**NOMINATION COMMITTEE**

**Convener’s Speech by the Rev Kenny Stott**

**Friday 26 May 2017**

Moderator, as we come towards the end of our General Assembly I wonder if someone somewhere has kept a statistical record – which commissioner spoke the most and how many times; what was the average length of question asked; what was the shortest reply? I pose the question because we do live in a society that has become increasingly aware and obsessed with the collection of data and statistics.

Whether we actually need them is a debating point but I am conscious that we do live in an age when we are bombarded by statistics and observations – many sporting events will be analysed and we will be told about how many passes were made by each team; we get percentage of possession or time spent in the opponent’s half.

Along with this obsession we have also developed a new language where acronyms abound - CD ROM to LOL to FOMO - and if you are concerned as to what FOMO means it may well have been coined by someone who knows you for it means FEAR OF MISSING OUT – to TMI - Too Much Information.

Can we have too much information? Well it depends. Personally I think the findings of last year’s Scottish church census must surely feed into our discussions and decisions regarding mission and outreach.

As this is my last report as Convener I found it interesting to look back at previous reports from the Nomination Committee. It appears that up until 2007 the Report consisted of the names of those elders, deacons and ministers who were being nominated to serve on Councils and Committees. Convenors would present the Report and no doubt make reference to the process but since 2008 we have shared statistical information that we hope informs the discussion around the process of how best to use the gifts and interests of members of the church within the national committee structure.

We seek to be transparent in all that we do and so you will see that in section 4 of our Report we give information as to how many nomination forms were received and from what sources. On behalf of the Committee I want to express sincere gratitude to those who were nominated and whose names we bring in our Report in section 6; but I also want to thank those who were nominated but were not invited to serve on this occasion.

As in previous years we have put a nomination form into every commissioner’s box and we would ask that you would be thoughtful and prayerful in thinking about who could serve on a Council or Committee. I would like to add though that while I made a reference to the acronym TMI, it is often the case that we get TOO LITTLE INFORMATION. I do not doubt that we have many people who are friendly and faithful in attending church but that information alone on a nomination form does not really help the Nomination Committee discern if a person is suited to serving on a particular Council or Committee. The more information we have in terms of skills, experiences or passions, the easier it is for the Committee to bring that name to the General Assembly with confidence.

In section 3 of the proposed deliverance to our Report we ask the Assembly to approve the alterations to the standing Committees and Councils as set out in section 6 of the Report. You will note that we wish to nominate Philip Brodie for a second term of three years as Convener of the Appeals Committee of the Commission of Assembly. We appreciate Lord Brodie’s willingness to serve for a further term but, in order for this to proceed, the General Assembly will be asked to agree to the suspension of Standing Orders to permit this extension.

You will see in Section 2 of our Report that we have become increasingly aware of the need for discussion to take place around the process for finding people to serve on committees dealing with specialised and sensitive legal matters on behalf of the Church. The nomination process tends not to bring forward potential nominees to these areas of work and, over recent years, the Committee has relied upon the Convener of the Legal Questions Committee and the Principal Clerk to suggest people for consideration. While we have absolute confidence in the appropriateness of the names brought to us, it is felt that some reflection on this involving the Nomination Committee, the Legal Questions Committee and senior officers of the Church, facilitated by the Council of Assembly, would be beneficial to ensure that transparency and accountability are maintained.

I began by making reference to statistics and for the last two years the Nomination Committee has been reflecting on whether there are barriers to participation in the life of the national committees of the Church. During the process of interviewing members to identify a new Convener and Vice-Convener of the Nomination Committee itself we used a live video-link to conduct an interview and the experience was positive. We have asked a member of the Committee to develop ideas and possibilities around the use of technology in Committee and Council work. We will also be using a questionnaire that has been developed by the Rev Dr Fiona Tweedie to use within a number of congregations – the purpose being to provide statistics that may help in tackling any barriers to involvement which may exist.

This is my final report as Convener and it has been a privilege to serve on the Nomination Committee since 2011. It is a committee that continues to reflect and adapt its way of working – always seeking to find the best way to encourage and use the gifts and skills of the members of the church. I would like to thank Ann Lyall DCS for her support and help as Vice-Convener; I have appreciated the guidance of the Rev Dr Martin Scott; and throughout my time on the Committee I have been indebted, as has the Committee, to the efficiency and kindness of Pauline Wilson.

Statistics do matter but behind each statistic is a person with skills and a story; and while a lot of the statistics that are presented around the life and witness of the Church can encourage and depress, we continue to believe that God Almighty, who reveals His love and power in the one born into poverty and insignificance at Bethlehem, who worked with a limited number of people, is still the God who can work in and through those who submit themselves daily to the lordship of Christ.

Moderator, as I am not a Commissioner, I would ask the Principal Clerk to move the Deliverance.