Presbytery of....."

*** Omit "for the ministry of the Gospel and" if this minister to be inducted has been ordained previously

**** Omit, where appropriate, "ordination and"

L NOTICE OF ORDINATION IN CASE OF INTRODUCTION – Section 32(4)

To be read on two Sundays

Notice is hereby given that a service of introduction is to take place because [*narrate circumstances requiring service of introduction*]. The Presbytery has found that the said [*Name*] has been regularly appointed and is qualified for the ministry of the Gospel and for the said appointment. The Presbytery has resolved to proceed to his or her ordination to the Holy Ministry and to his or her introduction as [*specify appointment*].

This ordination and introduction will take place on the day of at o'clock, and will proceed unless an objection occurs which may reasonably impede it.

Notice is given if any member of this congregation of X [and Y]* has anything to object to in the life or doctrine of the said [*Name*], you may appear at the Presbytery meeting at on the day of at o'clock to state your objection. Any objection which is made must be substantiated.

Unless a substantiated objection is made which is then upheld, the Presbytery will proceed to ordination and introduction of the said[*Name*] without further delay.

By order of the Presbytery

A B Presbytery Clerk

**refer to other congregation(s) if a linked charge*

SCHEDULE 2: PROTOCOL AS TO HYBRID CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

From 1 December 2023, congregational meetings, in addition to being held wholly in person, may be held in hybrid form, meaning with attendees permitted to be present in person or online, provided that certain conditions as set out below are met.

However, ***congregational meetings may NOT be arranged to be held wholly online.***

The conditions which will apply to congregational meetings held in hybrid form are mainly intended to achieve equivalence to the requirements which would apply under existing Church law to a meeting held wholly in person, and they are as follows:

- 1) The Kirk Session must decide in advance that the specific congregational meeting in question is one which it is appropriate to hold in hybrid form rather than wholly in person, having regard to the subject matter of the meeting and to the congregation's particular circumstances;
- 2) The Communion Roll or Electoral Register, as the case may be, must be up to date as follows: in the case of the Communion Roll it must have been annually revised and attested in terms of the Communion Rolls Act (Act VI 2000)^[xvi] within the calendar year prior to the date on which the congregational meeting is to take place, and in the case of the Electoral Register, it must have been prepared and may be updated in terms of the Vacancy Procedure Act (Act VIII 2003)^[xvii];
- 3) Notice of the congregational meeting must be intimated in the normal way, ie by pulpit intimation and where appropriate via the congregation's website and/or social media, by at least ten days' (including two Sundays') notice to the congregation;
- 4) The Kirk Session must be satisfied that arrangements can be made to distribute in advance to those who request it and are entitled to it, a link to join the congregational meeting online and information about how to connect and participate, including details of how to contribute to the discussion and how to vote;
- 5) The Kirk Session must be satisfied that it will be able to verify the identity of those who will be joining the congregational meeting online as being persons entitled to attend, participate and vote in such a meeting;
- 6) The Kirk Session must be satisfied that the congregational meeting can be set up and run with sufficient technical expertise to enable all those present, whether in person or online, to hear the full meeting, including all prayer, worship and debate and also to participate in the meeting should they so wish;
- 7) Before any vote is taken, the Moderator or Interim Moderator shall remind the meeting that only those who have been present during the full meeting and who are eligible to vote, can now proceed to vote;
- 8) Where a vote is required, the Kirk Session must be satisfied that an accurate ballot can be held; in the case of a secret ballot the arrangements made shall ensure secrecy of the ballot while maintaining verification of eligibility to vote^[xviii]; and
- 9) The minute of the congregational meeting shall record that the conditions set out in this Protocol were fulfilled, and the minute shall then be engrossed (included and signed) in the minutes of the next Kirk Session meeting.

APPENDIX VII**TABLE OF CHANGES (FROM VACANCY PROCEDURE ACT (ACT VIII 2003) TO PROPOSED CALL, ELECTION & APPOINTMENT OF MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT ACT**

Note: this doesn't list every single change made but tries to give a flavour of the main changes.

TITLE OF SECTION	CHANGE MADE	OLD SECTION	NEW SECTION
	Individual sections have been reordered and the Act has been divided into 11 sections overall.		
	References to other Acts of Assembly updated throughout the Act.		
Definitions	Definitions section added. Definition of vacancy has been amended to be one that has Permission to Call as defined. Faith Nurture Forum updated to FAPLT: Faith Action Programme Leadership Team.		1.1
Interpretation	Interpretation section added to encourage tasks to be undertaken concurrently where possible.		1.2
Circumstances of vacancy	For demission of charge or translation, minister is normally to give at least 3 months' prior notice to Presbytery Clerk. This provision is also to be inserted in the Parish Ministry Act. Call & Election process is now subject to the grant of Permission to Call.	3	2
Vacancy Procedure Committee	VPC is made a standing committee of Presbytery. Provision made for a Depute Convener of the VPC.	1	3
	Section 5 (Seat in Presbytery) deleted (<i>superseded by Church Courts Act</i>).		
Advisory Panel	The Advisory Committee becomes the Advisory Panel, a pool of at least three persons, and members of it will be able to act individually, save where there has been failure to nominate. People are to be appointed to the Panel for 2 year terms.	13	5
Release of Departing Minister	Wording about release of a minister in the first five years of his or her first charge has been clarified.	4(2)	6(2)
Appointment of Interim Moderator (IM)	Some provisions about who can be an Interim Moderator (IM) have been moved to the Church Courts Act. Slight expansion of who can be an IM.	6	7
Duties of IM & Shortfalls	Minor tidying up of wording.	7 & 9	8 & 10
Permission to Call	Question of Permission to Call must now be referred to the Presbytery additionally if the charge is subject to a financial sustainability review or where the manse is not currently available with vacant possession.	8	9
Shortfalls	A scheme for payment of unjustified shortfalls must be agreed with the Assembly Trustees rather than FAPLT and/or the Stewardship & Finance Committee.	9	10
Vacancy Schedule	Stewardship & Finance issues and approves the Vacancy Schedule.	10(1)	11
Manse	Presbytery Buildings Officer to be consulted about the manse. Wording added to link to section 9 as to possible delay to Permission to Call, depending on extent of works required and if the manse is not available with vacant possession.	11	12
Parish Profile	There are proposals elsewhere for Local Church Review to be replaced by each charge having its own Action Plan.	12	13
Electoral Register	Provisions on Electoral Register have been conformed with a rewritten Communion Rolls and Adherents' Rolls Act, so that congregations will simply keep their Rolls up to date and attested by Presbytery, then will use those as the Electoral Register. Names may be removed but not added unless an extension to Permission to Call is granted. A new Communion Rolls and Adherents' Roll Act is to be proposed by the Legal Questions Committee, which will be a tidied-up version of the current Act.	14	14

Appointment of Nominating Committee (NC)	Election of Nominating Committee simply to take place by secret ballot, ie option of voting for membership of the Committee by standing up is deleted. Some other minor tidying up of wording, including as to Team Ministry.	15	15
Task of the NC	Minor tidying up of wording.	17	17
Eligibility for Election	Wording tidied up. Eligibility of a Licentiate to be elected removed. Clarification that a minister who has lived outwith the UK for more than 12 months (whether continuous or in total) in the past 10 years must be able in addition to exhibit appropriate Safeguarding clearance, including a criminal record check.	18	18
Undue influence	The requirement for a minister accepting a call to confirm there has been no undue influence has been reinstated and a duty added for Presbytery to take the matter into consideration. Suitable provisions might be included in the Act or in Guidance.	New section	19
Team Ministry	Provisions added as to appointment of an IM in a Team Ministry.	New section	20
Nomination	Wording tidied up. At new 22(4)(d), mention added of Safeguarding clearance for ministers who have lived outwith the UK for more than 12 months (whether continuous or in total) in the past 10 years.	21	22
Preaching by Nominee & Election of Minister	Minor tidying up of wording.	22 & 23	23 & 24
Ballot Procedure	Counting of votes only requires to take place in presence of a quorum of the Kirk Session, ie three people. Reference added to hybrid congregational meetings and the Protocol from 1 December 2023.	24	25
The Call	Call to be subscribed during a period of not less than 8 days within a 2 week window.	26	27
Failure to Nominate	Provisions will activate after 12 months rather than 2 years. Final paragraph of old section 28 deleted as obsolete.	28	28
Eligibility for Election, Nomination, Transmission of Documents & Sustaining the Call	Wording as to Eligibility for Call and Safeguarding clearance tidied up in various sections. At 29, documents required now appear in a bullet point list for ease of reference.	18, 21, 29, 30	18, 22, 29 & 30
Admission to a charge	Presbytery to send intimation of the induction to the national offices, to FAPLT and to the Payroll Department.	31(6)	31(6)
	Demission of Status provision moved to the Parish Ministry Act (Act II 2018).	33	
Service of Introduction	Reference to edicts/edictal intimations deleted and all references are now to intimations.	32	32
Minister's name on Communion Roll	Provision inserted that minister's name is to be added to the Communion Roll.	New	33
Guidelines	Legal Questions Committee no longer to be involved in preparation of Guidelines – this reflects what has happened in practice recently. Guidelines updated to refer to those which FAPLT actually prepare.	34	34
Intimations & notices	Intimations may now be made electronically. Provisions streamlined.	35	35
Effective date, Repeal, Amendments and Transitional Provisions	Existing Act (Act VIII 2003) to be repealed. Transitional provisions confirm that where Permission to Call was granted prior to 1 June 2025, the existing process still applies, but from 1 January 2026 the new process in the new Act applies if that process has not concluded.	36	36
Intimation Schedules	Schedules C, D, E & F deleted in light of the new Communion Rolls and Adherents' Rolls Act.	Schedules	Now to be Schedule 1.
	<i>Protocol from 1 December 2023 on hybrid congregational meetings has been attached for ease of reference.</i>		Schedule 2

APPENDIX VIII

ACT AMENDING THE CHURCH COURTS ACT (ACT VI 2023)

[] ACT AMENDING THE CHURCH COURTS ACT (ACT VI 2023)

Edinburgh, [] May 2025, Session []

The General Assembly hereby enact and ordain that the Church Courts Act (Act VI 2023) shall be amended as follows:

1. Amend section 5.1.6 a) to read:
“review and approve the Communion Roll and Adherents’ Roll,”
2. Amend section 5.3.2.2 to read:
5.3.2.2 Where the relevant Presbytery appoints an Interim Moderator, the Interim Moderator shall be (i) a ministerial member of the relevant Presbytery, or (ii) a ministerial member of another Presbytery who has agreed to serve, or (iii) a member of the Presbytery who has attended training for the task provided by the Office of the General Assembly, or (iv) a voting member of another Presbytery who has agreed to serve and who has received the training referred to in sub-section (iii), provided that such a person shall remain a member of their originating Presbytery.
3. Insert a new section 5.3.2.3:
5.3.2.3 A person appointed as an Interim Moderator in a vacant charge shall not be a member in the vacant charge nor a member of the Vacancy Procedure Committee. The name of an Interim Moderator shall always be forwarded to the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team.

APPENDIX IX

ACT AMENDING THE PARISH MINISTRY ACT (ACT II 2018)

[] ACT AMENDING THE PARISH MINISTRY ACT (ACT II 2018) (AS AMENDED)

Edinburgh, [] May 2025, Session []

The General Assembly hereby enact and ordain that the Parish Ministry Act (Act II 2018), as amended, shall be further amended as follows:

1. Add a new section 19 and renumber the existing section 19 as section 20:
Demission of charge and/or status and/or Team Ministry Role
 - (1) Where a minister seeks to demit his or her charge or status as a minister of the Church of Scotland, or to translate to another charge, or to demit from a Team Ministry Role, the minister shall normally give at least three months’ prior notice in writing (which may be by email) to the relevant Presbytery Clerk.
 - (2) Where a minister seeks to demit his or her status as a minister of the Church of Scotland, any accompanying demission of a charge will be dealt with by the Vacancy Procedure Committee in terms of section 6 of the Call, Election and Appointment of Ministers of Word and Sacrament Act (Act [] 2025), but the question of demission of status shall be considered by the Presbytery itself. The Moderator of Presbytery, or a deputy appointed by him or her, shall first endeavour to confer with the minister regarding his or her reasons and shall report to the Presbytery if there appears to be any reason not to grant permission to demit status. Any decision to grant permission to demit status shall be immediately reported to the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team.

APPENDIX X**SECONDARY PRINCIPLES**

5.3.1 Presbytery, the Forum and the Trustees must prioritise Mission (as defined in sections 1.1 (l) and (n) through the PMP process. No area of church life is exempt (see section 1.1(r)). Everything in this Code of Practice should be read in the light of, and is subordinate to, section 2.1.1.

5.3.2 Communities: Every community of every size in every location within Scotland is part of a Church of Scotland Parish. While population should no longer be the only principle in shaping Presbytery Plans, it still remains the starting point. Our calling as a church is not primarily to resource congregations: it is mission to everyone in the land.

5.3.3 Ecumenism: "The Commission readily acknowledges that reaching the people of Scotland is an ecumenical task and one to which the Church of Scotland contributes along with other denominations as partners in the gospel." If a particular community is well served by another denomination, there may be no need for the Presbytery to duplicate that. Where a community is equally well served by the Church of Scotland and another denomination the Presbytery should explore what local possibilities there might be for recognising each other's ministry so that resources can be used elsewhere. The General Assembly of 2021 instructed the Forum, when developing principles for Presbytery Mission Planning, to include a principle of ecumenical working, bearing in mind the Lund Principle, affirming that churches should act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately. That same deliverance also encouraged the forming of Local Mission Communities and regional Covenant Partnerships as outlined in the [report of the Ecumenical Relations Committee](#).

5.3.4 The poor: The General Assembly has repeatedly affirmed that the gospel imperative is priority to the poor. At a time when resources are scarce, it is tempting to take away from the most marginal communities where churches are often very fragile and small. However pressing the reasons may be locally, this must be resisted because it makes a mockery of the gospel and the repeated commitments of the General Assembly. However, as in every part of the Church, this does not mean that existing patterns of ministry should not be evaluated and reviewed and different forms of church life introduced.

5.3.4 Whole people of God: One aim of the Act is to assist the church in making the most effective use of paid ministries. However, this takes place in the context of the ministry of the whole people of God. The Special Commission on the Third Article Declaratory, in 2010, noted that "the living out of the commitment of Article III may well involve an increasing number of communities where the ministry is exercised largely by the eldership and membership of the Church, albeit under the oversight of an ordained minister." (8.5.6) Therefore a further principle to guide Presbyteries in their deployment of ministries is how they might be used to encourage and enhance the ministry of the whole people of God. This sharing of talents may be across a wider area than a parish – some Presbyteries are developing the idea of Mission Districts, on which more information will be available later.

5.3.5 Congregations: The church has "a commitment to maintain worshipping, witnessing and serving Christian congregations throughout Scotland." One of the ways in which the gospel finds visible expression is in committed congregations under the power of the Holy Spirit. They both express the gospel and commend the gospel. In their Planning, Presbyteries will identify congregations that are outward looking, which engage with their communities and the wider church and consider how they might build on these strengths.

5.3.6 Mixed economy: Whilst affirming the importance of the Parish system and recognising the importance of a sense of 'place' the General Assembly stated that this needs to be expressed in a variety of ways. Martyn Percy, an Anglican scholar, says: "For the Church to find its place in the modern world, it will have to create new spaces for new communities and different opportunities for differentiated niche groups." While in many communities the sense of place is best expressed in something physical and tangible, that is not universally true. The Church will need, for example, to discover how to relate to those whose belonging is primarily through networks or the virtual world.

5.3.7 Financial responsibility: Presbytery Mission Planning does not mean ensuring that congregations which make a net contribution to central funds take priority. Nonetheless a degree of financial realism is required and it is appropriate that some consideration is given to congregational financial responsibility. Some congregations are more generous than comparable ones and all congregations are expected to make a financial contribution appropriate to their means. At present one third of congregations are net contributors and two thirds are net receivers. However, per capita giving can be much higher amongst some of the poorest congregations than it is in some of the wealthiest. It is essential for Presbyteries to consider the complex financial picture and allocate ministerial resources to congregations that take their financial stewardship seriously. The Presbytery, Forum and Trustees should also take account of the effect of a Mission Plan on the aggregate amount of Ministry and Mission Contributions which the Presbytery's congregations remit to the national Church.

5.3.8 Buildings: There is a connection between ministry and church buildings, although that connection is neither uniform nor universal. At a national level there is a consensus that the Church of Scotland has too many buildings, numerous buildings that are underutilised, buildings that are too large for present-day needs and buildings that are in the wrong place. At a local level, however, almost every church building is deemed essential by those who worship there week by week. There is no simple solution to this problem. The starting point, however, should be mission. Presbyteries will want to consider which buildings are essential and useful for the mission they envisage, and offer to local parties means by which they might look more objectively at the bricks and mortar which they possess. The General Trustees will support Presbyteries in developing their mission plans. Presbyteries are encouraged to make use of the General Trustees Land and Buildings Toolkit, and other assessment tools which will be available.

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 (inc. Cumbernauld)	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**OVERVIEW OF VACANCIES**

In order to reduce the uncertainty and anxiety for existing probationers, ministry students, potential ministry candidates and those in familiarisation and reviewable tenure, the General Assembly of 2022 instructed the Faith Nurture Forum, or successor, to report to future General Assemblies with full ministries numbers, covering the following areas:

- ministers of Full Time Word and Sacrament currently in charges,
- number of MDS staff counted towards the 600 fulltime ministries target figure by end of 2025,
- number of ministers in reviewable tenures,
- number of ministers in familiarisation,
- number of ministers expected to retire in the year;

Overview of Vacancies	
Minister numbers (FTE)	489
Interim / Transition Ministers	8
Ministers inducted on basis of reviewable charge	111 reviewable charges 47 with inducted ministers
Probationers and Familiarisation	22
MDS numbers (FTE)	72.57
Fixed Term assistant ministers contracts	41
Actual Retired in 2024	38
Actual Demitted in 2024	11
Expected retirals and demissions in 2025	35

These figures are the ones collected as at 31 December 2024. At time of writing, there are 30 vacancies on the Church of Scotland website. The Presbytery Mission Plan Implementation Group since February 2024 has processed bases of adjustment amounting to 50.2 vacancies which should appear on the vacancy list when Presbyteries have exercised due diligence in terms of congregation votes and subsequent Presbytery approval of these votes, with the (hopefully concomitant) granting of permission to call.

Appendix XIII

FINANCIAL INFORMATION AND ALLOWANCES

XIII.1 Stipends and Salaries

The Assembly Trustees approved the recommendation of the Faith Action Leadership Team that stipend & salary scales be increased by 2.5% for 2025.

Stipend Scale (including Associate Ministers) 2025

Point 1 £32,433

Point 2 £34,554

Point 3 £36,675

Point 4 £38,796

Point 5 £39,856

Ministries Development Staff Scales 2025

MDS General Scale

Point 1 £29,535

Point 2 £30,502

Point 3 £31,464

Point 4 £32,431

Point 5 £33,389

Team Leader Scale

Point 1 £35,960

Point 2 £36,763

Point 3 £37,564

Point 4 £38,369

Point 5 £39,170

Deacon Scale (Genuine Occupational Requirement)

Point 1 £31,464

Point 2 £32,431

Point 3 £33,389

Point 4 £34,354

Point 5 £35,317

Island Allowance

Island allowances also increase by 2.5% for 2025.

Outer Island Allowance: £2,114 pa

Inner Island Allowance: £831 pa

Travel Expenses 2025

Travel expenses payable remain as:

Rates for those providing their own car:

a) reimbursed 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

From April 2025 travel expenses are redeemable at a local level and will not be paid through payroll.

Ministers also receive capital reimbursement of £80 per month.

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 to ministers and MDS providing their own motor bike for pastoral duties:

24p per mile travelled per annum

d) reimbursed to ministers and MDS providing their own pedal bike for pastoral duties:

20p per mile travelled per annum

XIII.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.

XIII.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.

If a Charge has an average income base of less than £60,000, application may be made to Faith Action for assistance in meeting removal costs. This assistance may take the form of a grant or loan (or a combination of both) to the congregation.

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.

XIII.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.

XIII.5 Vacancy Allowance

Vacancy Allowance has been removed from 1st January 2025. From 1st January 2025 vacant congregations 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).

XIII.6 Guardianship Allowance

For 2025 the Guardianship Allowance remains at £933 per month.

References

- [i] In addition, a previous General Assembly instructed the consideration of the report *"Holding Things Together: Church of England clergy in changing times"* and review what we need to put in place to ensure that clergy, MDS staff and those in training feel valued and supported.
- [ii] The full report is available at [Ministerial Wellbeing Wave 1 Report FINAL.pdf](#)
- [iii] The Presbytery of Lothian & Borders have introduced a local Sabbatical Scheme and learning from the first year of the scheme should inform any national Sabbatical Leave Scheme
- [iv] [A Justice-seeking Church – The Methodist Church](#)
- [v] <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about-us/departments/faith-action-programme-committees-and-departments/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-group/legacies-of-slavery>
- [vi] On the pilgrimage were Rt. Rev. Sally Foster-Fulton (Moderator of the General Assembly), Mirella Yandoli (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Interfaith Manager, Church of Scotland), Rev. Dr Elijah Obinna (Racial Justice Convener, Church of Scotland), Most Rev. Mark Strange (the Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church), Miriam Weibye (the Church Engagement officer of the Scottish Episcopal Church), and Dr Lisa Adjei (British Church Relations Manager for Christian Aid), Rt. Rev. Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson (Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church – URC), Karen Campbell (Secretary for Global & Intercultural Ministries, URC), and Tom Hackett (Children and Youth worker of URC).
- [vii] https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/93862/apologising-for-historic-wrongs-final-version.pdf
- [viii] <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about-us/our-views/violence-against-women>
- [ix] The alt-right (alternative right) is a loosely connected far-right movement that emerged in the 2010s, promoting nationalism, white identity politics, and opposition to mainstream conservatism. It often embraces online activism, conspiracy theories, with some factions espousing racist, antisemitic, and extremist views.
- [x] <https://www.restored-uk.org/>
- [xi] Some basic research will lead to the conclusion that there are multiple versions of these collections of 'C's. The ones selected here are largely self-explanatory and underline our starting point that Commitment and Character come first, with Calling and Competence coming further down. The AR is a place for people to explore their Calling as it is now and how it might develop. Competencies are what will be learned through the programme.
- [xii] The Hubs are: Greater Glasgow, Edinburgh and the Lothians, Perth and Dundee.
- [xiii] Though already experienced, Apprenticeship Mentors will do specific training in the art of mentoring.
- [xiv] The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is a tool, developed by the Scottish Government, to measure relative levels of deprivation. The tool divides Scotland into 6,976 small areas, called data zones. It doesn't just focus on low income but also looks at limited resources and opportunities in areas like health, education, and employment.
SIMD helps identify where people face multiple disadvantages by ranking areas based on seven key factors: income, employment, education, health, access to services, crime, and housing.
- [xv] Ascertained currently by the calculator found on the gov.uk website
- [xvi] This reference will require to be updated, following the General Assembly, with the specific reference to the Act.
- [xvii] This reference will require to be updated, following the General Assembly, with the specific reference to the Act.
- [xviii] There are anonymised polls available on both Zoom and Microsoft Teams (Zoom Polls and Microsoft Forms/Polls).