

ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE MAY 2018

Proposed Deliverance

The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.
2. Approve the Order of Business for the first two days.
(Order of Proceedings)
3. Appoint Mr Roy Pinkerton to index the verbatim record.
4. Invite commissioners to submit to the first meeting of the Business Committee nominees for consideration to serve on the Selection Committee.
5. Remind commissioners of the deadline for submitting nominations for the Committee to Nominate the Moderator.
6. Encourage commissioners intending to move amendments and counter-motions to arrange to have these printed in the Assembly papers.
7. Instruct the Committee to review the efficacy of the role and size of the Business Committee and to report to the General Assembly 2019.
8. Welcome the appointment of Mr William Mearns as Assembly Officer.
9. Approve the Schedule of visits by Moderators of the General Assembly to Presbyteries (Section 13)

Scottish Bible Society

10. Urge the Scottish Bible Society to pursue its ongoing efforts to address the challenge of global Bible translation.
11. Support the Society in its desire to work in partnership with congregations to improve people's experience of the Bible and its impact on their life.
12. Encourage congregations to consider using *Bibleworld Books* as a way to improve literacy levels amongst children in their communities.
13. Endorse the Society in its efforts to encourage confidence in the gospel and in providing Scripture resources for mission purposes.

14. Commend the Society's global outreach to the generosity of congregations and members.

Report

1. THE VERY REV DR DEREK BROWNING

For Dr Browning, becoming Moderator at the General Assembly meant moving one chair right. As expected of a former Business Convener, he moderated our meetings with humour and expertise. However, that small shift in Assembly week set the scene for what has been a busy and eventful year.

Derek set “hospitality” as one of his themes and he has used his gifts as a welcoming host to engage with many individuals and many different circles of Scottish society. He commended the “longer table” rather than the “higher wall” and put that spirit of inclusion into practice. He stretched out a hand to many guests and in turn shook Pope Francis’ hand as he was welcomed to a private audience in the Vatican.

Countless small bridges have thus been built while one big bridge (the Queensferry Crossing) was suitably blessed. Having travelled the length and breadth of Scotland he has included a memorably busy week in London at St Andrew’s tide, visits to Northern Ireland, Germany and Sweden as well as a wide ranging set of encounters in Israel, Palestine and Jordan. He has told the Parliament of our commitment to young people and taken the Church’s concerns for a divided society to those in political leadership in Downing Street, Holyrood and Brussels.

As Moderator, Derek has done whatever he has been asked to do with an obvious enthusiasm. He went beyond his comfort zones and was always gracious enough to admit to new insights. He has been meticulous in his preparation and selfless in giving his time and talents to help further the cause of the Church.

The Church of Scotland is in his debt and we wish him well as he returns to the parish of Edinburgh: Morningside.

2. PRESBYTERY REPRESENTATION

The Presbytery returns show that there are in all the Presbyteries 1,038 charges, whether vacant or not and that there are 207 other ministers (excluding retired ministers) who are members of Presbyteries. Representation is calculated for each Presbytery in accordance with Act III, 2000 and the total number of commissioners is made up as follows: 348 ministers, 348 elders and 28 deacons.

3. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE TO NOMINATE THE MODERATOR

Since 2014, revised Regulations have been used to elect the Committee to Nominate the Moderator. A leaflet entitled ‘Nominating the Moderator for the 2019 General Assembly’ has been sent to commissioners explaining the process and its significance. Commissioners are encouraged to submit nominations by the deadline of noon on Monday. Ballot papers will be distributed to commissioners on Wednesday morning, with the ballot closing at 5pm that day. The names of those nominated will be announced on Thursday and will appear in the Friday Daily Papers.

4. EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

In the Committee’s report to the 2016 General Assembly consideration was given to the “functions” and “culture” of the Assembly.

In the “culture” section a plea was made for concise and accessible reports from the Councils and Committees and the need for preparing commissioners was underlined. Some of the preparatory resources, especially the videos, were put in place for the 2017 Assembly.

The report listed the functions in the order they had been placed by those who had been surveyed:

1. Governance
2. Visibility and Profile
3. Legislative Functions
4. Fellowship and encounter

It seems to be widely accepted that the Communications Team has demonstrably raised the Church’s media profile. Many commissioners comment favourably on their experience at the General Assembly of meeting others from across the Church.

However, there is still a concern that the Assembly is not exercising its governance and legislative functions as well as it could and should do.

The Committee has, therefore, taken steps this year to encourage commissioners to take a full part in the

governance and legislative process so that the Assembly really does offer oversight of the Councils and Committees.

A leaflet entitled 'Being a commissioner at the General Assembly' was produced and distributed in the mailing and a short video has been placed on the Church's website. The thinking behind the material is that we should consider the work of our Church in terms of theology and sociology – or to put it more simply, we should ask if the report we are considering fits with what we believe and, if it does, whether the approach being suggested is right for our context.

As commissioners come from all parts of the Kirk they bring wide-ranging perspectives on the work which is done collectively by General Assembly Councils and Committees, the legislation we pass to order our affairs and the distribution of the good things God has entrusted to our care.

We have underlined that commissioners have a right and a duty to speak. They should ask questions about how decisions are made, how priorities are set, to press Conveners on issues of value for money and the effectiveness of their programmes, to follow up from one year to the next. The printed and on-line resources affirm that they have the right to challenge proposals from Councils and Committees and to propose changes to sections of deliverance or indeed to offer alternative proposals.

The Committee has asked the Legal Questions Committee to bring forward an amendment to Standing Orders which will shorten the time taken for some speeches, but which will also take away the stricture that seconding a motion is only a formal step. We hope that this will assist in allowing more voices to be heard and will encourage speakers to get more quickly to the point. The Committee believes that this will increase the focus of the General Assembly on exercising effective oversight of its Councils and Committees.

The Committee has drafted a timetable for the Order of Proceedings which makes provision for morning and afternoon circulation breaks during the main business sessions. We hope that this will allow for more informal discussion of the matters being debated and will be a way in which commissioners can check their questions and motions with others. The catering provision has been supplemented, with the cooperation of the Grassmarket Centre, to cope with large numbers. It should also encourage commissioners to remain in the Hall for all business.

As these changes are necessarily experimental we hope that the Assembly will support them for this year and will expect a report on their effectiveness (or otherwise!) in 2019. The Committee will canvas the views of this year's commissioners.

5. NOTICES OF MOTION AND ASSEMBLY PAPERS

The Committee draws attention to the fact that commissioners wishing to move amendments or counter-motions to deliverances can have these printed in Assembly papers. As a courtesy to other commissioners, and for the convenience of the Assembly, the Committee asks that this be done wherever possible. Clearly situations can arise in the course of a debate where someone wishes to make a motion and such spontaneity is part of the life of the Assembly. However where people have considered and prepared texts, particularly if these are substantial, it is extremely helpful to have them in the order paper. Certainly, the availability of the screens means that motions can appear fairly quickly in writing and the "behind the scenes team" works hard to provide this service. However, when something complex (and clearly considered) suddenly appears it can take time to get it up on the screen and further time for reading and assimilation. There will again be five sets of papers - covering (1) Saturday and Monday, (2) Tuesday, (3) Wednesday, (4) Thursday and (5) Friday. For the first set of papers, notices of motion should be sent to the Principal Clerk's Office by Friday 11 May. For the second and subsequent sets they should be handed in to the Clerks' table by 12 noon on the Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of the Assembly.

6. LENGTH OF SPEECHES

Last year, the General Assembly agreed to amend Standing Orders to limit Conveners' speeches to 15 minutes. In continuing its broad review of the practice of the General Assembly, the Committee has concluded that business would be further expedited by limiting the time allowed for moving amendments and counter-motions to five minutes, in line with the limit for other speeches. Accordingly the Assembly Arrangements Committee has requested an amendment to SO95(i). This will be dealt with during the report of the Legal Questions Committee.

7. BUSINESS COMMITTEE

The Business Committee and Panel of Tellers currently consists of 40 commissioners. The Assembly Arrangements Committee feels that in order to manage business more efficiently there may be scope for reducing the size of the Business Committee. The Assembly Arrangements Committee therefore proposes to consider the matter further in the context of the role of the Business Committee and to bring a proposal to the General Assembly of 2019.

8. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The Committee was delighted to note significantly increased use of digital publications during last year's General Assembly, and continues to integrate technological developments to enhance commissioners' engagement and the smooth running of the Assembly.

In recent years WiFi has been provided via New College's broadband facility. To further enhance WiFi provision, the Committee has been working with the Church of Scotland's Information Technology Department to introduce a new dedicated connection for use in the General Assembly Hall and ancillary accommodation.

Statistics demonstrate an overall increased number of downloads, mainly via the dedicated website www.gapublications.co.uk. The GA App (introduced in recent years for iOS and Android devices) was an innovative trial, carried out at no expense to the Church. Having reviewed the merits of the various options, it has been decided to discontinue the App development and to focus instead on development of www.gapublications.co.uk as a cross-platform, web-based resource. This is a dedicated resource from which all General Assembly papers are accessible, with links to and from the Assembly pages on the main Church website.

The Church is grateful to the late Rev Douglas Aitken who for many years has distilled each day's happenings at the Assembly into a concise and informative daily podcast which has been appreciated within and beyond the Church. We are grateful to those who will continue this helpful facility.

The introductory videos introduced last year to help Commissioners learn more about Assembly procedures, the wider Church and the work of the Councils and Committees, were much viewed and highly appreciated. Some new and

updated material has been added this year. This resource is available to view at www.gapublications.co.uk and www.churchofscotland.org.uk.

The proceedings of the General Assembly, including Heart and Soul, will be webcast and can be viewed at www.churchofscotland.org.uk and www.gapublications.co.uk. An option including British Sign Language will be available. As introduced last year, the entire proceedings will be available to view online. Council and Committee reports, indexed by reporting body and date, will be made available within 24 hours and will remain available as a playback option.

Publications

A unified format for the Assembly Reports (Blue Book) is now in use by all reporting Councils and Committees. This facilitates production in a variety of media using the same source. From 2019 it is anticipated that reporting bodies will be able to set up reports directly using an online media publisher facility, thus reducing the time currently required after writing reports to prepare them for publication.

Last year the reduced uptake for printed copies of the 'Blue Book' resulted in significantly reduced printing and postage costs. This year again, and going forward, it will be assumed that Commissioners do not require a printed Blue Book unless it has been specifically requested.

The changes in the method and timing of creation and delivery of the various publications, including the Remits booklet, means that Volume II will no longer be required, and its publication will be discontinued in due course. The volume currently entitled Volume III will continue to be published as a bound printed reference publication available to the Assembly and Presbytery Clerks.

The Order of Proceedings booklet will continue to be sent in the mailing with the swipe card, and is also available in digital format from www.gapublications.co.uk. This year, printed daily papers will not be placed in commissioners' pigeon holes and should be picked up only if required. This system will be monitored and subsequent days' printing requirements adjusted accordingly.

Commissioner Survey

In the ongoing development of digital content for the General Assembly, the Committee is keen to listen to the experiences

of commissioners, particularly those who have not yet transitioned to the online resources. Offline and online questionnaires will seek feedback during and after Assembly week.

9. HEART AND SOUL 2018

For the eighth year, Heart and Soul, with the theme *Peace Be With You!*, will take place in Princes Street Gardens on Assembly Sunday, 20 May. This great celebration of our Church life offers a warm welcome to commissioners, congregations near and far and local residents and visitors who are simply curious to see something of what the Church is about. Last year, it was heart-warming to welcome in the region of 5,000 visitors to this special celebration – an indication of its broad appeal across all age groups. This year, significant changes have been made to the layout of the event. Paths have been created into new villages away from the main avenues, a new outdoor stage has been added and a new large tent added where speakers from different areas of the Church and beyond will be interviewed “In Conversation” on a wide range of topics. There will also be a Youth Tent, providing a central hub for young people, a family picnic area and fun and games for children.

To celebrate this Year of Young People, a special Heart and Soul Youth Night will be staged on Saturday, 19 May, with a mix of live music, worship and fellowship.

It is anticipated that Princes Street Gardens will not be available as a venue for Heart and Soul in 2019 due to planned closure of the gardens for redevelopment work. Active consideration is being given to what happens in 2019 and beyond. Full details of the event can be found at www.gapublications.co.uk or on the dedicated Heart and Soul website www.heartandsoul.org.uk.

10. PROPERTY

The Property sub-committee continues to advise the Assembly Arrangements Committee on matters relating to the General Assembly Hall and the Moderator’s flat.

In early 2017, the Committee resumed responsibility for the letting of the General Assembly Hall and prepared a draft business plan for the use of the Hall. With uncertainties over future availability of the General Assembly Hall arising not only from the Council of Assembly’s comprehensive review of

property use, but also from potential plans to refurbish New College, all of which could have impacted on use of the General Assembly Hall, it became unrealistic to finalise that business plan. The Committee is, however, continuing work on a 5-year capital expenditure plan for the General Assembly Hall. Letting income increased substantially during 2017 and it is envisaged that a good level of income will be maintained during 2018. Until the current uncertainties surrounding future availability of the General Assembly Hall are resolved, the Assembly Arrangements Committee will continue to work hard to maximise income from letting the Hall, bearing in mind that a considerable amount of staff time is often required to administer letting arrangements.

11. ASSEMBLY OFFICER

The Committee welcomes the appointment of Mr William Mearns as Assembly Officer and wishes him well as he undertakes this role.

12. COMMISSIONERS’ SUBSISTENCE AND TRAVELLING EXPENSES

The Committee recommends the following rates for payment of expenses:

Overnight subsistence not exceeding £60.00 for each night.

Daily out-of-pocket expenses not exceeding £15 per day.

Mileage rate, when no public transport is available, 25p per mile.

Further details appear on the reverse of the claim form issued to commissioners.

13. FASTI ECCLESIAE SCOTICANAE

The *Fasti*, the official record of ministers who have served within the Church of Scotland, was last published in 2000, with Volume XI covering the years 1976 to 1999. The Committee would like to see a Volume XII published for the years 2000 to 2020 and discussions about this have begun with those who might assist. These discussions are complicated by various factors, not least the stricter Data Protection climate and the advent of online publications, but it is still hoped that work can be undertaken to continue this important historical record.

14. SCHEDULE OF MODERATOR'S VISITS TO PRESBYTERIES

The Regulations governing the duties of the Moderator of the General Assembly (V (2) as amended) require her or him 'to visit Presbyteries according to a Scheme of Visitation sanctioned by the General Assembly'.

As indicated in 2012 when the Schedule for 2012-2022 was approved, it is not presumed that the pattern of ten days over two weekends will be appropriate in every case and the Schedule set out below also includes some joint visits.

2018 – 2019

Hamilton
Kirkcaldy
Annandale and Eskdale
England

2019 – 2020

Dundee
Inverness
Lanark
Caithness

2020 – 2021

West Lothian
Abernethy
Shetland
Perth

2021 – 2022

Irvine and Kilmarnock
Sutherland
Angus
Edinburgh

2022 – 2023

Ardrossan
Kincardine and Deeside
Orkney
Wigtown and Stranraer

2023 – 2024

Falkirk
Buchan
Lochcarron-Skye
Stirling

2024 – 2025

Aberdeen
Greenock and Paisley
Melrose and Peebles, Duns, Jedburgh
Lewis and Uist

2025 – 2026

Dunfermline
Argyll and Lochaber
Ayr
Moray

2026 – 2027

Lothian
Gordon
Dumbarton
Dunkeld and Meikle

2027 – 2028

Glasgow
Dumfries and Kirkcudbright
St Andrews
Ross

In the name of the Committee

JUDITH J H PEARSON, *Convener*
FIONA SMITH, *Vice-Convener*
GEORGE J WHYTE, *Secretary*

Addendum

Judith Pearson

Judith had agreed to act as Vice-Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee during the time that the Rev Dr Derek Browning would be Convener. However, when Dr Browning became Moderator in 2017, Judith was called up to the front line. In the run up to last year's Assembly she not only had to get up to speed with these new responsibilities but also with the recruitment of a new Principal Clerk.

She answered these unexpected calls with commitment, competence and good humour.

In chairing the Committee Judith has always ensured that everyone's voice was heard and that our discussions were both amicable and purposeful. The lessons learned and the skills honed as an academic lawyer stood her in good stead as the agenda swung from detailed planning to long term goal setting. Her love for the Church as a serving elder in Aberdeen: Queen's Cross was always evident in the care she took over the decisions made and her constant readiness to be at meetings in Edinburgh.

At the General Assembly she worked tirelessly to ensure that the business was carried through with grace and efficiency.

The Committee and the General Assembly has been well served by Judith Pearson. We thank her for what she has done and wish her well for future service in the Kirk.

In the name of the Committee

FIONA SMITH, *Vice-Convener*
GEORGE J WHYTE, *Secretary*

Appendix A

REPORT OF THE SCOTTISH BIBLE SOCIETY

'...for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now.'
Philippians 1:5 (NLT)

'Don't go it alone!' seems to be a repeated theme in the Bible. It is so good to have other people with us, whether we are facing tough situations or bursting with joy. When Paul writes

to the Christians in Philippi he delights in the fact that they are his 'partners in spreading the Good News about Christ' (Phil 1:5, NLT).

Partnerships work best when there is shared vision and an agreed common goal. Ensuring people have a Bible in order that they can encounter Jesus Christ and grow in their relationship with him is the vision and goal we look for in our partnerships.

Last year, we reached the mid-point of our multi-year partnership with the Bible Society of Malawi. Our commitment is primarily to support projects, to help children and families in Malawi to receive the Word of God. However, we have also had the opportunity to invest in capacity building, where the exchange of time and talent has seen our staff, board members and volunteers visit Malawi. Equally, we have benefited from colleagues from Malawi visiting Scotland, as well as being able to fund some Malawian staff to attend global Bible Societies' meetings to further their knowledge and development. This two-way expression of partnership helps sustain our global mission. We learn from our colleagues as well as being inspired by their work.

Thanks to the prayers and generous financial gifts of congregations, volunteers and donors, we provided almost ten thousand Bibles for Malawi last year. Other projects we have helped, include:

- Providing Bibles in a language and format people understand – in Argentina, many deaf young people experience great difficulty writing and understanding Spanish grammar, which is why Bibles in Sign Language are vital to educating deaf children about the love of God.
- Distributing Bibles where there is a shortage – in Guinea-Bissau more than 50% of the population is Muslim, yet there is a hunger for God's Word despite the challenge of low income and short supply.
- Responding to global changes – in Jordan the swelling population is due to an influx of refugees desperate for both physical and spiritual food, which is why the Bible Society in Jordan is partnering with local churches to provide relief packages, Scriptures and emotional support.

In Scotland, our partnership with Biblica, the publishers of the New International Version of the Bible, has flourished with projects such as the Community Bible Experience (CBE). In the past year, thirty churches have signed-up to this form of reading the Bible together and discussing it as a group. Over a four-year period since our partnership began on CBE, we have seen over 100 churches in Scotland sign-up. This is hugely encouraging as we seek to help churches, groups and individuals to deepen their understanding of God's Word. The following comment from a participant shows that CBE is doing just that: "This experience has helped me to be more committed to Bible reading and applying it to my own life."

Our *Bibleworld Books* project continues to progress thanks to key partnerships. Firstly, the specially adapted Biblical text used to create a series of books and resources suitable for children to learn the principles of reading, writing and literacy from the Bible, has been shared with us by the American Bible Society. We have combined the text with custom illustrations in a modern, contemporary style and the books, along with some resources for trained volunteers to help the children work through the material, is used in after-school groups. Secondly, the All Souls family of churches in Fife have been a key partner in helping us with the pilot project. Throughout last year, they were in dialogue with head teachers towards opening the door for the resource to be used in after-school clubs. So far, the children and volunteers in our trial groups have given us great positive feedback. Even parents of the children in our trial groups are noticing the difference this project has made, with one parent saying: "Bethan is writing stories at home now and reading more" whilst another parent commented: "Hannah would come home and share some of the spiritual aspects discussed."

We cannot do our work alone and God rarely asks any of us to go it alone in the tasks he gives us. It is our privilege to work with churches across Scotland, of all denominations. It is an honour to partner with other Bible Societies across the world. We are caught up into a global mission that has many local expressions.

Our greatest privilege, of course, is to be called into a partnership with God himself. We should never lose the wonder of God calling each of us to play a part in his mission. But it can be a daunting thought too...which is why we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. He is the one who will help us keep our vision clear and our goals worthy and honouring of him.