

## JOINT REPORT OF THE COUNCIL OF ASSEMBLY, MINISTRIES COUNCIL, MISSION AND DISCIPLESHIP COUNCIL, PANEL ON REVIEW AND REFORM AND LEGAL QUESTIONS COMMITTEE ON RESOURCING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LOCAL CHURCH REVIEW MAY 2018

### Proposed Deliverance

#### The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.
2. Discharge the Working Group and instruct the Council of Assembly, in cooperation with the Mission and Discipleship Council, Ministries Council and Legal Questions Committee, to review the provisions of Act 1 2011 on Local Church Review, to ensure they are consistent with the implementation of the Church's Strategic Plan and effectively resourced.

### Report

#### 1. BACKGROUND

**1.1** The General Assembly of 2016 instructed the Council of Assembly as follows: Instruct the Council of Assembly, working jointly with the Mission and Discipleship Council, the Ministries Council, the Panel on Review and Reform and the Legal Questions Committee to devise a structure together with any necessary regulation which will allow the implementation of Local Church Review to be appropriately resourced and delivered across every Presbytery and report to the General Assembly of 2017.

**1.2** A Joint Working Group comprising representatives of the five bodies met and considered the issues arising out of the instruction. It was noted that Local Church Review (LCR) is an essential foundation for an interconnected series of issues currently under consideration in the work of the bodies represented on the Group. Some of these are relatively new in terms of formal process, or are still in the developmental stage. They include:

- *Strategic Plan*: being developed by the Council of Assembly for presentation to this year's General Assembly, indicating the importance of LCR for implementation of its key goals;
- *Recruitment and Training for Ministry*: work being undertaken by the Ministries Council to offer a clearer picture of the expectations for ministry of people being recruited and trained;
- *Capability Process for Ministries*: to be developed by the Ministries Council in collaboration with the Legal Questions Committee, based around the expectations of ministry;
- *Vacancy Process and Parish Profiles*: work being undertaken by the Legal Questions Committee and Ministries Council to enable consistency in the conduct of vacancy processes and the production of Parish profiles;

- *Presbytery Review*: being piloted through the Principal Clerk's office, applying the principles of LCR at a Presbytery-wide level with Presbyteries acting as 'peers' to one another;
- *Facilitator Training*: for the LCR process, being rolled out by Mission and Discipleship Council.

**1.3** Aware there is an expectation, should the General Assembly approve the draft Strategic Plan, that LCR would play a significant role in its implementation, it is important to understand not only its place in the wider context of other developments, but also the extent to which LCR is currently being carried out across the Presbyteries. It is clear that compliance with Act 1 2011 on Local Church Review is variable.

**1.4** When the Group looked at this in August 2017, not all Presbyteries had shown diligence in ensuring all congregations were undertaking reviews. Some had done nothing as yet to implement the provisions of the Act. While failure to comply with the Act is a matter of governance, it is also often an issue of resources. Small Presbyteries and congregations may well struggle to complete the process on their own, so the sharing of resources between both congregations and Presbyteries is commended as a way of enabling good practice to develop. It is also self-evident that it would be sensible to draw on the experience of those who have implemented LCR, since their awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the current shape of the process would help others to use LCR more effectively.

**1.5** It is acknowledged that the volume of paper-based material for conducting LCR can be relatively large. It is, however, perfectly permissible for Presbyteries to adapt it to their own circumstances and needs.

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## **2. MOVING FORWARD**

**2.1** In seeking to address the question of resourcing LCR going forward, the Group noted the importance of having an identifiable focus for support. The fact that five different bodies had been instructed to work on resourcing was itself an indicator that there was no clear 'ownership' of the process of LCR. This made it particularly difficult for those Presbyteries who wanted to take it forward, but lacked the resources to do so and the knowledge of where to seek them.

**2.2** The instruction to consider questions of resourcing talks about devising a *structure* and *regulations* to enable implementation. In looking at the issues more closely, however, it was noted that what was really needed was a *process* for implementation. Taking this together with the question of focus / ownership, it was agreed that the best place to locate this work was with the Principal Clerk's Office. In his unique position, the Principal Clerk is in regular contact with Presbytery Clerks and is able to build the relationships necessary to offer appropriate support in developing the process of LCR. Alongside this, it was noted that in his personal capacity and previous post as Clerk to the Presbytery of Edinburgh, Rev Dr George Whyte had been influential in the development of LCR and responsible for overseeing its implementation in a large Presbytery, as well as being an enthusiastic champion of its value.

In addition to this, it was noted that Dr Whyte is involved with a small cross-committee group developing a form of Presbytery Review, drawing on the principles of LCR. Some nine Presbyteries are engaging in a pilot project around Presbytery Review, with others interested in joining in future. In this context, it made good sense to bring the process of resourcing LCR alongside that of taking forward Presbytery Review.

**2.3** As noted above, it is anticipated that LCR will have a key role to play in the implementation of the proposed Strategic Plan for the Church. In the event of this being adopted, it will be necessary to review the process and documentation for LCR to ensure that it enables congregations and Presbyteries to achieve the goals of the Plan effectively. Given some of the reservations expressed about the current process and documentation, such a review is timely and will allow a number of questions to be addressed.

**2.4** In terms of financial resourcing, the Strategic Plan will enable the Council of Assembly to give priority to the key goals identified – a crucial component of which is LCR. In its report, therefore, the Council is seeking to set up a collaborative working group (with Mission and Discipleship, Ministries and Legal Questions) to take forward the review and in particular to identify the resources to make LCR as effective an instrument as possible in achieving the Church’s missional goals.

*In the name of the Council of Assembly,  
Mission and Discipleship Council, Ministries Council,  
Panel on Review and Reform and Legal Questions Committee,*

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